

Sixth Sunday of Easter – Cycle C

Focus: Peace

First Reading
ACTS 15:1-2, 22-29

Psalm
PS 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

Second Reading
REV 21:10-14, 22-23

Gospel
JN 14:23-29

Good evening/morning once again. Today's readings offer us a number of images that at first glance seem to be unrelated. In our first reading from Acts of the Apostles, we hear the results of what has come to be known as the First Jerusalem Council of the Church, during which it extols the virtue of right living. In our second reading from Revelation we heard of the New Jerusalem with no Temple building. From the Gospel of John we heard from Jesus' farewell discourse to His disciples where he offer's several gifts. But as we all know, a glancing read through of these scripture passages would be an injustice.

At the First Jerusalem Council, the early church was in conflict. You see, there were folks stirring up dissension and made bold claims in contradiction to the community of Apostles, without their permission or direction. This conflict disturbed the peace, specifically the external peace of the community, as well as the internal peace of the members of the community. Who should they follow and believe. As it happens, the members of these

three communities had received instruction from St Paul and others on the attainment of salvation for which these members were following and then boom, someone changed the rules and conditions. Can you imagine how they felt? Today's reading does offer us some peace. First is that Salvation is a gift from God and key to obtaining that gift is living rightly. Meaning to abstain from pagan worship and the fruits of that worship. In today's society we can replaced the pagan worship of Baal and other primitive "gods" with our modern day "gods", such as consumerism, discrimination, and pseudo-theocracy in which people of only a glancing knowledge of God and Christ wage hate, distrust, prejudice and their own will all in the name of God. So we need to not only not participate in that type of worship but also not partake in the fruit of that worship, meaning we must stand up for the oppressed, discriminated, the outcast, the voiceless, and so forth through Catholic Advocacy, Social Ministry, Outreach, and praise and worship here in this space. The second point of peace derived from this first council of the church is that

it was lead by the Holy Spirit and sealed for us the legitimacy of Church's mission to non-Jews; truly the peace of unity.

From our second reading in Revelation we heard of the New Jerusalem. In describing this city the Johannine author upheld the first covenant to the people of Israel but also those following the Way of Christ lead by the Apostles. There are again, two central themes of peace. First is the peace of unity between the peoples of the world to that first covenant. The second is that there is no temple only God at its center. So here we are challenged to find a unifying peace between all peoples and to have the love of God at its core. On the other hand, there is something much more metaphysical about this New Jerusalem. First, it is the dwelling of God and that this is the dwelling for which we are told to live in during the introduction to today's Gospel. Further, this dwelling must reside within us. As you know, we are called to be inhabitants of the New Jerusalem. Second, to live in this city is to live in the unity of our Triune God and thus to live in peace as God is peace. How do we do this? How do we let go and let God? As the saying goes. How do we

put aside bitterness, envy, and anger derived from working and living in communities? How do we put aside the continued reminder of the pains inflicted upon us? Make no mistake it is difficult. It requires letting go and trusting in God the Holy Spirit. It requires acknowledging our feelings and their affect on our own internal peace. It requires forgiveness of self for how we feel and reconciliation, and ultimately reentry, to the New Jerusalem. It requires the petitioning to God to forgive those who caused us discontent, as we may not be ready to forgive them ourselves, but eventually perhaps.

Essentially, to return to a peaceful state of mind and being requires that we accept the four beautiful gifts offered by Jesus in our Gospel. First, accept and live righteously towards Christ Second Coming as described in our first reading. Second, accept the gift of the Holy Spirit who is the source of peace and the key to entering the New Jerusalem. Third, accept the gift of Christ's Love as he gives it unconditionally and without ceasing. Even in the depths of our pain, Christ is present for us. Fourth, accept the gift of Christ's peace not as the world gives it does Christ.

You see, Christ's peace is stronger than any mineral, metal or material in the whole of this universe, unlike the frailness of human manufactured peace.

Today we are challenged to look inward to what we allow to separate us from our own internal peace that then leads to division and discontent in our families and communities. We are challenged by today's readings to acknowledge the causes of this separation from peace but not to dwell on those causes. But dwell instead within the new Jerusalem by accept the gifts of Christ's return in righteous judgment, the gift of the Holy Spirit to teach, guide and strength us, Christ's Love and His peace so as to remain focused on Christ and His sacrament the church and thus be Christ and Christ's love and peace to everyone.