

Voluntas Dei
Team Lesson, June 2019

“To Build Peace” – the work of Easter and Pentecost

Prayer:

Leader – Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful

All – Enkindle in us the fire of your love

Leader – Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created

All – And, you shall renew the face of the Earth!

Introduction:

In the Gospel of John the resurrected Jesus greets his disciples with the word “Peace.” Appearing a second time in the upper room, now with Thomas present, he again greets them with the words “Peace be with you!” The Pentecost event, begun with the outpouring of water and blood from his side on the cross, the resurrected Jesus breathes on the disciples a Spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. The Easter gift of peace becomes the mission of the disciples by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. Easter faith brings us to the feast of Pentecost, a mission for us to live for the remainder of the Church year until Advent’s “new year of grace.” We do well then to reflect on Fr. Parent’s words, “To Build Peace” (*In the Footsteps of Jesus*, pp 132-135).

First Reflection:

“Vatican II affirms ‘*It is altogether necessary that international institutions cooperate to a better and surer extent and that they be coordinated.*’ (Gaudium et Spes, no. 83) After the Council, new organisms for promoting peace sprang up all over the world. Nevertheless, we must ask if we are not seeking only worldly peace. Christians must go beyond that, realizing that as sowers of peace, they must strive to calm agitated nerves, to bring light to distraught minds, to channel dispersed energies and to guide people toward unity.

We do not all have the ability to create organizations, but we can endeavor first of all to bring out the best in ourselves, our family and our work milieu. Each of us can become an animator of peace in the family, in the team, in the community and in society. Each of us can unite ourselves to the Church in order to bring out the best in the parishes, dioceses and communities, which can be marvelously focused organisms of peace. But perhaps they need to be renewed, to examine the quality of their witness or to rebuild their image so that it will be more attractive.”

Discussion:

In what ways does my participation in Voluntas Dei help generate a sense of peace in my life?

What are some concrete experiences where the spirituality of Voluntas Dei has enabled me to bring the gift of peace – to family, work, parish, society?

Second Reflection:

“Peace is quite demanding; it needs the actual presence of God. Often, it requires a continuity of concentration. We must admit that peace is not like winning a big lottery prize: we do not receive it once and for all. It is not acquired without attentive efforts; it cannot always resist the daily blows of life. Peace depends on the person in whom it is incarnated; it can have different degrees and suffer fluctuations or misadventures. We must watch over it carefully and attentively each day.

Peace must be cultivated every hour of the day. To make progress is to begin again daily; it is to count our victories and our happy experiences; it is to share and to be enriched by the lives of others.”

Discussion:

How does a consciousness of the presence of God contribute to receiving the gift of peace? How does it help one to be the gift of peace?

Do you have a practice to “count your victories and happy experiences?” If so, what is your practice?

Third Reflection:

“... [T]he question here is what does Jesus want of his disciples? What does he say in the Gospel? What does he illustrate by his daily behavior?

One thing is certain: he wants us to be *sowers of peace*. There are numerous ways of succeeding; I suggest one which has proved itself efficacious and continues to be efficacious: the way of the five attitudes for meeting Jesus.

1. Presence of God
2. Absence of criticism
3. Absence of complaint
4. Being of service
5. To be a sower of peace.

To succeed in the first four steps which are attitudes of the heart makes us sowers of peace, specialists in the love of neighbor, adults in faith, imitators of Christ and Mary – his mother and ours... The indifferent or tepid Christian who neglects thinking of God and referring to him, who acts according to circumstances like an automaton without a goal, who pays little attention to sowing peace is overtaken by spiritual arteriosclerosis, by a spirit of criticism and complaint.

Let us realize that the Lord wants us to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace (cf. Eph 4:3), that peace is inexplicable and marvelous and surpasses the powers of the intelligence (cf. Phil 4:7)...

Perhaps we have the impression that we will never have much success. All the same, what counts is to remain attached to Jesus and to carry out the daily tasks which he asks of us.

Discussion:

Try to give an example of how the practice of one or more of the first four steps/attitudes has given you the gift of peace.

Try to give an example of how the practice of one or more of the first four steps/attitudes has enabled you to be a sower of peace.

Closing Prayer:

*Lord, to love you by living in your presence,
This is what you ask of me.*

*Lord, to love you by respecting my neighbor,
By finding your presence in them,
By avoiding criticism,
This is what you desire of me.*

*Lord, to love you by discovering you in my work,
In events and objects,
By being caught up in the wonder of you,
This is what you desire of me.*

*Lord, to love you by serving others,
By being your docile instrument,
By surrendering myself totally to you,
This is your plan for me.*

*Lord, to savor peace,
To be animated by your serenity,
To taste your joy deep within me,
To sense you in my whole being:
This is what I receive from you. Amen*

- Fr. Parent, *In the Footsteps of Jesus*, p. 140.

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