

## 2019 6<sup>TH</sup> OF EASTER

One of the last words Our Lord spoke to the apostles- and through them to us were: “Peace I bequeath to you; my own peace I give you- a peace the world cannot give; this is my gift to you.”

A Catholic woman in Hamilton arrived home from work one evening to find her 19 year old son, Stephen, hanging by his neck just inside the front door of their home. Stephen knew that his mother would be the first one to find him and left a semi-coherent note, addressed to her, filled with terrible invective directed straight at her.

I was asked to perform the Requiem.

The mother and her husband made the decision to bring their son home after the autopsy and gently laid him on top of his bed in his bedroom.

His older sister told me that when she first had an opportunity to be alone with her dead brother in his bedroom she told him in no uncertain terms what she thought of him; on several counts: for traumatizing their mother so terribly, for the anguish he had caused in the family over the previous three years through his drug-taking and anti-social behaviour and for his utter selfishness in totally wrecking her Wedding which was coming up in ten weeks time.

I visited the home many times after the Requiem and worried about the mother. All she talked about was the failure she considered herself to be as a mother. She was only able to sleep in fits and starts and barely ate any food. She became gaunt. A deep black cloud of depression covered her.

And then one day I saw a glint back in her eyes and immediately recognized that something good had happened. With a lift in her voice, she told me of a dream she had had a couple of nights earlier.

In the dream she had seen herself in a huge whirlpool being swirled round and round and being inexorably sucked down deeper and deeper into oblivion. She felt doomed. Then she heard a voice- a voice she knew to be the Lord- saying to her: “Swim, swim like mad, swim out of the whirlpool. Don’t be afraid. I am with you.”

When she woke she felt a deep peace within herself. She felt embraced by the Lord. She knew Jesus had come to her in the night to help bring her back into life.

And, at that moment, she finally accepted the truth of the situation: that her son’s hatred for her had been triggered by her constant effort over the previous terrible three years to confront him over his drug-taking. She had done her duty as a mother and duty is another word for love.

She told me that she would never again ponder the reason for her son’s suicide. She simply placed Stephen into the hands of the Merciful God. And

she determined to get back into life. Heaven help her- there was a Wedding to be organized in a fortnight's time- and so much work to be done!

“Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give to you- a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you.”

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading- from the Book of the Apocalypse- was written by St. John at the close of his life while in exile on the Island of Patmos. Twenty years earlier Jerusalem- the city that had been loved as a favoured child by God- had recklessly rebelled against all-powerful Rome. Within three years General Vespasian's troops had arrived from Rome and remorselessly reduced Jerusalem to a ruin. Not one stone of Jerusalem now stood upon another stone. The slaughter had been horrific.

St. John and all of Christendom mourned for Jerusalem. For Jerusalem would always be the ‘Holy City’, the spiritual home for all of them.

But in his vision St. John sees Jerusalem- in heaven- glittering like a crystal-clear diamond, lit up by the radiant glory of God- utterly transformed. It is a vision of wonderful hope.

Stephen's mother still mourns him- but not hopelessly. For she believes that the real Stephen- the pre-drug Stephen- when he came before the wonder of God and felt the enormity of God's love, would have utterly rejected all his past nonsense and would have fled into the arms of God. She has the hope that when finally she goes to heaven she will see a new Stephen, a Stephen-transformed like the New Jerusalem in our 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading- radiating God's glory; his face shining like some precious jewel of crystal-clear diamond.

Because of our belief in Jesus, we are people of hope.

(SATURDAY)

And tonight ten young people from Campion College are to be baptized. Jesus has spoken to the hearts of each of them and invited them to take this step. Jesus, Who created them with infinite love and yearns for their love, has called them to begin a journey into deep intimacy with Him helped by the Sacraments of the Church and the inspiration of so many fellow Catholics.

Tonight we are all praying that as your life continues you will grow deeper and deeper in love with the Lord Jesus. For this is the way to deep-down peace.

The peace that Jesus brings will not be an absence of sorrow in your lives. It doesn't mean that you will never be sick or injured. It doesn't mean that people will always be nice to you. There will be conflict in your life. But by opening yourselves tonight to the love of Jesus and accepting Baptism and allowing God's Spirit to live in you, will bring you to experience that deep-seated peace Jesus promised to you. You are beloved sons and daughters of God and have the wonderful hope of eternal life.

I hope none of you will ever have to experience the anguish Stephen's mother faced. But just as Jesus came to her and gave her the strength to pick

herself up and to once again embrace life with hope and joy, so it will be for you.

Today all of us gathered in our Church say to all of you who are about to be baptized- from the very depths of our hearts: Peace be with you.

(SUNDAY)

Last night ten young people from Campion College were baptized. Each of them had been individually invited by Jesus to take this step. Jesus, Who created them with infinite love and yearns for their love, has now called them to begin a journey into an ever-deeper intimacy with Him- helped by the Sacraments of the Church and the inspiration of so many fellow Catholics.

We pray that they will grow deeper and deeper in love with the Lord Jesus. For this is the way to deep-down peace.

The peace that Jesus will bring to them is not an absence of sorrow in their lives. It won't mean that they will never be sick or injured. It won't mean that people will always be nice to them. There will be conflict in their lives. But by opening themselves to the love of Jesus and accepting Baptism, they have allowed God's Spirit to live in them. Inevitably this will bring them to experience that deep-seated peace Jesus promised to us all.

I hope that no one in our Church today will ever have to experience the anguish Stephen's mother faced. But just as Jesus came to her and gave her the strength to pick herself up and to once again embrace life with hope and joy, so it will be for you.

Today I say to all of you- from the very depths of my heart: Peace be with you.