

V TRINITY 2014
SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
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THE COLLECT / PETER 3.8

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God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding...keeps our hearts and minds safe...and helps us do our work quietly. World peace...may seem illusive.

If we had a window into the world of the 6th century, when the Collect read at the beginning of Mass was written, we should not be surprised to find out things were a mess. The Collect, which is one of the oldest in the Prayer Book, could have been written for us today. It is nothing short of an urgent plea to God to restore order to a chaotic world on the verge of self-destruction.

The Roman Empire of the 6th century was being attacked from enemies outside, and moral decay within. The Church was no longer relegated to celebrating the Mass in a hidden cave somewhere. But it too found itself victimized by forces beyond its control, and wondered how it would survive a world being torn apart by wars and hatred. And so they prayed...give us peace in our time, O Lord.

If all of this sounds familiar we should also not be surprised to know times haven't changed much in the last 1400 years. During the intercessions at every Sunday Mass we pray for those whom we love and have special needs. We also pray for peace in the troubled spots of the World and ask God to turn the hearts of the evildoers away from doing evil things that tear down and destroy, and toward doing good things that build up and promote peace.

We pray for peace in the world because we must...what goes on in the world affects the Church. Those of us who have been called to be the Ekklesia...the Church...are not immune from what is happening in the world around us. We are all affected by what happens in our own city and what happens half way around the World.

The World Peace we pray for starts with the inner peace we receive in knowing God himself has created a special covenant-relationship with us through his son, Jesus. It is that peace...which is far beyond our human understanding...that sustains us and guides us in our work...even in times of great adversity.

Peter knew what it was like to suffer and he tells us that even when we suffer for doing what is right, we should be happy! We should not be afraid or worry. When we do these things, we show reverence for Jesus in our hearts, and honor him as Lord. We want to do this because Jesus has given us the special gift of honoring us...by calling us to be his Church.

We honor Jesus when we ask God for peace in the world and in our hearts, so we may thankfully and joyfully go about doing his work. That is the difference between following Jesus and embracing hope and life, or giving up on everything and embracing hopelessness and death.

World peace may seem illusive but God's peace is not...we have it in our hearts, minds and souls now. It defines who we are as Christians and helps us do his work, and ultimately, everything we do is his work. We strive to do his work with patience and love even when the road ahead looks rough.

Let me share with you again something Mother Theresa of Calcutta once said about how we should go about doing our work:

- "People are often unreasonable and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.
- If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.
- If you are honest, people may cheat you. Be honest anyway.
- If you find happiness, people may be jealous. Be happy anyway.
- The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.
- Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway.
- For you see, in the end, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway."

And we must always pray for peace in our hearts...peace in the Church...and peace in our time...for the World.

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