

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Easter (B)

- For me, one of the most significant prayers in the Eucharist comes after the Lord's Prayer – "Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, peace I leave with you...", & then we exchange a sign of peace.
- I will at times introduce it by saying that 'we now pray for peace, peace in the so many troubled places in the world; peace in our own communities & families, & peace in our own hearts – a peace that only God can give.'
- The whole concept of God extending peace to us comes from my own lived experience, & especially from my primal conversion experience, when in the midst of my troubled life at the time, I felt a peace embrace me, one that I had never before experienced, & something that I could not have fabricated for myself.
- It is this experience that has become the driving force of my own vocation as a priest – to be a witness to this peace that only God can give.
- In these days & weeks after the resurrection, whenever Jesus encounters his disciples, he bestows upon them his peace in a time when they are still afraid, troubled & confused, though they had come to know that Jesus is indeed alive after his resurrection.
- They still don't know what to do with this knowledge, but they slowly begin to know that they are being commissioned to be the bearers of this peace that comes from God's love, for the rest of the world.
- It's not a pious platitude or a nice wish, but a powerful force.
- We're now called to place our hope in God & to pray for that true peace which is the work of justice - Peace is a gift of God & God's own work.
- If it exists, it does so because we have enabled the Spirit of God to work within us & among us.
- The Second Vatican Council tells us that peace is far more than the absence of war – it is built upon the four pillars of truth & justice, love & freedom & that without these pillars, there can be no order, no tranquility, no peace.
- As we pray for God's peace in the world, for the tranquility of order particularly in the so many troubled places in the world, we need to commit ourselves to living in truth & justice, in love & in the freedom worthy of God's children – this is how we can be peace-bringers.
- We need to realize that our lives contribute to the peace of the world.
- World peace is brought about not by military force; it depends on us, on the way we live the truth, the way we cultivate justice, the way we love, the way we use our personal freedom according to God's plan.
- Jesus says to us now what he said to his apostles in those days after the resurrection when they were huddled together in fear, "Peace be with you." - He is offering us interior peace in our hearts but telling us in the

context of the Gospel & of today's second reading from John, that we need to change in order to be receptive to the peace God offers.

- Our conversion is one of the ingredients of world peace.
- Peace in the world, we must acknowledge, depends on us too.
- In praying for the gift of world peace & in fostering respect for human life we are asking God to convert our hearts & to direct our lives to himself.
- Let us be mindful of the great personal challenge from which none of us is exempt: to live in a manner worthy of Jesus Christ & his call.
- Let us unite our prayers for a just & lasting peace with our humble prayer for the well-being of all those affected & afflicted by war.
- We pray for the innocent, for the long-suffering people of countries engaged in war, for those who have been deceived by false ideologies, for those suffering from homelessness & helplessness, & from lack of food, water & medicines, & for those manipulated to defend a defenseless cause.
- We ask God's protection on the members of our armed forces & their families - men & women truly committed to the defense of freedom & justice - a freedom & justice that should belong to all God's children in Australia, Asia, America, in the Middle East & everywhere in the world.
- It is time for our world once & for all to move beyond the logic of war & all forms of the arrogance of power; it is time for us to renew our conviction also that the arrogance of power can paradoxically be humbled by the conviction of the weak & the apparently powerless.
- Throughout history, there have been many examples of the saints & of the humble who through their concrete gestures of peace, of friendship above boundaries, have been able to change the destiny of their generation & have bent the stubborn hearts of those bitterly pointed on the ways of war & violence & without respect for human life.
- Scientific progress must be accompanied by progress in humanism & respect for life & human life in particular.
- Our civilization deserves better than war. We are capable of better.
- As Christians we need to express our sadness that this new century with so many promises of hope still finds nation against nation, with the horrible suffering of innocents, especially those who are the weakest, the sick & the elderly, the mothers & the young children.
- But, we also need to be people of hope - we need to believe that it is possible to change the world.
- Our civilization must know through us that liberation comes not through humiliation, but through enabling the women & men of our time to be the people that God made them to be, in his image & likeness.
- Therein lies our dignity as human beings & the respect that is due to all human life.
- Where in your life are you in need of the peace Jesus offers; & how can you be the bearer of this peace in that little part of the world that you touch?