

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: PROMOTING PEACE AND HUMAN DIGNITY THROUGH RELIGION

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations Charter, signed in San Francisco on June 26, 1945 and in force on October 24, 1945, proclaims in its preamble the belief of the peoples of the United Nations as „the fundamental human rights, the dignity and the value of the human person, the equality of rights between men and women, as well as the large and small nations”, with the decision to „create the conditions necessary to maintain the justice and the observance of the obligations deriving from treaties and other sources of international law, to promote social progress and better living conditions in a greater freedom". In order to achieve this, Member States have committed themselves to tolerance and to living in peace with each other as good neighbors to join forces and efforts to maintain international peace, to use international institutions to promote progress economic and social background of all peoples. This is how the United Nations Charter was adopted to establish an international organization called the United Nations. In proposing to maintain international peace, the United Nations shall make international cooperation in resolving all issues in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

Keywords: *human rights, peace, human dignity, freedom, religious freedom.*

The Charter of the United Nations², as the founding treaty establishing the United Nations, was signed by the 51 participating countries at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on the International Organization of San Francisco on 26 June 1945 and entered into force at October 24, 1945. The Treaty is structured in 19 chapters preceded by a preamble and comprises 111 articles, the Charter being part of the Statute of the International Court of Justice.

The contents of the charter outline the general lines of organization and activity of this important forum, in distinct chapters such as: goals and principles; members; structure; General Assembly; Security Council; peaceful resolution of disputes; action in case of threats to peace, peace violations and acts of aggression; regional agreements; international economic and social cooperation; Economic and Social Council; The International Court of Justice; Secretariat; various etc.

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² Charte des Nations Unies et Statut de la Cour internationale de Justice, Nations Unies, New York, 1993.

The preamble states the belief of the peoples of the United Nations in „the fundamental human rights, the dignity and value of the human person, the equality of men and women, as well as the great and small nations”, with the determination to „create the necessary conditions justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law, to promote social progress and better living conditions in greater freedom”. In order to achieve this, Member States have committed themselves to the practice of tolerance and to living in peace with each other as good neighbors to unite their forces and efforts to maintain peace, to use international institutions to promote economic and social progress of all peoples.

Some of the purposes of the United Nations stated in the text of the Charter in Chapter I, Article 1, are to maintain international peace and security, aiming at: *taking effective collective measures to prevent and remove threats to peace and to suppress all acts of aggression or other violations of peace and, by peaceful means and in accordance with the principles of justice and international law, to settle or resolve international disputes or situations which could lead to a violation of peace; will develop friendly relations among nations, founded on respect for the principle of equality of peoples' rights and their right to dispose of themselves, and take any other appropriate measures to strengthen world peace; will achieve international cooperation in resolving international economic, social, cultural or humanitarian issues in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.* The United Nations is thus called to prevent global conflicts and to save peoples from the scourge of war, to reaffirm the belief in human rights, to the dignity and worth of the human person, to create the necessary conditions for the maintenance of justice and the observance of the treaties and other sources of international law, the promotion of social progress and the creation of better living conditions in a greater freedom.

Within Chapter IX *International Economic and Social Cooperation*, Art. 55 states that *in order to create the conditions of stability and well-being necessary for peaceful and friendly relations between nations, based on respect for the principle of equality of peoples' rights and their right to dispose of themselves, the United Nations will promote: a. the standard of living, full use of labor force and conditions of economic and social progress and development; b. resolving international issues in the economic, social, health and other related issues; international cooperation in the fields of culture and education; c. Universal and effective respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.*

In almost all areas of society, in the period immediately following the Second World War, the issue of human rights was resumed in the debate, when the peoples³ expressed their determination to reaffirm their belief in the fundamental human rights, the dignity and the value the human being, the equality of rights

³ Irina Moroianu Zlatescu, *Human Rights - an Evolutionary System*, Romanian Institute for Human Rights, Bucharest, 2008, p. 9.

between men and women, and between nations, large and small, in order to outline these ideals in a clearer way.

Romania became a member of the United Nations on 14 December 1955 – Resolution 995 (X) is among the states of the "popular democracies"⁴.

