

**PEACE ON EARTH TO MEN OF GOOD WILL**  
**(10.1.2019 - J.F.M.H.)**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of advent, the first reading at Mass was from the Prophet Micah, (He prophesied from approximately 737 to 696 BC) "The Lord says this: But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel; his origin goes back to the distant past, to the days of old. The Lord is therefore going to abandon them till the time when she who is going to give birth gives birth. Then the remnant will stand and feed his flock with the power of the Lord, with the Majesty of the name of his God. They will live secure, for then on he will extend his power to the ends of the land. **He himself will be peace.**"

At the beginning of Our Lord's life on Earth, God's messengers, the Angels, ended their announcement of it to the shepherds with the words, "***Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will.***" In our own lifetime we have witnessed many wars, acts of hatred, terror and cruelty, demonstrating the **persistent lack** of good will amongst men. The violence, hatred and terror do not come from God, but are a product of the Devil working on the wills of men. Even the Holy Land, where the 'Prince of Peace' was born, has experienced it. There seems to be a circle of hatred, which mankind is quite unable to break by its own efforts. At some stage we have to wake up and bring God, the Prince of Peace, back into all our efforts to regain His peace. Earthly peace is the image and fruit of the peace of Christ, the "***Prince of Peace***" as Isaiah called Him (Is. 9.5). In the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus blessed the peacemakers, Christ gave us the most effective blueprint ever published on how to fight terrorism and achieve peace. It has to be done through Christ, for, without Him, we won't achieve it. At the end of His life, as He was taking leave of His disciples, He told them that He gave them '***His peace***'. Clearly **His peace was something important**. They were not to forget it. Down the centuries to the present day, popes, bishops and saints can be found urging the need for peace through prayer, justice and God's forgiveness, and through the love of our fellow men; it was never their own idea, they were quoting Christ. So it's not surprising that in the liturgy of the Mass, just after we are invited to offer each other the sign of peace, we should say the prayers asking God for peace.

**"Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us,  
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us,  
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace."**

Pope Francis links our inner Peace and our love of God as the way to get peace on earth. "*Every human being desires communion and peace. Everyone needs peaceful co-existence. But this can grow only when we also build inner peace in our heart. Many people live in a constant hurry. In this way all that they have inside them tends to be overwhelmed. This also affects how we treat the environment. It is necessary to grant oneself more time to recover a serene harmony with the world, with creation, and also with the Creator. Let us try, in contemplation and prayer, to achieve ever-greater familiarity with God. And, gradually, we will discover that the heavenly Father wants what is good for us. He wants to see us happy, full of joy and serene. It is this familiarity with God that also inspires our mercy. Just as the Father loves, so does His children. As He is merciful, we too are called upon to be merciful towards each other. Let us allow ourselves to be touched by God's mercy, also through a good confession, to become increasingly merciful like the Father.*"

**"Ultimately, only God can save man, but He expects man to co-operate".** (Pope John Paul 11) So as victim souls of substitution we make reparation for our sins, and offer it up through Christ to His Almighty Father. We do so to reconcile each of us to God. This reparation is not something God the Father ignores as of little worth, for it is the reparation of the mystical body of His Son, who has already gained the victory over the devil. The grace of peace come from Christ, the 'Prince of Peace', and like all other graces, through his Mother. No wonder the Church gives her the title 'Queen of Peace'. Let us never leave her out of our prayers for she asks Her Son whatever He wishes, and we know that He wishes to leave us His peace. In 2011 as part of catechesis on prayer, Pope Benedict XV1 reflected on the Assisi meeting for peace that his predecessor St. John Paul 11 had initiated 25 years earlier. He cited a homily by Saint John Chrysostom (347-407), "**For so long as we are sheep, we conquer; though 10,000 wolves prowl around, we overcome and prevail. But if we become wolves, we are worsted, for the help of our Shepherd departs from us. Our prayer for peace must therefore begin with ourselves; that we might ever more deeply converted to the pattern of Christ. That we might become what we contemplate.**" Even if we are not coping with social injustice, let alone earthquakes and tsunamis as the Indonesians have had to do, we still need to practice this dynamic in the face of our own difficulties. We need to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. In this way, we help to build the kingdom of heaven. As Pope Benedict XV1 said, "It is not with might, with force, with violence that Christ's kingdom of peace grows, but with the gift of self, with love, carried to the extreme, even towards enemies. Jesus does not conquer the world with the force of arms, but with **the force of the cross, which is the guarantee of victory.**"

**Our Lady, Queen of Peace.....Pray for us.**

