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Sermon by Dr. Varga Béla given at his bishopric inauguration

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Ephesians 4:6 KJV

Gathered Celebrants! Our biblical text is one of those powerful apostolic statements that we see a great many times in the epistles of Apostle Paul. It expresses concisely -- and with almost shocking brevity and simplicity -- the deepest, most universal truth of the teachings of Jesus.

That simple sentence has inexhaustible meaning and richness. In that sentence, there is the unmatched greatness of God who is above everything. That sentence also states that He is the Father of all of us, and that brings Him closer to us. It stirs our soul to know that while He is far above us, He is still our Father. There is something more in that sentence, something that gives direction and goals for our lives: God is acting inside all of us, and we are the result of His work; we are His coworkers, as the Apostle states in another verse.

The picture of a community unfolds in front of us where the central figure is God, the Father of everyone, from whom and towards whom myriads of strands stream; the Father who is influencing everyone, and connects with them at the same time. He is the moving force of this community; He is the manager who use His coworkers, all of us, according to His eternal goals. The light rays of God are reflected through every soul, like a prism. *"And He himself gave some to be apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers."*

Such an apostolic vision is permeated by the universally inclusive concepts of the Gospels that are profound, they break down all constraints, and speak irrefutable truth to everyone in times of geographical changes, in times of peace and war, and through the end of time.

All of humanity stands there, regardless of class, race, and national origin, lifted high, as high as possible as children and coworkers of God. From each human being a strand leads to God who is holding that strand in His hand. All those strands are held in that one hand, and human beings will remain humane as long as they feel they are part of

an invisible network with God connected to them. The essence of that human being, the concept of their self-worth, is determined by just how much that human being is impacted by the recognition that the strand connecting it to God is the highest level of possible fulfillment of their life.

While individuals are evaluated in that relationship, the effect of that evaluation differs from the effects of any possible evaluations based on human society's fluctuating value judgement. Here, we have a single measure: God and the godly. Anything that belong in the realm of God, or shows the qualities of godliness is valuable and eternal, while anything that doesn't belong in that realm or doesn't show such qualities is mortal, and, at best, it has a value as a tool.

The value of human beings is determined by how they interpret the coworker relationship. If their goal matches the goal of the employer, then they measure up to Him, but if they don't measure up, then they will be found wanting. In the Gospels, we see that both natural and man-made differences and limitations of people disappear, and only one measure of value remains: God, and the participation in the network of godly coworkers. Such is the oldest, most authentic, and highest level measure that makes people become aware of themselves, and find meaning for their lives.

I.

I don't need to prove to you that we live in a restive era. Many people are seemingly unwilling to acknowledge the reason behind it. And not only can they not seem to identify the reason for it, neither can they identify the means to bring an end to the restlessness.

A review of the efforts humans have made in the past few decades to reinstate the peacefulness and harmony in the world, leaves our souls troubled with hopelessness. Something was missing from those efforts! Perhaps, because of the low level of sincerity of those efforts, or because of the degree of helplessness, humans were unable to break the magic circle that held them captive.

Because of the human fallibility, they could not easily triumph over the challenges they faced. Will they eventually recognize what is needed to calm the restlessness of the souls? Have fallible humans totally lost their sense of the deepest roots of their origin? Could they have completely forgotten that their lives are connected to God, and that humans can become humane only through God?

Some say that humanity has grown up, it has become an adult. Historical developments have undoubtedly brought us much wisdom. However, it is not possible to break the strands that connect us to God; it is not possible to dispense true justice among people without God, the source of the truth. Partial truths that fit one group, but harm another, are the product of thoughts of fallible people. Worldly truth can prevail only if it bears the mark of the eternal.

Human society can not remain in existence without God, and the difficulties that swirl around us can only be resolved if the vision of Apostle Paul becomes a reality pulsing with life, in which everyone awakens to recognize we all are the children and coworkers of God.

The natural sciences have already progressed to a deeply introspective acknowledgement that its unsolved questions are leading them towards God. Will the fields of political science and sociology, who confess that they're derived from the natural sciences, draw the same conclusion their parent sciences have already drawn? Hasn't the twelfth hour come for the admission that they need to adopt the evangelium as the only road to solutions, and to acknowledge that without God there are no resolutions to their issues.