In the relationship of man with divinity and for the fulfillment of his spiritual needs, religion has played an important role in the development of humanity, being present in the life of human society from the very beginning of its existence. The need to organize communities and, implicitly, their lives necessarily prompted the emergence of the state. The relationship of the state, of its power with society is subject to the state administration, whose activity has been influenced over time, by every historical epoch that human society has traveled. At any time in history, religious institutions, as entities distinct from those of the state, have fulfilled their own role. At the same time, religious freedom marked its evolution in close connection with state development.

The foundations of the current religious freedom enjoyed by a large part of the world's countries were made in 313 by the Mediolanum Edict of Emperor Constantine the Great, proclaiming the right of every individual to freely decide for himself the religious belief on who wants to follow it, and through which the state guarantees religious freedom for all.

Religious freedom is part of the human rights and freedoms, which the state, as a result of their recognition, is called upon to respect, guarantee and protect them. The existence and life of man being inextricably linked to society, these desiderata are always topics of study and debate.

In the attempt to decipher⁵ man's conception of the world, in its relation to divinity, but also in its relationship with the state, human rights studies go through all the historical periods and stages of mankind, from antiquity to the moment of crystallization and finalization of the principles governs human rights. Such studies show that in international law there is no generally accepted definition of the term *religion*⁶, and it is difficult to define in the legal sense concepts considered to be of great complexity and ambiguity.

From a historical perspective, since antiquity, the notion of *religion* has had various interpretations⁷. In this regard, we recall Cicero who deduced the word from the verb *relegere* (rereading, studying with respect, referring to something with particular respect) and the Lactantiu who attributes to this word a less correct

⁴ *Idem*, p. 22.

⁵ Prof. Univ. Dr. Irina Moroianu Zlatescu, Dr. Radu C. Demetrescu, *From the History of Human Rights*, Romanian Institute for Human Rights (IRDO).

⁶ Prof. Univ. Dr. Irina Moroianu Zlătescu, *Freedom of Religion and Beliefs - Fundamental Human Rights*, article presented at the Xth edition of the International Symposium "Human Rights. Spiritual Dimension and Civic Action", held on 15-17 May 2007 in Iasi. The article was published in the *Human Rights Review*, XVII, Nr. 2, 2007, edited by the Romanian Institute for Human Rights, p. 12.

⁷ Deacon Prof. Dr. Emilian Vasilescu, *History of Religions*, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1982, p. 9.

etymology from a grammatical point of view, but more appropriate to the meaning given by Christians as coming from the verb *religare* (to bind, to unite) in the sense of union with God. By analyzing the term *religious freedom*, the term *freedom* defines⁸ the status of a person who enjoys the full enjoyment of political and civil rights in the state, and the *freedom of conscience* a formal principle in a modern pluralistic society that makes it possible to act in accordance with one's own conscience, mainly with regard to religion.

From a theological perspective, *freedom* is an essential component of spirituality⁹, human rights are based on the essential ideas of Holy Scripture.

Religious freedom is one of the most important freedoms of man, in the exercise of this being in a relationship of interdependence with the expression of other rights and freedoms¹⁰. The right to freedom of religion is ensured under the law¹¹. Religious freedom is a natural right¹² that every citizen enjoys, being classified as civil rights. Religious freedom is the recognition of religious rights and identities, freedom and equality of cults without discrimination, freedom and autonomy to organize themselves according to their own statutes and to affirm their faith. It also means religious pluralism and the protection of religious groups, respect for guiding principles for the propagation of a religion or belief.

Human fundamental human right, the manifestation of religious freedom is closely linked to the collective to which each person belongs. For a society to be considered just, it is necessary to respect the rights of each of its members. In order to respect individual freedoms, the state, through public administration, assumes its role and obligations towards its citizens, which has the role of identifying and solving public problems. Religious freedom implies freedom in the field of religious education which, for state schools, is stipulated in the Constitution and guaranteed by law.

Modern legal literature places a special place on human rights, both through national domestic acts, being recognized through state constitutions or national laws, and through international (regional and regional) acts such as declarations, conventions, treaties.

Following lengthy debates and discussions on the development of a human rights document, including the form that it should embody, the United Nations General Assembly adopted and proclaimed on December 10, 1948, Resolution 217

⁸ Collective, Encyclopedic Dictionary, Vol. IV (L-N), Enciclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001, p. 101-102.

⁹ Daniel, the Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bucovina, *L'Eglise orthodoxe et la dimension spirituelle des droits de l'homme*, presented at the International Symposium *Les Droits de l'Homme - Dimension spirituelle et action civique*, Iasi, Roumanie, 22-24 September 2000, published by IRDO, 2000, p. 79.

