

HOMILY FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY 2019

On this Third Sunday after Trinity, the appointed scriptures draw our attention to the need, and the importance of peace. One word that occurs and is repeated in all three readings today is “peace”.

Isaiah, in the First Reading, speaks of God sending “flowing peace, like a river” upon Jerusalem. Paul in the conclusion of his letter to the Galatians, speaks of the peace and mercy that come to all who are transformed by their encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. Throughout the entirety of his epistles Paul reminds us that Jesus Christ is the source of our peace. And, in the Gospel, Jesus sends his disciples as lambs in the midst of wolves, and tells them to proclaim peace and to bring peace with them to every house they enter.

One of our most natural and fundamental human desires is to live a peaceful life. So let us begin by asking what is peace? Peace is not merely the absence of war or maintaining balance of power between adversaries. No, Peace is the tranquility of stability and order, it is the effect of justice and it is the effect of charity.

Ordinarily one would expect that with all the scientific discoveries and inventions in our world, that humanity would be enjoying more peace and harmony. The secular, liberal humanist narrative about peace tells us that peace will blossom on the earth when there is a new world order of universal justice, equality, and opportunity for all. Its a nice concept but it has to be said, this is a utopian dream and nothing more, because this sort of ideal fails completely to understand and accept the fallen nature of mankind. Human endeavour must indeed strive to contain warfare, promote a just sharing of the earth’s resources so that poverty privation and ignorance are reduced and we must play our part in all of that. However, that said, the peace that is spoken of in today’s scripture readings is no secular utopian dream, neither is it a call to international effort via the United Nations or any other world organisation for that matter.

The peace that is proclaimed in the scriptures is not dependent on outside circumstances for it is the peace that comes from knowing the saving power of the cross of Jesus Christ at work in our lives. It is an interior peace that began with our baptism and incorporation into the household of the redeemed. It continues with our confirmation when God’s grace bestowed upon us the gifts of the Holy Spirit to strengthen us in our life of faith. One of those seven fold gifts being --- the gift of

peace. The peace of Christ within us continues with our participation in the celestial banquet – the Glorious Eucharist - where week by week and even day by day we receive the body, blood, soul and divinity of Him who died that we may have life and have it to the full.

If we destroy our Christian life by deliberate sin, once again through the sacrament of Confession, Jesus Christ restores the penitent Christian to his peace through the sublime gift of forgiveness. How blessed it is to know, first hand, the inner peace that flows from God's forgiveness. What a wonderful life is the life of grace in God's holy church. It is the life of true joy, happiness and peace.

It can exist even when we are surrounded by storms. It is the peace Jesus experienced after his prayer in the garden. It is the peace Jesus experienced on the cross in the midst of sufferings. It is the peace that Paul experienced, even though he most certainly had his own share of the "cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" and bore in his own body the marks of Jesus' pain and suffering. The scars on the back of St Paul would have been a most terrible and confronting sight for five times he received the 39 lashes and three times he was beaten with iron rods. That cruel punishment could not erase the peace of Christ from his heart

Yes, our task as Christians is to be bringers of peace. It is not the peace of ... "oh, for goodness sake couldn't we all just agree to be nice to each other?" That's the utopian peace of liberal humanism. The peace that Christians have to offer is the inner peace that a close following of Jesus brings to every aspect of our lives.

Today's Gospel tells us that we too have the task to proclaim the kingdom of peace. We have been made part of God's family and we have the responsibility to reach out to God's children because we have a strength, we have a purpose, we have a certain hope we have God's peace within us. Jesus wants us to rejoice, not simply in what has been done in the past but in the fact that through God's grace we are working out our salvation by being part of the kingdom of peace. We have come to the fullness of life in the presence of the living God and we are all invited to be instruments of his peace.

Finally, the peace of Christ is truly something precious and golden. Like joy, it is contagious. Let Peace then be our greeting and peace be our hallmark. May the God of peace be in our hearts and on our lips, in our homes and in our daily lives today and every day.