

On the Way Homily – 29th April 2026

“All because of Religion!”

Religion, Violence, and the Need for Transfiguration

Psalms 85:7–10; Luke 9: 29, 31, 34–35

Introduction

This week, the world woke again to the sound of sirens, missiles, and funerals in the Middle East—Israel, Iran, Lebanon, and the United States locked in a spiral of retaliation. Each side claims justice. Each side invokes God. Each side believes it is right. And so, the old accusation returns: **“All because of religion.”**

But is that really true? Let us begin by defining our key terms.

Religion comes from the Latin *religare*—*to bind together, to unite*.

Violence comes from the Latin *vis*—*force, the power to compel*.

Transfiguration comes from the Latin *transfigurare*—*to change form, to be transformed from within*.

So, Religion is meant to bind.

Violence forces.

Transfiguration transforms.

Yet history—from the Crusades to modern terrorism, from sectarian wars in Europe to conflicts in the Middle East—shows that what is meant to bind can be twisted into force.

So tonight, we ask three questions:

1. **Is religion the cause of violence—or the excuse for it?**
2. **Why do human beings turn faith into conflict?**
3. **What would true transfiguration look like—in us, and in our world?**

Let us reflect together using the dialectic method of Socrates:

Thesis. Antithesis. Synthesis.

Thesis: Religion Causes Violence

This accusation is familiar: Religion divides. Religion radicalises. Religion kills.

History seems to support this claim.

The Thirty Years' War in Europe killed millions in the name of Christian doctrine.

The Partition of India in 1947 left over a million dead amid Hindu-Muslim tensions.

Today, sacred language still fuels political violence.

Even Scripture can be misused.

People quote God to justify hatred. They weaponise identity. They sanctify revenge.

In essence, Religion can become dangerous when it is fused with power, fear, and identity.

Philosopher René Girard argued that societies often unite by creating an enemy—a scapegoat. Religion, when distorted, can bless that scapegoat mechanism.

But a sword raised in God's name does not prove devotion—it often reveals insecurity.

Yes—religion can indeed be used to justify violence. But as we can intuitively notice, that is not necessarily the whole truth.

Antithesis: Religion Is Not the Cause—The Human Heart Is

Socrates would now challenge the first claim.

If religion causes violence, why do secular ideologies also produce mass killing?

The 20th century witnessed the bloodiest conflicts in history—many driven not by religion, but by nationalism, racism, or political ideology.

The problem is not necessarily religion.

The problem is the human condition.

Psalm 85 tells us: “**Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.**”

Violence happens when those virtues are separated.

In essence, Religion does not create violence—human fear, pride, and insecurity do.

Saint Augustine called this *disordered love*—loving power more than truth, identity more than humanity.

For illustrative purpose: A knife can prepare a meal or commit murder. The tool is neutral. The intention determines the outcome.

As such, Religion is not the disease. The disease is the untransformed heart.

Synthesis: The Need for Transfiguration

Now we arrive at the turning point.

In Luke 9, Jesus climbs a mountain.

There, his appearance changes.

His face shines.

His clothes become dazzling white.

The Transfiguration is not an escape from the world.

It is a revelation of what humanity can become.

Not destroyed. Not divided. But transformed.

In essence, Peace will not come merely through diplomacy or power.

It requires inner transformation—personal and collective.

Every great civilization has discovered this very truth:

- **Confucius** taught moral self-cultivation
- **The Buddha** taught liberation from destructive desire
- **Socrates** taught examination of the self
- **Jesus** taught transformation of the heart

Violence ends not when enemies disappear, but when hatred loses its grip.

For instance, Nelson Mandela emerged from prison without revenge.

Martin Luther King Jr. faced hatred with nonviolence.

These were moments of transfiguration in history.

So, it is safe to say and believe that the world changes when people change.

Conclusion

To conclude, let us answer our three introductory questions.

So, is religion the cause of violence?

No. It is often the language used to justify deeper fears.

Why do human beings turn faith into conflict?

Because untransformed hearts seek power, certainty, and control.

What would true transfiguration look like?

A transformation from fear to compassion, from revenge to reconciliation, from division to communion.

Psalm 85 gives us the vision: **“Righteousness and peace kiss each other.”**

That is the world God desires. And it begins not on battlefields, but in hearts.

I leave you with three more questions for us to reflect on:

- Where in our lives are we confusing conviction with hostility?
- Where are we tempted to defend God instead of reflecting God?
- What would need to change in us for peace to begin?

Amen.