Commentary on the Readings for July 7, 2019

The 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The theme of the Readings for the 14th Sunday is "Peace" or, in Hebrew, "Shalom," but what do we mean by Peace? Certainly, we do not mean the opposite of war, at least when we are talking about the kind of Peace that Jesus offers us. In the examples we have in the Readings, Peace means a certain inner “calmness” of spirit that tells us, "Everything will turn out alright." However, that implies Trust. The word Shalom goes even further in its meaning by wishing one Prosperity and Good Health. Yes, everything has its price; and the great gift of divine Peace, as in these examples, requires Trust.

The First Reading is from the Prophet Isaiah (66:10-14c). This passage comes from the last chapter of the writings of Isaiah and the time is after the Israelites (Jews) returned to Israel after their 50 years captivity in Babylon. Their city, Jerusalem, was in ruins, they had no earthly leader and all life seemed to be at rock bottom. The Prophet is encouraging the people to rise up to a new life in the God of Israel who brought them back from Egypt many years before and has now brought them back from Babylon. The prophet teaches that if they trust in God and worship Him faithfully, they will again have the spiritual wealth, prosperity and good fortune that they once had. Or, in other words, peace – “Shalom!”

The Responsorial Psalm is (66:1-7, 16, 20). Anyone who has come through a crisis, whether it is corporal or spiritual, will be able to identify with this prayer and make it their own, over and over. It is the prayer of someone who has experienced the love and peace of God through faith and trust and he or she will gratefully sing out the last lines of this psalm, "Hear now, all you who fear [trust in] God, while I declare what he has done for me."

The Second Reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians (6:14-18). Midway in Paul's mission to the Gentiles, he experienced opposition from a certain group of converts that insisted the Gentiles must be circumcised before they could be baptized into Christianity. This is only a brief portion of his long teaching on why it was not necessary to adhere to that Hebrew custom. Instead, all that was necessary was faith and trust in Jesus Christ and that "Peace that only Christ could give" would follow.

The Gospel Reading is from the Gospel of St. Luke (10:1-12). If you were told to go on a business trip or vacation without money, extra clothing or reservations, you would obviously decline with haste. But that is exactly what Jesus is asking of His disciples in this story. Of course, the times and social customs were different; but nevertheless, it required great trust in Jesus - and look at the results! The seventy-two returned rejoicing, but Jesus cautions them against bragging and commends them for their trust in Him.

I have often been asked, "What is the difference between Faith and Trust?" The only answer that is possible is "Action!" Faith is an interior belief or assurance, whereas Trust is the manifestation of that faith in action. Nevertheless, when exercised by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the result is a certain calmness that we can only describe as Peace. So, after reading the above, the question is: "Is your mind and heart truly at Peace? Shalom!" Something to think about during your prayer time this week!