

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time — July 7, 2019

The 1st Reading paints a glowing picture of the blessings that God will bestow on Jerusalem and all of the returning exiles from the Babylonian Captivity. It likens Jerusalem to a mother who lovingly nurses her children. It can be seen also as a foreshadowing of the Gospel where the Disciples are sent out to proclaim the Kingdom and to announce “Peace” which is the hallmark of this Kingdom.

While all of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, & Luke) record a sending out of The Twelve, only Luke records the sending out of the seventy-two disciples. This second sending out is explained by the size of the harvest, and the fact that time is short. The call for more harvesters, more Missionaries, is related to the fact that Jesus can't do it on His own..... He needs laborers in His Vineyard ordinary ministers who will proclaim the presence of God's Kingdom. While the Mission itself, in this case, was just to local towns and villages, (thus the keen instructions on what to bring and not to bring) it was certainly a foreboding of the Mission He entrusts to His whole Church at the end of Saint Matthew's Gospel: “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world.” (Matt 28:19-20)

When Jesus sent the seventy-two out, He said their first words on entering a house were to be: “Peace to this House.” They were to be ambassadors of Peace and Good Will. Wow! What a joyous possibility! Imagine if we had 72 disciples from among us going around our parish and visiting all of our families and they carry with them these beautifully designed signs and place one over the door of each household saying, “Peace to this House!” God's Peace has come to you all you've got to do is receive it !!!!! Wow what blessings are available to us!

Peace is not just the absence of war or enmity. Peace is a very positive thing, not just the absence of something else. Peace implies openness, friendship, tolerance, good will, hospitality, reconciliation. It disposes us to each other in good faith. It helps to breakdown the barriers that exist between people, Fear Prejudice Suspicion Bigotry.

Working for Peace is very difficult work. There is a lot of persecution, martyrdom, and suffering involved in the message of proclaiming peace. Thus, Jesus could say :

“Go on your way; behold I am sending you like lambs among wolves.”

During the height of the troubles in Northern Ireland, when great hostilities existed between the two premier religions, Catholic and Protestant, there were some really valiant workers in the quest for peace. On Christmas morning, a Catholic priest in Northern Ireland went across the street to the local Protestant church to wish the

minister and his congregation a Happy Christmas. The minister received him warmly, reciprocated his greeting, and later made his way across across the street to return the visit. However, some of the Elders of his church reacted angrily and took steps to have the minister removed from their church. Both ministers felt they were only doing what Christ would want them to do to proclaim “Peace on Earth to people of Good Will.” But, there is a great resistance to peace in our world, as you well know. The people we most need to make peace with are not our friends, but our enemies. But how hard that work is!

As a Eucharistic Community, our primary responsibility is to be bearers of Peace. Not surprising that Jesus made this such a central teaching in His great instruction of ‘The Beatitudes.’ *“Blessed are the Peace-Makers, they shall be called Sons and Daughters of God” (Matt. 5:9)*

In the Eucharistic celebration before Communion, the priest says these words, “The Peace of the Lord be with you always.” What a wonderful gift is being offered to us the Peace of Christ Himself. The Peace of Christ a gift which the world cannot give to youonly God alone ! The priest then invites us to share, or offer a sign of that peace to one another. It is valuable for us to remember that the hand we extend to our neighbor, is the same hand with which we receive Jesus in Communion. We come to Mass to share Communion with Jesus and with each other. If we were to come away from Mass with nothing more than His gift of Peace and a commitment to be peace-bearers, then our time would be very well spent.

We receive at Mass, and we commit ourselves to sharing what we have received. The end of Mass is not like the end of a football match where we simply get up and leave. The end of Mass is a sending forth to proclaim what we have seen and heard and celebrated The Lord’s Peace is available to All who will receive it ! We are sent forth like those 72 to proclaim His Mission, His Peace to the World.

— Fr. Gerry Hurley