

30th Sunday (A)

29th October 2017

'Love in Action VI: Solidarity & Peace'

Ex 22: rules for love of neighbour Ps 17: God is the rock where I take refuge

1Thess 1: news of your faith in God has spread everywhere

Mt 22: 34–40: *love the Lord your God ... love your neighbour ...*

The Lord Jesus in today's passage from Matthew cuts through the malice of yet another set of questioners trying to trick Him out, and utters one of the most straightforward lines in the Gospel: "*You must love the Lord your God ... [and] you must love your neighbour as yourself.*" This is the Gospel in miniature, and shows just why the Church has its 'Catholic Social Teaching': we cannot just 'love God'; we must also 'love our neighbour.' As the Church looks at the world it looks at it with the eyes of Christ: the Church loves the world, for it is God's world; the Church loves humanity, even though humanity is fallen and is sinful; the Church wants the very best for mankind, and that does mean **solidarity and peace**.

The Church, as the living voice of our Lord Jesus on earth, and as the holy people dedicated to living and loving as He taught, wish always to stand alongside with all peoples of the world, especially the suffering ones. We,

above all, must not ever adopt an attitude of 'immunity; to the sufferings of others. It's all too easy to ignore what is happening in the world when it isn't happening on one's own doorstep, but the Christian should *never* become immune to his neighbour, near or far.

Our Lord Jesus urged on us repeatedly as His disciples a profound attitude of peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" He taught in the Beatitudes. He also urged, "Make peace with your opponent in good time, when you are on the way to the court ...". And in John's Gospel He reminded us where true peace really comes from: "Peace I leave with you; My own peace I give to you — a peace that the world cannot give, this is My gift to you." We have to be people of peace, if we are to live our faith. We have to be people who promote forgiveness and reconciliation.

The past century has seen the Popes and the Church more generally plead for peace in the world in all sorts of settings. Pope Benedict XV strove relentlessly for peace during World War I; Pope John XXIII wrote a strong

encyclical letter promoting peace at the height of the Cold War in 1963, *Pacem in Terris*; and the Second Vatican Council addressed world peace in a whole chapter of its final great document, *Gaudium et Spes*, in 1965. In our own day, Pope John Paul II made repeated calls in 2003 not to engage in the Iraq War — calls which ultimately went unheeded — and in September 2013 Pope Francis held a powerful Vigil for peace in the piazza in front of St Peter's, praying that there would be no invasion of Syria or concerted bombing attack from the West.

It may sometimes seem that, compared to the global scale of terror, armed conflict, and nuclear threats, our little contribution to peace makes little difference. But this is not so. For every person heeding the Gospel call to peace — even if this is on a small scale in family quarrels or disputes between friends — there can be all sorts of wider implications. It only needs one person to begin the moves towards peace, even in some great conflict. Sowing the seeds for peace, therefore, can begin at home. If those we influence — our children, for example — are helped to be

people with a mindset of being peacemakers, then who knows what in later life they might achieve. Every person in a position of power, government, or international diplomacy began life as a child ... So let's not underestimate what it means to teach peace to our young ones, insist on forgiveness, resolving tensions, ironing out disputes, not engaging in physical violence.

As we reflect, then, on peacemaking as a central part of our Catholic Christian identity, let's just bring to mind any lack of peace in our lives at this present time. May Christ, the Prince of Peace, speak to our heart and mind now, as we ask ourselves:

Qn: With whom am I presently not at peace? Have I been the cause of that, ... in part? What can I do to resolve that? What can I say, ... do ... to make things better? What must I pray for, ... what do I need to receive the Lord's strength for, to bring peace in my own situation? *Blessed are the peacemakers ...*