May 26, 2019
Sixth Sunday of Easter 2019: “Inner Peace”
Deacon Dave Snyder

Reading 1 Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

Some who had come down from Judea were instructing the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved.” Because there arose no little dissension and debate by Paul and Barnabas with them, it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question.

The apostles and elders, in agreement with the whole church, decided to choose representatives and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. The ones chosen were Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers. This is the letter delivered by them:

“The apostles and the elders, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia of Gentile origin: greetings. Since we have heard that some of our number who went out without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind, we have with one accord decided to choose representatives and to send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we are sending Judas and Silas who will also convey this same message by word of mouth: ‘It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right. Farewell.’”

Reading 2 Revelations 21:10-14, 22-23

The angel took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal. It had a massive, high wall, with twelve gates where twelve angels were stationed and on which names were inscribed, the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites. There were three gates facing east, three north, three south, and three west. The wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation, on which were inscribed the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

I saw no temple in the city for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb. The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb.

Gospel John 14: 23-29

Jesus said to his disciples: “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me.

“I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

You heard me tell you, ‘I am going away and I will come back to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe.”

HOMILY

Peace – such a simple, positive word. But, don’t we live in a world that craves so much excitement that if we described ourselves as peaceable, peace-loving, peacemaker, or even calm, some
might consider our lives to be lacking in excitement and adventure, and maybe even … borderline boring. But, it’s something we long for, inside and out, isn’t it. In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus told His disciples while at the Last Supper, and He tells us, His disciples at our Eucharistic celebration today, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” Where IS the peace today in our world, our nation, our neighborhoods, our families, even our own lives? What is this peace that Jesus gives, and what is the peace that the world tries to give us that Jesus refers to?

I can try to speak from my own personal experience. As a youngster with 5 younger siblings, including 4 brothers, peace meant trying to stay out of trouble, or at least trying to not get blamed for something when there was trouble, whether you did it or not – sorry, Lord!! Peace meant doing what you were told to do, by parents, teachers, or anyone in authority, and not arguing about it. Growing older, peace took on different meanings – with new stresses of college, finances … new friends, job, more finances … wife and children, still more finances … newer friends, house, less free time … and even more finances. We all look for peace in our own ways – I certainly found joy and some personal fulfillment being around family, and friends, and trying to do the right thing. To relieve daily stress, I looked towards building things, real small things like … a shed … a tree-house … a patio … and even remodeled a fairly large room. And I buried myself into gardening (pun intended). Alongside that, Barb and I got quite involved with the pro-life movement, with its own joys and stresses. Then, as many a gardener gets to find out, the deer and other wildlife, insects, temperature fluctuations, weeds, you name it, took over. Gardening was no longer fun, no longer … my peace. About that time, I realized that God was calling me … to the diaconate. God, who I had thought of as more of an impersonal authority figure, was calling … me. So, I sensed the presence of God in my life in a much different, a much stronger, a more personal way. I prayed more, and differently. I developed an internal sense of peace, depending on God to help me make decisions, to help me understand better the curve balls thrown by circumstances in life, to help me enjoy life, friends, family, events, and the beauty of God’s creation in a much more peaceful, deeper way … to help me understand my relationship with God in a better way. If I asked myself, “Where or how do I find peace,” or “What gives me true peace,” I would answer, “When I sense the presence of God, especially in extraordinary ways,” and, “in the quiet of the day, when I can turn my thoughts to God’s Will.”

But, how would others answer? Very recently, I posed those same questions, “Where or how do you find peace,” or “What gives you peace,” to numerous adults and some children, from different venues. Not surprisingly, the venue set the stage for expected answers, especially for the adults. At a private baptism I presided at, answers around family were preferred, but answers concerning God were a close second. For people who attend Eucharistic Adoration, answers centering on God were the overwhelming choices. For other adults, including some family and others, the answers were generally split among family, God, and relaxation. Overall, specific answers which did NOT mention God included:

- Traveling around the world, seeing the beauty of the world
- The health and safety of family
- The laughter and happiness of grandchildren
- Witnessing family and friends getting along
- Spending time with family and loved ones, enjoying their relationships
- Relaxing while going to sleep or having their hair combed
- Enjoying a scotch and cigar in the backyard
- Creating things, playing the guitar, reading a good book, having balance in life
- Enjoying a quiet morning
I know that many of those who responded above are religious and church-going but they sense peace in a
different way than adults who provided more God-centered answers, answers such as:

- Going to church each week
- Appreciating God’s blessings
- Leading a Christ-centered life, practicing what He asks of us
- Sitting in front of the tabernacle, Adoration
- Quiet time after receiving the Eucharist
- Praying while running and refocusing while doing so
- Meditating, thinking of Jesus’ life and all that He did, via praying the rosary, Creed, etc
- Witnessing family staying with the faith
- Knowing they are doing God’s Will
- The sacrament of Reconciliation, having a clear conscience
- Enjoying the beauty of God’s creation
- The belief that God is present through all things, is always there, no matter what

Other answers from the adults that are worth thinking about included:

- Don’t know, haven’t had it in a long time
- Nothing at all

From the youngsters, we have the following:

- When it’s quiet, being alone
- Reading, music, doing “stuff” (whatever “stuff” is)
- Eating a good meal (hopefully the youngster heard peace and not peas)
- Enjoying “epic” video games (maybe some youngster can explain to me how that is peaceful)
- Sleeping without nightmares
- Spending time with their pet (dog)
- Being with family and feeling safe
- Playing soccer to learn focus and hard work

And, from a future pope:

- Going to God’s house and loving Jesus

I might guess that many of you would have similar answers to those on these lists. I haven’t found
polls on peace, but other polls show that people look for joy by having more money, better job and career
advancement, fancier clothes, cars, etc. But, none of that was mentioned in our lists. Adults who
responded to my questions saw a difference between the two, between worldly joy and inner peace.

So, what kind of peace would the world bring? Think about it. The world can advertise a false
and fleeting sense of peace, through the abuse of sex, drugs, alcohol … it can advertise numbing of
physical and emotional pain, through opioids and other drugs … it can advertise the freedom to do what
you want with your body, and pay the consequences later … it can advertise laws which increasingly
infringe on religious freedoms and rights … it can advertise a “me first” attitude with less regard for the
“other”, whether that “other” is immigrant, unborn, aged.

However, that inner peace offered by Jesus can be found by a real relationship with Him, as many
of the respondents have suggested and even found. That inner peace can be found by prayer – at home, at
Eucharistic Adoration, in the car, during lunch breaks, wherever. That inner peace can be found in truly
understanding and participating in the sacraments, including Reconciliation. That inner peace can be
found through the diocesan Project Rachel program, if you have been affected by an abortion, either
directly or indirectly. That inner peace can be found by helping others on their faith journey and helping
them find their inner peace. That inner peace can be found by seeing the face of Jesus in each other and trying to help in a practical way when needed. That inner peace can be found in understanding the love which God has for each and every one of us, so much love that He gave His only-begotten Son Who died so that we may have everlasting life. That inner peace is offered by Jesus, who IS peace – He offers the only peace that is truly long-lasting, a peace that is eternal. That inner peace is offered by Jesus to each of us, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.”

As a final note on this Memorial Day weekend, please appreciate that we can also talk about peace through relaxation, and enjoying family and friends, and the beauty of the world, with little worry about our freedom, because of the heroic sacrifices that others have made for us to be free. Those are the celebrations to have this weekend.

Peace be with you.