

2022 Christmas Eve Homily

Merry Christmas!!

Thank you each and everyone for being here in the Presidio Chapel and on-line. Welcome.

May we each bring the spirit of this holiday season into our own lives and the lives of those with whom we associate and live.

The holiday season is an amalgam of metaphors:
Hanukah, Kwanza, Christmas.

The phrase “Holiday Season” serves as a general umbrella. The holiday season is not necessarily attached to winter as it is here in the northern hemisphere. The same holiday season is also celebrated in the southern hemisphere with a different backdrop: summer. Yet, associated with the Holiday Season is snow and Santa Claus, a Hanukah bush or Christmas tree and a manger scene. What is underneath this Holiday Season umbrella?

One reality under the umbrella is covered by another word: **peace**. Just what is meant by peace? Governments ask that on-going war games be quieted at least for Christmas day.

Merriam-Webster defines peace as a state of tranquility or quiet: such as a: freedom from civil disturbance; b: a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom a breach of the peace; 2: freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions.

Tonight we are commemorating the birth of the Prince of Peace. Scripture tells us Jesus said: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" ([John 14:27](#)).

Jesus' peace is not the freedom from civil disturbance. Civil disturbance comes with the human package as we have learned from our history. Humans in the main are disturbed, some more so than others. Nor is Jesus' peace a state of security or order within a community provided by custom or law. One's state of security is relative to the law giver and cultural milieu, is it not? Such is the peace that the world gives. Such peace is tenuous at best, ambivalent in the extreme.

Jesus' peace references freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions. How is such peace obtainable in this world of stress and hassle,

happiness and joyfulness, illness and disease, health and well-being, plenty and famine, peacetime and war and so forth – the whole 9 yards of the human experience?

Jesus offered a solution: **let not your hearts be troubled.** *How does one let one's own heart not be troubled* may be asked in quiet desperation or depressed longing? OK. How does one let not one's heart be troubled?

Jesus then offered, **neither let them be afraid.** Fear is the foundation of the human experience. Fear of death, fear of living, fear of success, fear of failure, fear of heights, spiders, blood. Fear. Basic human fear. How does one counter one's own fear? Why do we fear? We fear because we **BELIEVE** we cannot handle the situation so we grow fear. We may have forgotten that we turn a life circumstance into a situation by taking it personally: my, myself, and I.

The mental health community informs us that the first step of recovery is to recognize the problem – in this case *fear*. Of what are we each afraid. We all have our fears and our fears form our problems to a large extent. Our fears run the programs of our lives until we just stop and recognize that we are just afraid!!! The more we resist being afraid, the more afraid we become. We may suppress, where we recognize yet ignore, our fear. Often times the more we suppress we grow chronic health conditions and/or depression where we feel cut-off from our surroundings. Or, we may repress, where we do not recognize our fear. Our repression results in anger, frustration, sadness, grave disappointment.

Jesus is asking us, no telling us, to take charge of our lives. **Let not your hearts be troubled.** It is up to each of us to grow up, to let not our hearts be troubled. This appreciation comes with the realization we each are the creators of our own experiences, our own lives, our own perceptions. We are neither right nor wrong, good nor bad. These states are subject to the times and circumstances in which we find ourselves and attending situations we may have created. We **LET** consciously or unconsciously thoughts, feelings, emotions, people, places, things happen in our live. We let them happen – we can let it all happen. Otherwise, if we do not, we become victims of our experience, do we not?

A Tibetan meditation informs us to work with our thoughts, to open them as they arise. We can bring many pleasant feelings, which — without attachment — also become our meditation... We can even go into the thoughts that judge other thoughts, and, **embracing this judging mind, become united with it.**

By relying on the light of awareness we can see that the difficulties we face are manifestations of our own concepts. Going deeply into our thoughts, we will see how we create our experience, how we alone are the judge who determines heaven and hell, good and bad.

Further more, whatever experience arises, we can stay with it, expand it, and heat it up. If we remain within the intense core of the experience, **then we unite with thoughts and emotions, and everything dissolves.** Then awareness grows powerful and one-pointed. As thoughts and emotions are increasingly included within this field of awareness, they become more useful. Instead of being a cause of frustration or confusion, they become agents of well-being.

So in closing, Jesus said: *My Peace I give unto you, my peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives but as I give. Let not your hearts be troubled, nor let them be afraid.*

Just be peace. Amen. And Merry Christmas!!

Thank and Peace and Joy to you and yours.

White Robed Monks of St. Benedict

