

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson

22nd May 2022 - 6th Sunday of Easter

Readings (Year C): 1st: Acts 15:1-2. 22-29. 43-52. Psalm: 66. 2nd: Apocalypse 21:10-14. 22-23.

Gospel: John 14:23-29.

Bishop Mark was in the parish Thursday & Friday, for his nieces wedding. Asking him how he was he said his mind was almost schizophrenic, quite scrambled, as it seems to be in so many places at once. Still here, yet getting ready to move to Cardiff. Having the family wedding was a good distraction. Moving on, though, he thought was like a bereavement, we leave the familiar and friends and move to where you may know no one.

Similar for the disciples, as their minds were numbed and confused when Jesus spoke to them of his impending departure. Love finds it so hard to let go of the loved one.

Jesus explained to them how it was necessary to let go of his physical presence so that he could release even greater gifts to them.

They were promised very special gifts from Father, Spirit and Son.

The Fathers' gift would be an inner sense of his love: an intimate, at-home relationship with the very creator of all.

The Spirit's gift would be the light of faith to understand the teaching of Jesus.

The Son's gift would be *shalom*; not a worldly imitation of peace, but his own inner strength which enabled him to face the conflicts of his departure and the pain of the cross.

Bible Alive today suggests entire industries are built upon human desire for peace of mind. The insurance industry seeks to provide us with a sense of peace and security in the face of tragedy, loss or bereavement. The pensions industry urges us to invest in various scheme to enjoy a peaceful and happy retirement. Security firms are eager to alert us to how vulnerable and exposed our houses and possessions are without their particular alarm system. Politicians and statesmen promise military stability and economic health in their endeavour to win elections. The world can offer some peace but it doesn't last.

The hedonistic West offers peace like the soothing of an irritation. Take a painkiller, drugs, distract the mind as an escape from boredom, release all pent up energy, calm nerves with soothing music; ease the pressure with drink or pills which dull the senses. These ways offer an escape but not an authentic inner strength. Escapism may remove the itch for a while but doesn't cure the wound.

The East offers a journey into inner tranquillity. The source of all pain and misery is said to be desire, so the remedy for pain must be through control of our desires. Techniques of muscular relaxation, breathing exercises and the mental repetition of simple soothing sounds have been perfected as a means of control.

The painkilling of the West may be legitimately used and the inner tranquillity of the East may be gainfully sought.

But the Christian search for peace is a search to know peace with God. Jesus alone is the One who gives us peace, but it is a certain strain of peace, a quality which is divine, holy, and eternal. The peace Jesus offers is the peace of Reconciliation with God.

Through the Cross Jesus destroyed the dividing wall of hostility between us and God; he bridged the unbridgeable through shedding his blood and ransomed us from sin and death. He opened the door of heaven and allowed us to share in the very life of God.

Because of his intimacy with the Father, Jesus could speak of peace on the night when he knew apprehension, disappointment and fear. His unfailing source of trust was his sense of the Father's will. In his Father's will was his foundation, his inner strength and source of peace.

The poet, Dante attributed the joy of the blessed in heaven to their doing God's will. 'In his will is our peace.'

St John, who recorded the words of Jesus' promise of peace, knew how much the disciples were to live with pain, suffering and persecution unto death for their belief.

Like their Master, they would find their peace in intimate union with the Father... who had set up home in their hearts.

Parts of life may be painful, even terrifying at times, but the totality of life is firm: for God is at home in our heart.

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