

Fr. Romeo Homily
December 25, 2018
Christmas (C)

My favorite Christmas tradition while I was still in the Philippines is the kissing of the Baby Jesus at the close of Mass. I admired the late Pope John Paul II every year reverently kissing the Bambino Gesu. I am drawn to this tradition and especially to the image of the child whose presence makes this day so special for everyone in the world because he brings with him his gift of peace.

Peace is one of the greatest gift of Christmas. But do we really know what peace is all about? Some think that it is the absence of troubles in life for the moment, because they will inevitable come. Some teach that peace is inner calm in the midst of the storm, an assurance and confidence inspired by God. But in truth, peace is, when people come together, restored relationships. Truly connected with each other, we are at peace.

This year, my family will celebrate Christmas differently for the first time. My 15 year old niece died last Wednesday morning. I know some of you have lost people this way, too, and your celebrations will be a bit different. But we also lose people through other means – envy or jealousy, anger or spite, a misunderstanding that led to alienation, an argument that exploded into enmity. Who are the people you have lost this year? Whatever we do, we have already disturbed our peace.

We do not only lose people. We also lose ourselves, our identity. We disturb our peace when we allow ourselves to live in duplicity and hypocrisy, when we continue to live in such a way that we deceive ourselves. In this way, we also lose God because when we are not true to ourselves, we betray God. Then we begin to live far from him, in sin.

The angels proclaim today: Glory to God in the highest and peace! Yes, peace to all of us on earth. The Son of God became man to bring an end to whatever divides people from each other and from God – war, deception, suffering, sin, even death. He is the Prince of Peace foretold by Isaiah and he is our peace, affirmed by St. Paul. He has come to break down the walls that divide us.

But how do we bring about this peace? We must touch the source of peace. Coming to Jesus in the Eucharist is a gesture full of meaning if we realize that the one we approach transforms our hearts and makes us ready to reconcile with God and with one another. During Advent many of us have experienced the peace of God's forgiveness. Many, too have experienced the peace that comes with attempts to reconcile with those who hurt them and whom they have hurt.

Today, we are all invited by Jesus to come to Him, the source of Peace. Let us whisper to him our desire to be instruments of peace in our homes and community. Our hearts are ready to welcome peace. Our lives are ready to share peace.

Merry Christmas to All!