

Letter by Domenico Battaglia, Archbishop of Naples
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Translation by Giacomo Fiori

To the merchants of death,
to you who do business with the blood of men,
to you who count profits while mothers count their children,
to you who call “strategy” what the Gospel calls scandal,
I address words that do not come from diplomacy, but from wounds.

I am writing to you from this land that trembles.
It trembles under the footsteps of the poor,
under the cries of children,
under the silence of the innocent,
under the ferocious noise of the weapons you have built, sold, and blessed with your cynicism.

I write to you while the world seems to have relearned the language of Cain.
That ancient and terrible language that asks:
“Am I my brother's keeper?”
And yes, we are.
We all are.
And you, more than others, because you have chosen not only to look away, but to profit from your brother's wound.

There are nights, in this time, when humanity seems to lose its way.
Long nights, when the sky offers no consolation and the earth returns only rubble.
Yet even there, in the heart of the night, the Gospel continues to persist.
It continues to say that no man is born to be a target.
That no child is destined to become dust.
That no mother should have to learn to recognize her child from a scrap of cloth.
That peace is not a weakness to be mocked, but the highest form of strength.

You do the opposite of bread.
Bread is broken to feed.
Weapons break bodies to starve the future.
Bread brings people to the table.
Weapons dig graves, empty houses, and lengthen tables without diners.
Bread has the scent of hands.
Weapons have the cold smell of balance sheets.

And tell me: how can you do it?
How can you sleep knowing that behind every contract there is flesh torn open?
That behind every signature there is a school emptied, a hospital demolished, a face erased?
How can you call “market” what, before God, has the simplest and most terrible name: sin?

I am not speaking to you as a judge.
I have no courts to open.
I speak to you as a man and a pastor.

As a believer wounded by the ferocity of the times.
As a bishop who feels in his gut the cry of Christ still crucified in humiliated peoples, in devastated cities,
in the nameless bodies that the sea returns and war hides.

Because today the Crucified One has the hands of civilians buried under bombs.
He has the wide eyes of children who cannot name the horror.
He has the faces of women clutching photographs instead of hugging their children.
He has the thirst of the refugees, the fear of the elderly, the trembling of those who no longer have a
home or even a language to express their pain.

And you, merchants of death, continue to pass under that cross as the soldiers once did, dividing up the
clothes of the condemned.
Only today you are not casting lots for a tunic:
you are casting lots for entire peoples.
You gamble on borders, on grudges, on escalations, on armed balances.
And in the meantime, you call fear peace, you call domination order, you call permanent threat security.

But there is no security where death is sown.
There is no future where young people are taught to be suspicious.
There is no justice if the wealth of the few is based on the mourning of the many.
And there will be no peace as long as war remains an acceptable investment.

The Gospel, on the other hand, does not negotiate.
The Gospel does not bless the industries of destruction.
The Gospel does not get used to death.
The Gospel cannot bear to see pain become statistics and massacres consumed in the tired commentary
of a news report.

The Gospel puts a child at the center.
Always.
And when a child is at the center, all your reasons collapse.
Military doctrines, opportunistic alliances, geopolitical justifications, and the technical language with
which you hide your shame collapse.
Because in front of a murdered child, there is no longer right or left, East or West, friend or enemy:
there is only the abyss.

I ask you, then, not only to stop.
I ask you to convert.
Yes, convert.
An ancient word, a scandalous word, a necessary word.
To convert means to stop thinking that everything has a price.
It means recognizing that human life is sacred, or it will no longer be human.
It means moving away from the logic of profit and embracing that of stewardship.
It means finally having the courage to lose money in order to save lives.

Take a moment to reflect.
Just one, but a real one.
Let the tears you have kept out of your rooms reach you.

Let the names of the dead into your boardrooms.
Let a mother come and disturb your accounts.
Let the Gospel ruin your peace of mind.

Because there is no peace without disarmament of the heart,
and there is no disarmament of the heart as long as the hand remains clinging to profit.
War does not begin when the first bomb falls.
It begins much earlier:
when the brother becomes an obstacle,
when the poor become irrelevant,
when compassion is judged naive,
when the economy stops serving life and decides to use it.

Yet I am not writing to you to deliver you to despair.
I am writing to you because even for you there is a way.
God does not stop knocking even on the most heavily armored doors.
Even for you there is a chance for redemption.
Even for you there is a Good Friday that can open up to Easter.
But you must come down.
Come down from the pedestals of power, from the language that absolves, from the rooms where death
is planned without smell and without face.
You must become men again.
Before being executives, shareholders, strategists, intermediaries: men.
Men capable of shame, and therefore of truth.

I dream of the day when your factories will change their vocation.
When iron will become a plow rather than a bullet,
when ingenuity will be used to preserve life rather than perfect offense,
when capital will be spent on healing, educating, rebuilding, welcoming.
I dream of the day when the word "profit" will no longer rhyme with "funeral."

And I know that some will smile, calling all this naivety.
But the only real naivety today is to believe that war saves.
The only real madness is to think that we can continue to set the world on fire without burning with it.
The only realism possible now is peace.

That is why I leave you with a question that I hope will not leave you in peace:
How much blood is enough for you?
How much pain must history still endure before you understand that you are not trafficking in goods,
but in children, in mothers, in faces, in flesh loved by God?

Stop.
Before it is too late for the peoples.
Before it is too late for yourselves.
Stop, and listen to the Gospel of peace, which does not shout but insists, which does not crush but
converts, which does not humiliate but calls by name.
Listen to Christ, unarmed and true, who continues to say:
"Blessed are the peacemakers."

Not the calculators of war.
Not the guarantors of armed equilibrium.
Not the sellers of fear.
The peacemakers.
The world needs hands that lift up, not hands that arm.
It needs awake consciences, not blind profits.
It needs prophets, not merchants.

And we, the Church of the Gospel, will not be silent.
Not out of ideology, but out of fidelity.
Not out of naivety, but out of obedience to Christ.
Not because we ignore the complexity of history, but because we know the infinite value of every life.

To you, merchants of death, I say the last word, not as a condemnation, but as a plea:
give back the future.
Give back breath.
Give back the children to their mothers, fathers to their homes, dreams to the earth.
Give yourselves back to your humanity.

Peace will judge you.
But, if you want it, peace can still save you.

With sorrow, with hope, with the Gospel in our hands.

The Archbishop of Naples