¹⁰ Cristina Stuparu, *State - Society - Religious Freedom*, IRDO Publishing House, Bucharest, 2009, p. 192.

¹¹ *Idem*, p. 26.

¹² Prof. Univ. Dr. Irina Moroianu Zlatescu, *Freedom of Religion and Beliefs - Fundamental Human Rights*, article published in *Human Rights*, XVII, Nr. 2, 2007, p. 13.

A III), *the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*¹³, which enshrines freedom of thought, conscience and religion:

Article 18: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes the freedom to change religion or belief, as well as the freedom to manifest their religion or belief, either alone or with others, both publicly and privately, through teaching, religious practices, worship and the fulfillment of rites .

This statement is the most important landmark of the field, being a common ideal to which all peoples and nations of the world must strive. In its final form, this document enshrines freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Concerns on human rights and religious freedoms are also present in several regional intergovernmental organizations, such as the *Council of Europe* (EC) and the *European Union* (EU). The Council of Europe is a supranational political intergovernmental and parliamentary political organization founded after the Second World War on May 5, 1949, at the initiative of ten states (Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, The United Kingdom and Sweden) with a view to achieving a „closer union among its members in order to defend and promote the ideals and principles that constitute their common heritage and to foster economic and social progress“. Thus, the first European-style organization was born by signing its Statute in Strasbourg and entered into force on 3 August 1949¹⁴. The principles declared in the statute refer to pluralist democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Romania became a member of the Council of Europe in October 1993, through Law no. 64 of 4 October 1993, published in the Official Gazette no. 238 of October 4, 1993.

The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted in Rome on 4 November 1950 and entered into force on 3 September 1953, restates the basic principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Due to its importance and relevance, we read the text of Article 9 of this document:

*Article 9: Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion*¹⁵

1. *Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes the freedom to change religion or beliefs and the freedom to manifest their religion or belief individually or collectively, in public or in particular, through cult, education, practice, and ritual fulfillment.*

2. *Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall not be subject to restrictions other than those provided for by law which, in a democratic society, constitute measures necessary for public security, the protection of order, health, public morals, the freedoms of others.*

¹³ Centre pour les droits Genève, *Droits de l'homme, Recueil d'instruments internationaux*, Nations Unies, New York, 1988.

¹⁴ Prof. Univ. Irina Moroianu Zlatescu, Dr. Radu C. Demetrescu, *European Institutional Law and Community Policies*, Calistrat Hogaş Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001, p. 30.

¹⁵ Irina Moroianu Zlătescu, *For a Culture of Peace, Democracy and Tolerance in Romania*, Vol. II, Editorial House „Calistrat Hogaş”, Bucharest, 2000, p. 166.

Although the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is a European document that gives the universal provisions an enforceable character¹⁶. It should be noted that this European document takes over some of the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, bringing some additions where the need felt. With regard to the fundamental right to religion or belief, Article 9 of the Convention complements Article 18 of the Declaration in that the freedom of expression of religion or beliefs can not be restricted except as provided by law.

The original text of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was subsequently revised through a series of Protocols (3, 5, 8, 11, 12). The document is a very important instrument, constituting the first international treaty to guarantee all member states of the European Community for human rights, requiring signatory states to guarantee all these rights and freedoms at their level. The originality¹⁷ of the Convention thus forms the permanent institutional mechanism of protection. The adopted convention is a regional mechanism for the protection of human rights, giving each person a real, international guarantee for a range of civil and political rights, including freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

It should also be noted that, following the drafting, the text of the Convention has been supplemented and improved by 14 additional protocols aimed at extending and extending these rights. Following the adoption, the Convention was ratified by the member countries in the Council of Europe, the number of countries that have made this progress progressively increasing. The EC Statute¹⁸ states in Article 3 that any European State may become a member of the Council of Europe only if it accepts the principles of the rule of law and the principle under which every person in its jurisdiction must enjoy the fundamental rights and freedoms of man.

Romania ratified the Convention and its Additional Protocols by Law no. 30 of May 18, 1994, published in the Official Gazette no. 135 of 31 May 1994.

