

## V TRINITY 2016

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

#### FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

##### THE COLLECT 1 PETER 3.8

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Peace in the world...might seem elusive. In the Intercessions at every Sunday Mass we pray for peace in the world...asking God to change the hearts of evildoers from doing evil and destructive things into doing good and constructive things.

The Collect for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity is one of the oldest in the *Book of Common Prayer*. It was written in the 6<sup>th</sup> century during a time when the Roman Empire was being attacked from enemies outside...and moral decay and decadence within.

By the 6<sup>th</sup> century the Church largely operated above ground and Mass was no longer celebrated in hidden places. Christians were no longer subject to arrest and execution by hostile government agents because of their Faith in Jesus. But the Church was not immune from a World being torn apart by wars and hatred...how would it survive?

“The Times They Are a-Changin’” is a song recorded by Bob Dylan in 1963. The song became immensely popular because of its general theme about changes in society in the turbulent 1960s...people wanted peace and justice in the World. Less than one month after the song was released...President John Kennedy was assassinated. Some would say things have gotten worse and have given up all hope things will ever change for the better.

If we stop to think...the 6<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century worlds aren't all that different. While advances in technology and medicine help people live longer and fuller lives today...we still have a knack for perpetuating hatred and war. People haven't changed much in the last 1400 years...and we have gotten more efficient at wreaking havoc.

The Collect is a plea to God to keep peace in the World and in the Church. It is a profound prayer of hope. God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding...keeps our hearts and minds safe...and helps us do our work quietly. World peace...might seem elusive...but it begins when we allow God to change our hearts and minds and keep them grounded in love and doing good works.

It is that peace...which is far beyond our human understanding...that sustains us and guides us in our work. It is precisely in times of great adversity...when we are tempted to throw up our hands and say there is no hope...we must never give up hope...because to do so would validate evil and hand Satan a singular victory.

Peter tells us that when we are criticized for doing what is right...we should be happy! We should not be afraid or worry about the bad things people might say about us...nor should we try to get back at them. Jesus has called us to be *ecclesia*...his *Church*...his people gathered in his Name. 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 Jesus.

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. This is the difference between following Jesus and embracing hope, the Light that is Jesus, and the life he gives us...or giving up on everything and embracing hopelessness, darkness and death. Let's choose life not death.

World peace might seem elusive but God's peace is not...we have it in our hearts, minds and souls now. It defines who we are...it helps us do his work...and everything we do is his work...which we should do with great joy...it helps us love each other and strive for peace within our Parish...and always pray for peace in the World...because that is God's wish.

The World and the Church face many challenges...especially for those who actively work for Peace...who confront those who seek to destroy Peace...and not give up hope. Saint Paul reminds us when he wrote to the Thessalonians...the Church is made up of people who hope and do not despair.

And may God's Peace, which passes all human understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of him and of his Son Jesus.

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