

Homily by Bishop Felipe J. Estévez

Queen of Peace Parish Mass

Saturday, August 19, 2017

Gainesville, Fla.

Peace be with you!

This parish honors the Mother of the Lord as the Queen of Peace. She holds that title because Her Son is the Prince of Peace. Isn't it true that a family, a neighborhood, a city cannot flourish unless there is peace among us? I celebrate this parish community for promoting with passion relationships: this parish and school is home to thousands of families; this parish is always promoting relationships, this parish calls each one, each family to be actively involved at all levels!

Peace is a gift from our Lord Jesus. For St. Paul, Jesus gave it to us at his sacrifice at the Cross-Redemption-his precious blood. In Eph. 2, 11-22: St Paul says: "...but now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he Himself is our peace."

The healing ministry of reconciliation and peace is the outflow of the great work of our Redeemer.

As a nation, as a country, we are in great need of the Peace of Christ. Yet what we hunger for is a peace that human instruments cannot provide. We are all aware for example of the events which happened in Charlottesville, Virginia, such hatred and violence seen by all.

The president of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Di Nardo said: **"the abhorrent acts of hatred on display in Charlottesville are an attack on the unity of our nation and therefore summon us all to fervent prayer and peaceful action. The bishops stand with all who are oppressed by evil ideology... We stand ready to work with all people of goodwill for an end to racial violence and for the building of peace in our communities."**

Let us hope the Prince of Peace helps us to be engaged as instruments of peace working for unity and harmony both in society and Church.

Prophet Isaiah envisioned the coming of the Messiah as a time of great light, shining in the darkness, (Isaiah 9:1). A time of joy for the birth of a child named Prince of Peace!

Because of her deep association with the Prince of Peace, Mary is also called Queen of Peace. The Gospel portrays her: as the humble servant of the Lord. Mary is called to the supreme mission of becoming the mother of the Prince of Peace. And even not knowing how it would happen, she consents, she trusts, she says yes, in docility to God's plan for her. And we often pray for her powerful intercession for world peace (and most especially in North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan) and the protection of our military families in duty.

On this, your patronal feast, as your bishop, I come tonight to celebrate and give thanks for your witness of peacemaking here in Gainesville. And for being such a dynamic community with such clear identity as a full stewardship parish. As you state: **we receive God's gifts gratefully, we cultivate them responsibly, we share them lovingly in justice with others, we return them with an increase to the Lord!"**

This mission statement is full of light, and it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit guidance working through your leaders.

Jesus said: my gift I give to you. His gift of peace is so that we give it to our dear neighbor as it happens just before communion in every Catholic Mass. Let us join the poverello of Assisi, Francis, in saying the prayer for peace:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.