The European Convention is the first and most elaborate and precise regional human rights document, adapted to the specific conditions of European countries. The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has been created to ensure that a European law order is achieved legally. The courts with powers to control the enforcement of human rights were until 1 November 1998, the European Commission of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights. When their rights are violated, both individuals and non-governmental organizations can file complaints.

¹⁶ Irina Moroianu Zlătescu, *Human Rights - an Evolutionary System*, Second Edition Revised, IRDO Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008, p. 104.

¹⁷ *Idem*, p. 103.

¹⁸ Coordinators, *The main international human rights instruments to which Romania is a part*, Vol. II, Regional Instruments, seventh edition, revised and added, IRDO Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006, p. 8.

Following the signing and entry into force of international (universal and regional) human rights papers, the signatory states undertake to implement at the local level the regulations in the field of religious freedom and belief.

At Romania level, religious freedom is regulated by Law no. 489 of 28.12.2006 on religious freedom and the general regime of denominations and is enshrined in the Constitution of Romania¹⁹, inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

„Freedom of conscience – Article 29:

(1) Freedom of thought and opinions, as well as the freedom of religious beliefs, can not be restricted in any way. No one can be compelled to adopt an opinion or adhere to a religious belief contrary to his beliefs.

(2) Freedom of conscience is guaranteed; it must manifest itself in a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect.

(3) Religious cults are free and organized according to their own statutes, according to the law.

(4) Any forms, means, acts or actions of religious denial are prohibited in the relations between the denominations.

(5) Religious cults are autonomous to the state and enjoy its support, including by facilitating religious assistance in the army, hospitals, prisons, shelters and orphanages.

(6) Parents or guardians have the right to ensure, according to their own beliefs, the education of minors under their responsibility”.

One of the essential elements of the legislation in force concerns the full equality of religious denominations recognized in Romania²⁰. All religious cults can be organized according to their own statutes and can carry out their activities (religious services, administration, theological education etc.) according to their own beliefs, traditions, doctrines and specific rituals, having the possibility of using their mother tongue in all these activities.

Religious communities in Romania encompass over 99% of Romania's population, according to the 2011 Census, and, according to the law, are private and public utility organizations, being important parts of civil society.

The main institution in Romania that manages the relations between the state (its public institutions) and religious life organizations (religious and religious associations) is *the State Secretariat for Cults (SSC)*, whose main mission is to support the exercise of religious freedom by citizens according to the principle of neutrality Of the Romanian State in terms of beliefs and religious and philosophical beliefs, according to Romania's international commitments, primarily by supporting the activity of religious cults.

¹⁹ *The Romanian Constitution of 1991*, adopted at the meeting of the Constituent Assembly of 21 November 1991 and entered into force after its approval by the National Referendum of December 8, 1991, the 8th Edition, the Official Gazette, p. 7.

²⁰ Irina Moroianu Zlatescu, Ioan Oancea, *Rights of persons belonging to national minorities*, Autonomous Registry Official Gazette, Bucharest, 1993, p. 20-21.

In fulfilling its primary objective for developing relations with a representative civil society segment, *the State Secretariat for Cults* offers expertise in religious life to facilitate the development of good relations between religious cults and public authorities, develops public policy strategies and policies in the field of religious life, ensuring *compliance with national and international law on freedom of religion*. In its efforts to promote religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue, the adoption and implementation of specific legislation on religious life is carried out by consulting religious cults when legislative changes affecting their work occur.

Ensuring the relationship between the State and the cults, the State Secretariat for Cults is the institution that provides financial support for the salary of the clergy and for the construction and repair of places of worship, the support of cults in social, educational and charitable programs, in cooperation with public authorities, some activities to restore the ecclesial space to promote and enhance the historical monuments that are the property of the cults.

The State Secretariat for Cults elaborates and ensures the implementation of the strategy and policies in the field of religious life. In its activity, *the State Secretariat for Cults ensures the observance and promotion of fundamental rights and freedoms*, enshrined in the Romanian Constitution, republished, and by Law no. 489/2006 *on religious freedom and the general regime of denominations as well as the international treaties and conventions to which Romania is a party regarding the freedom of conscience and religious beliefs* and are guided by the fundamental principle according to which the cults recognized by the law are free, autonomous and equal before the state authorities.

