

[Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 89; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Luke 2:10-11]

Perhaps no word is more used – and abused – during the Christmas season than the little word PEACE. Over and over again we hear it in the lyrics of Christmas carols. We send and receive cards that proclaim it in a thousand different shapes and phrases. We wish it to our relatives and friends. The Mass texts of this feast and this season are filled with the word, peace.

One of my e-mail friends passed this on to me, and I share it with you:

“I am passing this on to you because it definitely works, and we could all use a little more calmness in our lives. By following simple advice heard on the Dr. Phil show, you too can find inner peace. Dr. Phil proclaimed, 'The way to achieve inner peace is to finish all the things you have started and have never finished.' So, I looked around my house to see all the things I started and hadn't finished, and by the end of the day, I had finished off a bottle of White Zinfandel, a bottle of Tequila, a package of Oreos, the remainder of my old Prozac prescription, the rest of the cheesecake, some Doritos, and a box of chocolates. You have no idea how peaceful I feel right now!”

We must realize that there are different types or levels of personal peace. There is bodily peace, a certain physical contentment such as we experience after a delicious Christmas Eve or Christmas Day meal. Ah, Wigilia!

There is emotional peace or relational peace, a certain mental satisfaction that we have done a job well or that someone really cares about us, even loves us. These types of peace are very good and very necessary for us. But sometimes, even this kind of peace can often quickly come and go.

There is another, deeper type of peace, the peace the angels promised to the shepherds that first Christmas. The peace that God promises to His people. This is an inner, spiritual peace that neither suffering nor adversity, nor poverty, nor loneliness can take from us. Only one thing can rob us of it: sin.

We have among us in our assembly people who have lost their jobs or may lose their jobs. People who have lost or will soon lose their homes. People who have recently lost a loved one because of death, separation or divorce. Perhaps a recent graduate whose job prospects in this state look bleak, or the person serving in the military who just received marching orders.

There may be someone who is all alone this Christmas, and who seeks to find a sense of family here in the midst of our Christmas celebration.

On the material level, on the emotional level, it may be easy for us to feel “forsaken” and “desolate” – and it is precisely why we need you here with us at this time. To you I give a special welcome and a remembrance in my prayers.

One of the reasons many of us do not have that peace of Christ is because our relationship with Jesus just might be like that person lying in their bed in the middle of the night

who hears a strange noise elsewhere in the house. Is it a burglar? Is it that old furnace? Is it the house settling?

We know that some presence is there, but we do not know who or what it is. Such it may be with our relationship with Jesus Christ. Unknown. Untried.

Someone decided to make their annual retreat at Christmas time at the nearby monastery. Having had a wonderful spiritual experience, they were leaving the monastery to head home, suitcase in hand. They passed one of the monks on the way to the parking lot. "Merry Christmas!" they eagerly said to the monk. "May Christ be born in you," came the reply from the monk.

"May Christ be born in you." Wouldn't that be a wonderful way to say to one another, "Merry Christmas?" "May Christ be born in you?"

As we grapple with the fears within our hearts and with the fear around us, we need to be ever-more sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit trying to calm us from within, assuring us that not only will we survive, but that through this, we will indeed grow closer to God as we give up any false pride or illusive desire for total control in our lives. And, most importantly, we come here to be nourished in Word and Sacrament. This is the only place where this can happen. And it happens here every Sunday. At every Mass. God comes to us tonight so that we can come to Him. He becomes one like us, so that we can become like God.

Please accept as a gift from your parishioners Matthew Kelly's latest book, "Perfectly Yourself." May this help you in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

This is my Christmas Prayer for you this night:

"May the peace of God and the freshness of the Holy Spirit rest in your thoughts,
rule in your dreams tonight, and conquer all your fears.

May God manifest himself today in ways you have never experienced.

May your joys be fulfilled, your dreams be closer, and your prayers be answered.

I pray that faith enters a new height for you; I pray for peace, healing, health,
happiness, prosperity, joy, true and undying love for God."

"Today in the city of David a savior has been born for you, who is Christ and Lord.

And this will be a sign for you:"

PEACE! May Christ be born in you! Merry Christmas! AMEN!