

The Breath of the Holy Spirit - "Peace be with you"

Our lives are filled with sayings and phrases...

Pepsi Generation?... That's the way the ball bounces....

"Wait till your father gets home!"... "You've buttered your bread... Now sleep in it!"

There is one saying that I use when I refer to my wife Marge, which I think serves to keep me out of trouble. I call her, "She who must be obeyed."

There is a four word phrase that we heard in this evenings Gospel that has a very *joyful* and *timeless* and *forgiving* message...

"Peace be with you."

These were the *joyful* words that Jesus spoke when he entered that room on that "First" Sunday evening.

We too can recall and remember with great joy our own personal moments. Maybe it was when we first realized that we had met that someone special.

Maybe it was when we found out just how much our parents loved us.

Maybe it was when we found out how lucky we were to have our own children.

Maybe it was when we realized that we were always being held in the arms of a loving God.

Wasn't that a time!

We get a picture of just such a beautiful time in the life of the early Church. In our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles...

"They were all together in Solomon's portico."

That's the Temple in Jerusalem. The early followers of Christ were not considered to be Christians yet but perhaps the first "Jews for Jesus". The apostles and the disciples of Jesus were allowed to worship in the temple after the Sabbath. These first followers were probably there on Friday for the evening services and Kiddush. They were probably there on the Saturday to listen to the readings from the Torah, and then back on Sunday to recall Christ's words and share in His body and Blood.

Wasn't that a time!.

However, those days of worship in the Temple didn't last. The Romans started their persecutions of the Jews and the followers of Jesus and the Temple was destroyed.

Our personal lives also have had their challenges... with times of loneliness and times of tragedy and times of doubt.

However, remember there is more to Peace than just a time of Peace....

Peace can also be *timeless*...

"Peace be with you."

Do you remember in Luke's Passion Narrative when Jesus was dying on the cross and He forgave the thief? Jesus said, "This day you will be with me in Paradise."

Besides reminding us of Jesus' constant forgiveness the gospel writer is subtly point out something else.

This day in Paradise, what does he mean? Isn't he going to be in the tomb for three days and then rise? Luke wants to remind us that at the moment he dies he will be with the Father and then rise in three days.

It seems that Jesus can step out of the limitations of time itself.

This is the same message that we hear in John's Resurrection account.

When Mary Magdalene sees the resurrected Jesus he tells her he has to ascend to the Father and he will be back...

"On the evening of that first day of the week."

Jesus is no longer held in the grasp of time.... And are you ready for this? For those who believe in Him the same will apply.

You see, life without the limitation of time is another way of describing eternity.

"Peace be with you."

You can now live again in those moments of great joy.

You can be with those friends and loved ones you miss so terribly.

You can always be filled with the gift of Love.

This evening we remember the joy filled lives of Billy and Ashley Streeter; two of God's children who I never met. They were killed in an automobile accident some seven years ago.

I have met their parents who have held on tight to God's merciful grasp. I have witnessed the out pouring of prayers and loving embraces from this community whenever Billy and Ashley's names are mentioned.

I consider them to be two of Notre Dame of Mount Carmel's Saints.

I pray to them for inspiration, because I know they are with God. They are not trapped in the time of that terrible night. They are living with the resurrected Christ.

Almost everyone here can remember fondly someone who we can no longer be with. Someone who we have loved...

Someone who we have admired...

Someone who we miss terribly.

Let us not forget the gift of Jesus' death and resurrection. The gift that ends time and brings us eternal life.

"On that first evening of the week..."

When Jesus entered that room where the apostles were he didn't say, "Where were you when I was suffering for you?" or "Did you think that I would abandon you?"

He said, "Peace be with you." Those were the only words of forgiveness he needed to say. He then got close enough to them to breathe on them and say,

"Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive they are forgiven them."

Tonight we have the opportunity to forgive just like Jesus. All we have to do is get close enough to that person who has hurt us deeply, so they can feel the breath of the Holy Spirit and say...

"Peace be with you."

Then they maybe able to see the hurtful wounds that they have inflicted on us, and

see that we have forgiven them, just like Jesus, without any conditions.

The peace of Christ's forgiveness in this time or in the eternity to come will fill us with God's Love.

We can receive it now or we can receive it later. It is up to us.

"He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them.'"

"Peace be with you."