Observing the structure of believers within religious organizations in our country, one can easily ascertain that the majority of Romania's population, representing about 86.5% of the population, has self-declared membership and membership of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which attests to the fact that in Romania has a majority church, a Church whose history is identified with the history of the Romanian people, deeply involved in the emergence of the modern Romanian nation. The fact that the Romanian Orthodox Church is a majority church is a social, cultural and educational reality. Characterized by ethnic and religious diversity, in Romania ethnic communities do not overlap with religious ones, ethnic and religious pluralism being characterized by tolerance and mutual respect in the exercise of religious freedom, regardless of the belief shared by a particular religious group with respect to another.

Throughout its history, Europe has promoted and developed a true cult of *religious freedom as a fundamental right guaranteed by the constitution*.

In line with the current concerns about religious freedom, the promotion of peace and human dignity through religion, we exemplify the issues addressed on June 21, 2016, at the first working session of the Holy and Great Council of Crete²¹

²¹ The most important event of Orthodoxy in 2016 was the Holy and Great Council of Crete. It took place at the Orthodox Academy of Crete on June 16-26, 2016, under the presidency of His Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. The Delegation of the Romanian Patriarchate, led by His Beatitude Daniel, participated in all the proceedings of the Synod.

in which the document "Mission of the Church Romanian Orthodox Church in the Contemporary World, *Contribution of the Orthodox Church to Achieving Peace, Justice, Freedom, Fraternity and Love among Peoples and Removing Racial and Other Discrimination*"²², structured in 6 chapters and 45 paragraphs. Due to their relevance, we recall the themes dealt with in the six chapters:

- A. *Value of the human person*
- B. *Freedom and Responsibility*
- C. *About Peace and Justice*
- D. *Peace and Prevention of War*
- E. *The Orthodox Church in the face of discrimination*
- F. *The mission of the Orthodox Church as a testimony of love in service.*

Analyzing the document, the participants emphasized that the Orthodox Church contributed, contributed and will always contribute to achieving peace, justice, freedom, brotherhood and love among peoples, and removing all kinds of discrimination, showing that the Church is concerned with the state of all humanity and disapproves initiating and maintaining conflicting states in the world.

The document reveals that the Church does not remain indifferent to the problems of man all the time but, on the contrary, participates in his sufferings and his existential problems. This sustainable mission of the Church must not be carried out with aggressiveness or through various forms of proselytism, but with love, humility and respect for the identity of each person and the cultural particularity of each people. The Orthodox Church participates in the worries and fears that concern the contemporary man with regard to fundamental existential problems, wanting to contribute to their resolution, so that divine peace, reconciliation, and love can master the world.

A. *Value of the human person*

The teaching of the Church is the inexhaustible source of any Christian effort to defend the value and dignity of the human person. On this basis, intercultural cooperation is indispensable in all areas, to defend the value of man and, of course, to the same extent, the good of peace, so that the pacifist efforts of all Christians, without exception, gain more weight and power. The common recognition of the high value of the human person can serve as a prerequisite for a wider collaboration in this field. Orthodox Churches can contribute to understanding and interreligious cooperation through peaceful coexistence and social coexistence of peoples, without involving any kind of religious syncretism. It is also expressed the belief that only working on the basis of Christian values can ensure progress for the benefit of human society, at local, national and international level.

B. *Freedom and Responsibility*

The consequences of independence from God and its tragic consequences are the imperfections and shortcomings that prevail in the contemporary world:

²² <http://basilica.ro/sfantul-si-marele-sinod-misiunea-bisericii-in-lumea-contemporana>.

secularization, violence, degradation of moral life, negative phenomena such as drug scourges and other forms of addiction, especially among young people today, racism, armed struggle, wars and social catastrophes caused by them, oppression of social groups, religious communities and entire peoples, social inequalities, limitation of human rights in the field of freedom of conscience and, in particular, freedom of religion, misinformation and manipulation public opinion, economic poverty, disproportionate distribution or complete absence of essential goods for living, famine affecting millions of people, forced population deportations and trafficking in human beings, refugee crisis, environmental damage, use uncontrolled genetic biotechnology and biomedicine at the beginning, during and at the end of human life. All this sustains the endless anguish in which today's humanity struggles and leads to the degradation of the notion of human person. Freedom without responsibility and without love ultimately leads to the loss of freedom.

