

14TH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, C CYCLE, JULY 2-3, 2016

1st Reading: 2 Isaiah 66:10-14 [To her I extend peace like a river]

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 66 ["Let all the earth cry out to God with joy"]

2nd Reading: Galatians 6:14-18 [Peace and mercy be to all who follow the way of Christ]

Gospel: Luke 10:1-12, 14, 17-20 [The kingdom of God is at hand for you]

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

At that time the Lord appointed seventy two others whom he sent ahead of him two by two into every town and place he intended to visit.

He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.

Go on your way; and remember: I am sending you like lambs among wolves.

Carry no money bag, no luggage, no sandals and greet no one along the way with long salutations. Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.'

If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on them; but if not, it will return to you.

Stay in the same house and eat and drink what they offer you,

for the laborer deserves a wage. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you,

cure the sick in it. Say to them, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.'

Whatever town you enter and they do not welcome you, go out into the streets

and say, 'We shake the dust of your town from our feet in testimony against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand.'

I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town....

It will go easier for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you...

The seventy two returned rejoicing and said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name." Jesus said, "I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky.

Behold, I have given you the power to 'tread upon serpents' and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven.

The Gospel of the Lord

(Luke 10:1-12, 14, 17-20)

♪ Peace is flowing like a river, flowing out **to** you and me.

Flowing out into the desert, setting all the captives free. ♪

Did you notice that I changed one word of that song?

Instead of singing "*Peace is flowing out **of** or **through** you and me*",

[which are the words in most hymnals] I sang "*Peace is flowing out **to** you and me*"

I made that change to emphasize that peace is a grace,

a gift that we **receive** before we can give it.

In the 1st reading from Isaiah we heard the words, *"I will spread prosperity over Jerusalem like a river"* In another translation - one I use in my own prayer - it's *"To her I extend peace like a river"* and in the same reading we hear the words, *"As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you,"* which paints a picture of God as a mother. The message is that Peace will overflow for you as a gift from God, who loves you more than a mother.

The Responsorial Psalm celebrates that message as the work of God for us & in us. In the 2nd reading, Paul writes to the Galatians that peace and mercy will be the gifts given to all who follow the way of Christ and become a new creation.

And in the Gospel, Jesus sends his disciples out to bring peace and healing in his name. The peace that comes from God's love is a gift.

The message of Jesus, the Good News is first of all that we are loved before we have done anything to deserve it. As John writes in his first letter, it is not that we have loved God, but that God has loved us first. Or, as my friend Richard Rohr has said, "God doesn't love us because we are good, God loves us because *God* is good! We are good *because* God loves us."

That is what Paul is talking about when he says that circumcision - keeping the Jewish law - doesn't save you, what matters is becoming a new creation.

Everything is a gift, everything is grace.

But even though the gift is freely given, Jesus makes it clear that it must be welcomed and received as a gift, or it does us no good. Yet, from Adam & Eve until today, we try to own, hold on to, and control the gift of peace, the gift of life, the gift of freedom.

Once we have received the gift of peace, Jesus invites all of us who claim to be his followers to bring peace to the world. The gift is also a call & it rots if we don't give it away

And how do we keep peace flowing like a river - to us and through us?
I can sing that to you in words of Jesus himself:

♪ *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and God's righteousness,
And all these things shall be added unto you, Allelu, alleluia.* ♪

Jesus says in the Gospel for today, *"The Kingdom of God is at hand."* We hear it twice, so it must be important. Still, it will do us no good unless we welcome it into our hearts & our lives; it will do us no good unless we actively seek it.

To seek God's reign is to live the words of the Lord's Prayer,

"Your kingdom come, your will be done on *earth* as it is in heaven.

And what is this "Kingdom of God?" Another way of saying *"The Kingdom of God is at hand"* is to say, "The KIN-dom of God is at hand!" As another author would put it, "The life-giving network of God is at hand" [Brian McClaren, *Sojourners*, March 2006].

The message of the Gospel is that we are **all** kin to each other, since God is creator and father of all of us. The Kingdom of God [the KIN-dom of God] is wider than our individual salvation, it is broader than our own families or communities, it is bigger than our parish or our nation. It is even more than the particular church or spiritual network we call home. We say we believe that challenging good news whenever we pray, "OUR Father.



If we claim to live the values of Jesus, what we are called to proclaim, by deeds first and then in words, is that the peace of Christ is offered to every human person, and to the earth itself [as Pope Francis has so beautifully proclaimed].

The gift of peace has been given, it is *our* responsibility, our work, to accept it and pass it on.

Monday is the 4th of July - a day to celebrate freedom and peace. It is a day to remember the gifts that have come to us through our country.

Almost all of us are descended from people who came from other lands seeking freedom and peace. The parents of both my father and mother, many of your own relatives, and even Fr. Terry, your pastor [who came from Ireland] have been welcomed to this land. The Gospel we follow says that the gift of welcome is a call to welcome others.

Loving our homeland, true patriotism, is not about closing our borders and excluding those who are different. The ones who shout a message of fear and rejection are contradicting the message of the Gospel of Jesus and the teaching of the Church.

Pope John Paul II, now St. John Paul, describes true patriotism in these words:

“Patriotism is a love for everything to do with our native land: its history, its traditions, its language, its natural features... The native land is the common good of all citizens and as such it imposes a serious duty ... [But there is] the risk of allowing this essential function of the nation to lead to an unhealthy nationalism. Of this the 20th century has supplied some all-too-eloquent examples, with disastrous consequences...[like two world wars, several attempts at genocide & the oppression of the poor]

*Whereas nationalism involves recognizing and pursuing the good of one’s own nation **alone**, without regard for the rights of others - Patriotism, on the other hand, is a love for one’s native land that accords rights to all other nations equal to those claimed for one’s own.”*

There is a song that sets this kind of patriotism to music. Most of us know the first verse by heart, but the 2nd verse is a prayer that invites us to challenge what needs changing as well to celebrate what is good. Would you sing it with me as a prayer for our country and ourselves?

♪ O beautiful for pilgrim feet whose stern impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat Across the wilderness!
America! America! God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control, Thy liberty in law! ♪

Since doing this homily on July 2-3, I discovered two more verses, that reflect the spirit of the song and the message of the Gospel. They were written by Miriam Therese Winter:

Indigenous and immigrant, Our daughters and our sons:
O may we never rest content til' all are truly one.
America! America! God grant that we may be
a sisterhood and brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

How beautiful, two continents, and islands in the sea,
that dream of peace, nonviolence and people living free.
America! America! God grant that we may be
a hemisphere where people here will live in harmony!

