

**2017 London, Association of Parliamentarian for Peace, Nina Nováková**



Ladies and gentlemen, I am very honoured to be here today.

Let me introduce myself: I am a woman, white, Czech, catholic, European, mother, wife, teacher, politician, activist...

But what remains if we remove all characteristics and differences? What basic human qualities do we all share? And what values do we all embrace? I believe we all have in common the capacity to distinguish good and evil. Our humanness guides us toward choosing good, but to force anyone to be good is simply impossible.

To recognize evil may be difficult, the real world is not black and white like in fairy tales. We continue to learn this all our life and still our capacity remains imperfect. One step further is to resist evil and we often fail at this out of fear even though evil cannot bring us safety because there is no goodness in it.

Evil is committed by people and according to my faith and your faith we should treat all people with respect and fairness. But how can we help someone who serves evil purposes? By preventing them from committing evil acts. Irrespective of our religion, true faith teaches us that to confront evil means to protect both the victim and the aggressor.

We can learn to choose between right and wrong only in an environment of freedom – the freedom of thought, conscience and religion. We, from the former Eastern socialist bloc, could tell you a lot about this from our own personal experience.

The most important and valuable tool for evaluation of our acts is our conscience and we must constantly strive to cultivate it. We should listen to its voice, especially as decision-making politicians. I am sure that many of you, ladies and gentlemen, are now thinking: Why is she telling us all this? Because these essential truths are not self-evident anymore. We disregard them as relative and we pay too much attention to unimportant details instead.

All religious traditions, since time immemorial, agree on one universal method of evaluation of our actions, the so-called golden rule: Treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself. We should never forget this or shy away from saying it out loud.

Nowadays we ignore ethical considerations. Ethics lead us to a willingness to set limits – to ourselves, not to others. The ambition of science to understand the world should be limitless but application of technology should have limits. To seek economic profit is good, but to destroy people and the environment in the process is wrong. To strive for a position of influence and authority is legitimate but no politician, no cleric, no leader can ever place themselves above and beyond good and evil.

Thank you for your attention.

**Nina Nováková, Central European Inspiration**