

Homily For Tuesday of the 29th Week of Ordinary Time- Year II

St Peter's 8:30am Mass - Oct. 20, 2020

Eph 2:12-22 "You were without Christ, strangers to covenant promises ... But he proclaimed peace."

Psalm 85:8-13 "The Lord speaks of peace to his people. Righteousness and peace will kiss each other."

Luke 12:35-38 "Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit ... waiting for your master to return."

Peace the World Cannot Give

Introduction

We know that one of the great biblical themes of the bible is peace. Where does peace come from and how does it get established? Even in the secular world, there is constant concern about peace, with references to situations of violence and unrest. It's not a word but we could call it 'unpeace'. Sometimes we will hear that peace has been restored, at least temporarily. But we know that usually just means that some people were arrested and everyone else went home. There is not a true peace or unity.

Caesar Augustus was called the bringer of peace and unity. That was the 'Pax Romana'. We know, and everyone who was part of that empire knew, that the peace was only a lack of open conflict, enforced by the military after a violent conquest. It certainly was not peace of mind and heart for the subjects.

We can speak of peace and unity from two perspectives. First is between groups, peoples, nations. The other is peace of mind and heart, an internal peace which does not depend on what is going on outside.

Psalm

We can start today with the beautifully expressed words of the psalmist, who addresses the question: From where does peace come? The Lord 'speaks' peace to his people. From where does peace come? From the Lord. How do we experience it? By listening to the Lord who speaks. From this listening comes salvation itself. Being saved from disharmony and conflict. Righteousness and peace will kiss. That means a holy life is intimately joined to inner peace.

Ephesians

This is certainly the theme of this part of Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. Never mind Augustus, Christ IS our peace. In a mathematical equation, Christ = peace. It's a one to one relationship. There may be temporary calm outside of Christ but there is no true and lasting peace outside of Christ.

I think we can probably see that, even with Christ as our peace, that peace requires unity but will also lead to unity. This is what Paul is addressing to the Ephesians. The movement of the whole story of salvation history is summed up like this.

You Gentiles - that's us - used to be without Christ. Now you have Christ, in his flesh and in his blood. Of course, the Eucharist is the ongoing living reminder of that movement.

From two peoples - Gentiles and Jews - you are now one people in Christ. The dividing wall in the Jerusalem Temple separated the outer court of the Gentiles from the inner courts, where Israel alone could pray and sacrifice. Signs warned of that trespassers would face the death penalty. This was a remnant of the symbol that Israel needed to separate itself from the idolatry of the nations. Gentiles are not becoming Jews. Rather God in Christ has made peace, creating one group of two.

From far off you have come near. You were spiritually distant from God. From strangers you have become citizens. Paul mentions all the covenant promises. Those covenants were with the people of Israel, whom God chose to be caretakers of God's promises until that time when all the nations of the world and all people would be blessed. Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, all were parties to those covenants. Through those covenants, the blessing of God expanded from an individual, to a family, to a tribe, to an enslaved people of 12 tribes, to a nation and finally, to all nations through the final covenant, sealed in the body and blood of Jesus Christ, lived out in his Church, which is like an incredible building, of which Christ is the corner stone, or foundation.

Israel could no longer contain the richness of the covenant relationship. It explodes and spills over the sides of that container.

Luke

In the Gospel parable from Jesus today, there is a master who is going to return from a wedding. He's not coming home to go to bed though. He is taking the celebration with him, to all those who were not there, who were 'far off' to use Paul's language. But, if they – WE – are ready to receive him, who is the Lord himself, we will experience the fullness of life that brings peace and unity. Not only that, the master will put on his serving clothes and serve us. That is what he does on the cross. And, if we are ready to receive it, the blessings of the cross will be ours.

Call To Action

The paradox is in the fact that adequate preparation is the result of letting go of worldly concerns and values. The prepared person will not be attached to the concerns of this life.

We are consumed with trivialities, things which lessen our attentiveness. Our culture, let's face it, is not spiritual and, if we attach ourselves too closely to the things of the culture, we will not be spiritually ready for the master when he comes. Let us conclude with Mary Margaret's words: Keep your heart in peace and let nothing trouble you, not even your faults. You must humble yourself and amend them peacefully, without being discouraged or cast down, for God's dwelling is in peace.

Key Scripture Passages

Ephesians: *Brothers and sisters, as Gentiles, remember that you were without Christ, aliens from Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace. In his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall that is the hostility between us ... that he might create in himself one new humanity, making peace through the cross. So, Christ came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. So then you are citizens with the saints, members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.*

Psalms: *The Lord will speak peace to his people. His salvation is at hand for those who fear him. Righteousness and peace will kiss each other. The Lord speaks of peace to his people.*

Luke: *Jesus said to the disciples: Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit. Be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet. Blessed are those whom the master finds alert. Truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.*

Margaret Mary Alacoque: *Keep your heart in peace and let nothing trouble you, not even your faults. You must humble yourself and amend them peacefully, without being discouraged or cast down, for God's dwelling is in peace.*