

Homily  
December 25, 2022  
Christmas Day Mass  
20:18-31:45

What a wonderful way to begin a day: in song. Songs that just leap out of our mouths from our hearts because of this day. Many words speaking of so many wonders. But especially today, a thread that binds them all. One of the focal moments of this celebration. That is peace. Because of the Prince of Peace, the Lord.

We heard it in our First Reading from Isaiah 52. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation and saying to Zion, ‘Your God is King.’” That was written to exiles in Babylon. The prophet Isaiah was trying to encourage them that the lack of peace in their hearts and in their lives, the catastrophe of being carried off -- God was going to intervene and bring them home. But first to bring peace into their hearts and their lives.

The Canticle of Zechariah is another of those from Luke that we all know so well. “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel. He has come to his people and set them free. He has raised up for us a mighty Savior born of the house of his servant David. Through his holy prophets he promised of old that he would save us from our enemies, from the hands of all who hate us. He promised to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy Covenant. This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham. To set us free from the hands of our enemies. Free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our lives. In the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high shall break upon us. To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death. And to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

To guide our feet into the way of peace.

Brothers and sisters, peace on earth is not a magical instantaneous happening. When the Prince of Peace came into this world, he brought not instant peace, but rather a way – a way of life – a pilgrim journey. It is ours to live in that way and to seek it each day, this way of peace. It is essential that this way is not an absence of conflict, but a product of justice and right living in Christ that can guide our feet through the conflict. And it doesn’t matter what that conflict is. It can be anxiety, distress, confusion, cancer, heart disease, violent thoughts. You name it. God can guide our feet to an even greater

realization of peace through those moments. And peace is not the absence of emotion, but a river cutting through our emotions and circumstances, to reveal God's presence as guide and companion.

Peace is not imposed. Peace is a gift that God offers, a grace born of the fruit of our hearts from which spring our thoughts and actions. Peace is quiet in the midst of chaos.

Imagine being in prison, if you will. Paul the great apostle of the Gospel was in prison a number of times, but at one point he wrote a letter to his beloved people of Philippi. And that letter is shot-through with two very important ideas: **Joy and Peace**. Hear his words from Chapter 4 of that letter.

“Rejoice in the Lord always, I say it again, rejoice!  
Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near.  
Have no anxiety at all, but in everything by prayer and  
petition with thanksgiving make your requests known to  
God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all  
understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ  
Jesus. Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true,  
whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure,  
whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious – if there is any  
excellence and if there is anything worth praise, think  
about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned  
and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of  
peace will be with you.”

Peace, brothers and sisters, comes about when we pray and petition the Lord. When we thank the Lord for all that is good in our lives and how he has moved us through whatever it is that besets us. When we arrive at that, we realize that his gift is beyond all understanding and should lead us to truth, to be honorable and just, pure, lovely and gracious. For that is ours to do.

Pope Saint Paul VI said, “If you would have peace, work for justice.” Thus my brothers and sisters, he urges us as does Paul and the Canticle of Zechariah and the power of the words of Isaiah Chapter 52 urges us to be agents of the gift we've been given. It is not something that we leave God to take care of: “Okay. You're the Prince of Peace. You take care of it.” No.

It is ours to incarnate it. Just as the Lord incarnated himself in the human condition to reveal this very sense and gift of peace, so we are to do the same. It can be in the most simple of things. It can be just friendliness, neighborliness. It can be holding a door. It can be greeting a stranger. It can even

be not rolling your eyes when someone says something really stupid. It can be reconciliation. It can be care of the poor. It can be speaking out when we know something is not just.

We might not be able to change the situation, but if we speak the truth in love, then some part of that gracious peace will come into the situation.

Yes, my brothers and sisters, we are to be led into the way of peace and then lead **others** into the way of peace. We are incarnate, through Christ, the very way of peace in the world.

It is a challenge these days, is it not? There is such a lack of it. But brothers and sisters, if we do our part – as small as it may seem – not only will it bring that peace into our hearts, but the world will notice. And the effect begins to become a gift to others.

Please God, may it be so.