

*Homily of S.E.R. José Serofia Palma,
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Let me begin by extending to you the greetings of peace and joy from the Philippines, particularly from Cebu, the host of the 51st IEC and the Cradle of Christianity in the Far East, as our country celebrates this year the 5th centenary of the arrival of the Christian faith on our shores.

Today, the psalmist exclaims, “What marvels the LORD worked for us. Indeed, we were glad!” (Ps 125). We are glad to join His Eminence Cardinal Peter Erdo and the thousands of delegates for this 52nd International Eucharistic Congress. Personally, I am glad because the patron of our cathedral in Jaro where I was ordained is St. Elizabeth of Hungary. We are all glad as we anticipate the coming of our beloved Holy Father Pope Francis for the *Statio Orbis* on November 12, the day of love.

My dear brothers and sisters, today we are all glad for we marvel at the Lord’s work of gathering us together despite the pandemic here in the historic and beautiful city of Budapest to reflect, meditate, and celebrate the wondrous gift of the Eucharist. In this Mass, we also celebrate the feast of the Kassa Martyrs, Saints Mark, Stephen, and Melchoir. Our Liturgy today also asks us to reflect on the theme of peace, the peace which only God can give. At this point, allow me then to share with you some thoughts on peace:

First, God’s Peace is about Being Part of God’s family.

Our theme for this year’s International Eucharistic Congress, “All my springs are in you” (Ps 87:7). In this short chapter, we hear the Lord praising Jerusalem as over and above the dwelling places of Jacob for it is the city which the Lord himself established. However, this privileged status of Jerusalem has been extended by the Lord to all nations even to the city’s enemies so that everyone will say “this one was born there”. And so, when all nations together with Jerusalem learn and live the order and peace which God has willed then “all singers and dancers shall say, All my springs are in you” for creation has reached its goal.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, what the psalmist proclaims is actualized in every Eucharistic celebration. In every Holy Sacrifice, we begin by acknowledging the source of our gathering together, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We also profess to the Triune God that “all our springs are in them, are from them”. Right at the start of the Holy Mass, we let go of our social status and the many things that divide us for we become one family of believers. It is also in every Eucharist where we let go of our titles and call each one as brothers and sisters and we ask the Lord to make “my sacrifice and yours be acceptable to the almighty Father.” It is this experience of being family every time the Eucharist is offered and celebrated that we can truly experience the peace which only God can give. If before, peace draws its source from the springs in Jerusalem, today, every time the Sacrifice is offered on every altar, peace gushes forth, for in every Eucharist we become one family of God, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pt 2:9).

Second, Peace is not about the absence of pain and suffering but the realization of God’s presence in the midst of pain and suffering.

Our Gospel today is part of the missionary discourse of Jesus in Matthew. In the earlier verses, Jesus speaks about the presence of persecution when “men will deliver them to courts, flog them in synagogues, and be dragged before governors and kings.” Yet despite all these pain and suffering, the Lord assures his apostles in today’s Gospel not to fear and worry, for if God values the sparrows, how much more you and me who enjoy familial intimacy with our Father in heaven. Once we realize this truth of divine adoption by the Father then no amount of pain and suffering can disturb and destroy the peace that springs from the heart of God, for “if God is with us, who can be against us” (Rom 8:31). Even as in many places Covid is still around, because God is with us, we do not give in to fear, but rather, we continue to be steadfast in our faith. Thus, together with Paul, we can boldly profess, “we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but never destroyed” (2 Cor 4:8-9).

Our two points on peace: peace as being part of God's family and peace as God's presence in the midst of pain and suffering are perfectly concretized in the lives of Sts. Mark, Stephen, and Melchoir. St. Melchoir who was born into Polish aristocracy yet left such privileged life and joined the Society of Jesus. St. Stephen, who like Melchoir entered the Jesuits, even if he could have enjoyed living his life in his native Transylvania. St. Mark who considered his different missions as one single field of apostolic activity and who was said to have a good relationship with the Calvinists never treating them as enemies but brothers and sisters in Christ even if he was horribly killed by them. The lives of these three martyrs of Kassa teach us today that peace is very much attainable despite the presence of pain and suffering as long as we in the deepest recesses of our hearts allow ourselves to become part of one this family that draws living water from the spring of God the Father in heaven.

In his message to the Pope during a mass held in the Vatican to commemorate the 500th year of Christianity in the Philippines with the theme, "Gifted to Give", His Eminence Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle said and I quote, "The gift must continue being a gift. It must be shared. If it is kept for itself, it ceases to be a gift."

My dear brothers and sisters, we who have been blessed and satiated with the springs of God's graces in the Eucharist are called henceforth to be conduits of peace to others. Just like a spring that flows freely until it waters and fills every corner and space that it reaches, let us radiate God's peace to all nations, to the ends of the earth wherever we find ourselves in. May God's peace be with us always as we go forth in fulfilling this mission. And may our Blessed Mother, the Queen of peace intercede for us all.