

Father Philip's Address to St Paul's Assembly

Thursday 14th November
Theme for the week: Peace

Philippians 4:6-9

'The God of peace will be with you'.

This is the promise that we heard in our reading today.

Peace – it is a word which we can look at in many different ways:

- it can be silence or stillness, such as when we look for a place we can have some peace away from other people;
- it can be something we look for in our mind, wanting to free our thoughts of distractions;
- and of course it is also when countries or people or groups are not at war or in disagreement.

In all of those examples, PEACE is an ABSENCE of something.

- An absence of noise
- An absence of distractions
- An absence of war

A video clip of Louis Delvoie – former Canadian High Commissioner to Pakistan, was shown. "What does peace mean to you?" The clip can be seen here:

<http://vimeo.com/66761068>

In tomorrow morning's reading at Assembly we will hear these words which Jesus said to his disciples:

My peace I give you.

'My peace I give you'.

If Jesus gave his disciples his Peace, was he giving them an ‘absence’ of something? Was he giving them a lack of war, or a lack of noise, or a lack of distractions?

Not at all! When Jesus gave his disciples his peace, he was giving them something active, something positive, something which was present.

There is a quote of which versions have been attributed to many different people through history, but the earliest I can find is by a man called Baruch Spinoza, a Dutch philosopher, who said:

“Peace is not a mere absence of war, but is a virtue that springs from a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice.”

So when we look at those different kinds of peace, there is another sort which we need to add to the list, and this morning I am going to call it by its Old Testament Hebrew word:

- *Shalom*

The city Jerusalem is really Yerushalem (Shalom) the City of PEACE.

The understanding of peace in the Bible, of the Hebrew word SHALOM is much more than the absence of war. It includes:

- Wholeness
- Prosperity
- Righteousness
- Justice

A video clip of Dr McKay – Canadian Historian, was shown. “What is your definition of peace?” The clip can be seen here:

<http://vimeo.com/66171430>

So our Christian and Biblical understanding of peace is one which is not just about living with other people without conflict, it is also about acting in a just and caring way, so that all people may come to know a life without fear or need.

Jesus said 'My peace I give you'. What he gave to his disciples is the gift and the grace to live in His name and to build His kingdom of love, justice and righteousness here on earth.

When we pray for peace, we quite rightly pray for those places in the world where there is war and violence or the threat of war and the results of war.

But to pray for peace in a way which understands the peace of Christ, is to pray for that gift of Jesus to be experienced and known by those who are living in a situation which is unjust, who are not experiencing wholeness or prosperity.

In our minds and in the news at the moment the situation in the Philippines is a big issue.

The loss of life as a result of Typhoon Haiyan, the devastation which has passed through parts of the country. We see the broken-ness, the poverty and the injustice which is in our world.

For them, we pray for peace at this time. For peace of heart and mind. For the people to be brought to wholeness and safety. For peace to be an active part of their life, building up their lives here on earth and allowing them to know the presence of Christ in their lives.

God, who quiets great winds and stills rough seas
We ask your protection for the people of the Philippines.
Comfort them in their fear.
Stay close to them in their danger.

Together with all your holy saints
may we may stand in solidarity with our Filipino brothers and sisters
through their darkest hour
through their longest night.

Give us the courage to remain steadfast
To reach out to them in their need
To comfort them in their sorrow
To hold them as closely as You hold them
that they may know Your peace.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.