

Unconditional Witnessing

Bearing Witness in the Peace of Jesus

Reflections Family, Discipleship and the Christian Life 29 June 2020

Matthew 5:8 (quoted)

Matthew 10:11-13 (quoted)

Church services, or the Mass, normally end with a Benediction from the presiding priest, which invariably includes a blessing to the effect that "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ; and the blessing of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit be among you, and remain with you always" — or words to that effect. It is an admitted fact that, being what we are, we have no means of experiencing the peace of Jesus to its fullest extent; we scarcely even understand it. The absence of purity in our inner selves is the reason for this. One of the Beatitudes that Jesus preached tells us, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). A pure heart, a pure inner self, is thus a precondition of being within the Kingdom of Jesus.

Having said that, whatever we do in the Name of Jesus, we must always keep the peace of Jesus within our hearts. One may wonder why I seem to be making contradictory statements at once. I am not; it means, essentially, that while the peace of God is beyond our comprehension, we may still believe that Jesus can bless us with such peace. It is that trust, that expectation, which we must make our own, as we receive the peace of Jesus. Such a profound doctrine was strange enough even to His disciples, as they followed Him about. Knowing this, Jesus instructed them: "And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you" (Matthew 10:11-13).

Our great temptation, our great failing, is to allow others to take our peace from us. This happens when we are provoked — I confess that, by nature, I am provoked easily enough, though I have now learnt not to harbour anger against anyone for more than a few minutes — and we become angry, hostile, bitter, spiteful, manipulative, argumentative, or vengeful. When that happens, others do not respond favourably to the Good News we try to bring to the unreached.

Good News becomes bad news when it is proclaimed without the peace of Jesus, and without much joy. Anyone who proclaims the forgiving and healing love of Jesus with a bitter heart is a false witness. Jesus is the Saviour of the world; we are not. We are called to witness for Jesus,

always through our lives, which ought to reflect Him, and sometimes through the words we speak of the great things God has done for us. But this witnessing should never be a matter of ritual; it must come from within us, willing to give without expectation of any return, as the peace of Jesus rules our inner selves.

The more we trust and believe in the unconditional love of Jesus for us, the more we shall be enabled to proclaim His love, free of any inner or outer condition.

May you have a peace-filled, blessed week ahead.