C. About Peace and Justice

The Orthodox Church recognizes and diachronically highlights the centrality of peace and justice in people's lives. Christian peace is the fruit of the dignity and greatness of the human person, the manifestation of the organic unity of the human race and of the world, the universality of the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice, and ultimately the birth of Christian love between people and peoples of the world. True peace is the fruit of the fulfillment on earth of all Christian ideals. It is the peace for which the Orthodox Church always prays. At the same time, the spiritual gifts of peace and justice also depend on the involvement of the man seeking peace and justice, in order to avoid their conflicts, discourses, crimes, wars and their tragic consequences. The Orthodox Church encourages all that is truly in the service of peace and which paves the way for justice, brotherhood, true freedom and mutual love among all peoples that constitute the human family, supporting all people from different parts of the world who are deprived of the good of peace and justice.

D. Peace and Prevention of War

The Orthodox Church condemns the war in general, which it regards as a destructive threat to creation and life. Especially in the case of wars with weapons of mass destruction, the consequences would be terrible, not only because they cause the death of an incalculable number of human beings, but, moreover, because survivors' lives would become unbearable. These would cause incurable diseases, genetic mutations and other negative effects that would seriously affect future generations. Not only nuclear weapons are very dangerous, but also chemical and biological weapons, and all forms of weapons, which create an illusion of supremacy and domination over the surrounding world. This type of weapon maintains a climate of fear and lack of confidence and is the cause of a new arms race.

At the same time, the Orthodox Church encourages any initiative and effort to avoid and prevent war, through dialogue and any other appropriate means. If the war becomes inevitable, the Church will continue to take care of all people involved in military conflicts to defend their lives and freedom, making every effort to restore peace as quickly as possible, firmly condemning all forms of conflict and wars, motivated by fanaticism, based on religious principles. The continuing trend of increasing oppressions and persecutions against Christians and other communities because of their beliefs in the Middle East and elsewhere, and the uprooting of Christianity in its cradle of history, provokes profound concern. Thus, existing inter-religious and international relations are threatened and, at the same time, many Christians are forced to leave their homes. Orthodox people worldwide suffer with their Christian brothers and all other persecuted in this region and call for a fair and permanent solution to the problems in the region. The Orthodox Church also condemns the wars caused by nationalism, as well as those that cause ethnic cleansing, changes in state borders and occupation of territories.

E. The Orthodox Church in the face of discrimination

The Orthodox Church disapproves of violence and injustice and condemns inhuman behavior towards other people, such as hatred, hostility or intolerance. The position of the Orthodox Church on this subject is very clear: the Orthodox Church encourages the removal of any barrier to hostility and prejudice, confessing that every human being – regardless of color, religion, race, gender, nationality or language, has equal rights in society. According to his teachings, the Church refuses discrimination under the above-mentioned forms, which imply a difference in dignity among persons. Respecting the principles of human rights and equal treatment of men, the Church seeks to apply principles of family and Christian values in general. The Church has the right to testify about its teaching in public space.

F. The mission of the Orthodox Church as a testimony of love in service.

The Orthodox Church actively cares for all people in need, the hungry, the poor, the sick, the disabled, the elderly, the oppressed, the captives, the prisoners, the homeless, orphans, victims of armed catastrophes and conflicts, trafficking in human beings, and any contemporary form of slavery. The efforts of the Orthodox Church contribute to overcoming extreme poverty and social injustice and can cooperate with all social institutions in the whole diversity of its social service. Antagonisms and hostilities in the world lead to injustice and inequality, depriving millions of people of essential necessities and leading to the impoverishment of human personality. They cause massive population migrations, give rise to ethnic, religious and social conflicts, threatening the internal cohesion of human societies. The Church can not remain indifferent to the economic processes that negatively affect all mankind. The Church insists on the need to establish the economy on moral principles.

The gap between the rich and the poor deepens dramatically because of the economic crisis, which is usually the result of uncontrolled speculation by some representatives of financial circles, the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a small number of people and an economic activity perverted, which, being unjust and human sensible, does not ultimately serve the real needs of mankind. A viable economy is an economy that combines efficiency with justice and social solidarity. Under these tragic conditions, it is understood the immense responsibility of the Church in the fight against hunger and all forms of poverty in the world. This phenomenon of our age, when countries live in a globalized economy system, highlights the grave identity crisis of the modern world. Famine endangers life itself for entire peoples, and affects the high dignity of the human person. It is a duty of all the Orthodox Churches to show solidarity and to organize aid in an efficient manner to people in need.