The recognition of a divine reality doesn't cut us off from nature, or from the appreciation of sociological or political institutions, but, rather, provides the missing frame of mind that God is actively at work in everybody.

That sort of enlightenment is the key to the seemingly intractable problems in the natural world, and, moreover, to the unconquerable challenges of mankind.

II.

But what do we see instead of such enlightenment? Not only that most of mankind has forgotten about God, but also that they have forgotten to see their fellow human beings as their neighbors, and as the children and coworkers of God. Mankind has forgotten about the only true standard that could be the foundation of peace and justice in our societies.

Examining the first observation, we don't just point to the general hostility towards God that aims to eradicate any religious thoughts in people. We don't just think about isolated movements, but also to that broad, sweeping type of forgetfulness that resulted in losing the capacity to acknowledge the existence God.

We are seeing the spreading of the hollowing of the human soul to such a degree that was not seen even before the pagan days of the Age of the Antiquity. During and before that Age pagan practices filled the void of the soul. Today, even those practices are gone. I wonder what will halt the faltering of the soul, that disorder of our times? Should we truly expect that it will be halted by the quick advance in technology, the very factor partially responsible for this increasing degree of godlessness?

Scholars of history and sociology have concluded that we are at such a pivot point that didn't exist in previous centuries. This pivot point is described several ways. Some believe that humanity has reached the pinnacle of its development. Others believe the opposite: History is moving toward a new, higher level of development, and, therefore, we are at the cusp of new possibilities built on the experiences of our past.

This latter type of thinking is closer to what actually is happening. Reaching the pinnacle of development would coincide with the achievement of love, peace, and the manifestation of God's love on Earth. Without achieving all of those, progress is meaningless and hollow. New roads of development need to open to reach a better future. Those roads will lead to God. Our future development needs to look inward, aiming at the soul. In that way we could counter the faltering of the soul, and we could then contrast the truth of God with the perceived truths of human fallibility.

When we examine the second observation, we can see that the loss of the recognition of human dignity and of humans as coworkers of God, are the consequences of the first observation. The differentiation between people should only be based on God's reflection in them. No matter how great the other type of differences are, the shared foundation always exist -- the essence of the soul, the shared measure of all human life. We have forgotten to recognize this shared attribute in the midst of our many differences. No type of categorization of people -- whether based on natural attributes, on world view, on an enforcing power or some kind of theory, will be able to restore peace and unity if we lose sight of the condition mentioned above.

In God's great, eternal church each person is a building block. Each individual, at their designated position, is a coworker of God. They work for themselves only as much as they work for the church. They belong to the whole as they work, and all the while they feel they are responsible for their work, and feel that the others work for the same goal.

To be God's coworker means to feel the community of fellow human beings, and to have the understanding that everyone was created not only for themselves, but for everyone else as well. Everyone must take up their cross in order to provide an example for others, so they, too, can take up their own crosses to bring about that great masterpiece: the Kingdom of God, and the kingdom of godly souls.

III.

The time has come for the only power of the world, love, to take its rightful place. Only universal and unconditional love can do away with unsatisfied desires and the distressing restlessness. No matter how much we would want to build today's Towers of Babel. Those towers, as symbols of foolish human efforts, always fall down before they reach the sky.

On the other hand, love is not only a matter for humans, but also a perfect reflection of God through the human soul. All those who advocate peace and love, lose sight of that. Neither peace nor love will ever happen without God. The over valuation of worldly things will never bring into existence unconditional love, because, as the Apostle says: *"God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."* - 1 John 4:12, KJV.

To be God's coworker means to love, never to hate, never to rivalize -- and to acknowledge the divine creation of others, and to extend the finite into infinite, the

mortal into eternal, the human into godly. Only if we do these things do we truly become disciples of Jesus, who considered that universal law an important sign of discipleship when he said: "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*" - John 13:35, KJV.

I wonder: When will humanity reach that level of fulfillment of Christ's teaching? Perhaps, in the past few days we took a step closer to it.

If it is possible to create something great in this world, that would be rightfully considered great; it would answer all questions, and bring about the peace of God in the world. Amen.