The Orthodox Church promotes the principle of human solidarity and more intense cooperation of peoples and states for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, while being concerned about the imposition on humankind of an increasingly consuming way of life, Christian moral values. In this sense, consumerism, combined with secularized globalization, tends to lead peoples to the loss of their spiritual roots, their historical memory, and the forgetting of traditions. Mass media (media) often fall under the control of the ideology of liberal globalism and become the promoters of a consuming ideology and immorality. Cases of unrealistic, even blasphemous, treatment of religious values cause discord and revolt within society, triggering some anxiety. The Church draws attention to the danger of manipulating consciences through the media and their use not for the rapprochement between people and peoples but for their manipulation.

The Church is increasingly confronted with manifestations of secularization. The willingness of a steady increase in prosperity and unbridled consumption inevitably leads to a disproportionate use of natural resources and their exhaustion. The current ecological crisis, which is linked to climate change and global warming, makes it imperative for the Church to contribute to protecting the world against the effects of human greed, leading to man's spiritual impoverishment and destruction of the environment. Thus, the Orthodox Church emphasizes the need to protect the environment by cultivating man's responsibility towards it, noting that not only current but also future generations have the right to natural goods. The Orthodox Church appreciates the scientific research capacity of the world, but it also highlights the dangers of certain scientific achievements. The scientist is free to do research, but he must interrupt research when human and human principles are violated. This view of the Church proves to be indispensable for many reasons for the correct delimitation of freedom and for the exploitation of the fruits of science in almost all its fields, and especially in biology, where both successes and risks are expected.

Over the past few years, the rapid development of biology, as well as related biotechnology, has been noted. Many of these achievements are considered beneficial to man, although they cause moral dilemmas, while others are considered unacceptable. The Orthodox Church considers that man is not a simple ensemble of cells, tissues and organs, and that it is not determined solely by biological factors. Man should be treated with due respect. Recognizing this fundamental principle leads us to the conclusion that both the scientific research and the practical application of new discoveries and inventions must protect the absolute right of every man to be treated with respect and honor at every stage of his life. Research must take into account moral and spiritual principles.

In these times of secularization, one can notice especially the confusion between liberty and libertinism, which ultimately leads to increased crime, destruction and the disappearance of respect for human freedom. A special attention of the Church is directed towards the continual education of youth and the crediting of responsibility to the family institution as a union between a man and a woman. This is especially true in the context of attempts to legalize in certain countries and the theological justification in some Christian communities of cohabitation opposed to tradition and Christian teaching. In the contemporary world, as in all times, the Church proposes love as the only way to a world of peace, justice, freedom and solidarity between people and peoples.

Another recent example of promoting peace and human dignity through religion is the Christmas Message of 2017, of His Holiness Bartholomew, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. In His Message, His Holiness draws attention to the social problems of the world and regrets that, in the face of the tragic experiences of violence, wars and exploitation of people, „we do not learn history or want to learn”. Patriarch Bartholomew reminded in the same message that in 2018 70 years will come from the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which contains the highest ideals of mankind and which should be respected by every people and state and finds, unfortunately, „The violation of this Declaration continues, while various misconduct and intentional misconduct of human rights undermine their observance and realization²³”:

„Unfortunately, „Christ is born” is heard again in a world full of violence, dangerous conflicts, social inequality, and violation of fundamental human rights. In 2018, seventy years have passed since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which, after the terrible experiences and catastrophes of the Second World War, has demonstrated the highest common ideals that all peoples and states have to respect without exception. However, violation of this Declaration continues, while various misconduct and intentional misconduct of human rights undermine their observance and realization. We keep learning from history or wanting to learn. Neither the tragic experiences of violence and the reduction of the human person

²³ <http://basilica.ro/in-mesajul-de-craciun-patriarhul-ecumenic>.

nor the proclamation of supreme ideals prevented the continuation of violence and wars, the divinization of power, and the exploitation of man by man. Neither the power of technical means, nor the extraordinary achievements of science, nor economic progress have brought the social justice and the much desired peace. Instead, our indulgence in the age is increasing, and globalization destroys the conditions of social cohesion and peace. The Church can not ignore these threats against the human person. We fight for human dignity, for the defense of freedom and justice”.

We consider that the two examples presented above confirm and strengthen the role of religious freedom in promoting peace and human dignity as active and responsible religious manifestations.