

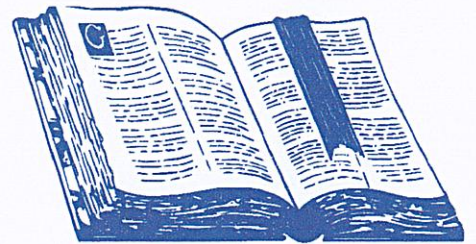
Our Faith on Sunday

GOSPEL REFLECTION

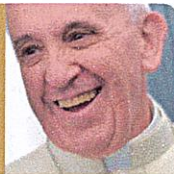


The theme of this Sunday's gospel is waiting. Waiting for who? In the first of this Sunday's readings Isaiah foretells the coming of the one who will turn implements of war into tools of agriculture, and of the time when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more". If this is the case, then we are still waiting. And yet, Jesus came among us two thousand years ago. He gave us the secret to peace: that we love one another as he loved us. Perhaps this is why we celebrate Christmas every year. Each time we make present among us the birth of the one who said "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you" (Jn 14,27) we are given another opportunity to banish war forever, to use the

billions spent on armaments to feed the hungry, and build homes for the homeless. The pessimists among us will say that there has always been war and there will always be war: get used to it. If that is our belief then we are hypocrites if we continue to celebrate Christmas; or at best we can secularise it into nothing more than an occasion to eat, drink, and be merry. So, who are you waiting for this Christmas? Will the Prince of Peace find a place in your heart?



POPE FRANCIS' ENCYCLICAL FRATELLI TUTTI BROTHERS AND SISTERS ALL



THE INJUSTICE OF WAR

260. In the words of Saint John XXIII, "it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice".²⁴³ In making this point amid great international tension, he voiced the growing desire for peace emerging in the Cold War period. He supported the conviction that the arguments for peace are stronger than any calculation of particular interests and confidence in the use of weaponry. The opportunities offered by the end of the Cold War were not, however, adequately seized due to a lack of a vision for the future and a shared consciousness of our common destiny. Instead, it proved easier to pursue partisan interests without upholding the universal common good. The dread spectre of war thus began to gain new ground.

243. Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (11 April 1963): AAS 55 (1963), 291.

Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter DILEXIT NOS

If we find it hard to trust others because we have been hurt by lies, injuries and disappointments, the Lord whispers in our ear: "Take heart, son!" (Mt 9:2), "Take heart, daughter!" (Mt 9:22). He encourages us to overcome our fear and to realize that, with him at our side, we have nothing to lose. To Peter, in his fright, "Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him", saying, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Mt 14:31). Nor should you be afraid. Let him draw near and sit at your side. There may be many people we distrust, but not him. Do not hesitate because of your sins. Keep in mind that many sinners "came and sat with him" (Mt 9:10), yet Jesus was scandalized by none of them. It was the religious elite that complained and treated him as "a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Mt 11:19). When the Pharisees criticized him for his closeness to people deemed base or sinful, Jesus replied, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (Mt 9:13).

That same Jesus is now waiting for you to give him the chance to bring light to your life, to raise you up and to fill you with his strength. Before his death, he assured his disciples, "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me" (Jn 14:18-19). Jesus always finds a way to be present in your life, so that you can encounter him.



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Ps 24:1-3

To you, I lift up my soul, O my God.
In you, I have trusted; let me not be put to shame.
Nor let my enemies exult over me;
and let none who hope in you be put to shame.

COLLECT

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at his coming,
so that, gathered at his right hand,
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 2:1-5

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah
and Jerusalem.

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the
house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the
mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the
nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say:

'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house
of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that
we may walk in his paths.' For out of Sion shall go forth the
law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge
between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many
peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up
sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 122(121):1-2. 4-5. 6-7. 8-9. R. cf. 1

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the LORD.

I rejoiced when they said to me,
'Let us go to the house of the LORD.'
And now our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

It is there that the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD
as it is decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.
There were set the thrones for judgement,
the thrones of the house of David.

For the peace of Jerusalem pray,
'May they prosper, those who love you.'
May peace abide in your walls,
and security be in your towers.

For the sake of my family and friends,
let me say, 'Peace upon you.'
For the sake of the house of the LORD, our God,
I will seek good things for you.

SECOND READING

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Romans 13:11-14a

Brothers and sisters: You know the time, that the hour has come
for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now
than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at
hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on
the armour of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime,
not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and
sensuality, not in quarrelling and jealousy. But put on the Lord
Jesus Christ.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL

Alleluia, alleluia.

Psalm 85(84):8

**Show us, O LORD, your mercy,
and grant us your salvation.
Alleluia.**

GOSPEL

Matthew 24:37-44

The Lord be with you.
And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples: 'For as were the days of
Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those
days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying
and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the
ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept
them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then
two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two
women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one
left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day
your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the
house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming,
he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house
be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of
Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, we pray, O Lord, these offerings we make,
gathered from among your gifts to us,
and may what you grant us to celebrate devoutly here below,
gain for us the prize of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Ps 84:13

**The Lord will bestow his bounty, and our
earth shall yield its increase.**

R.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May these mysteries, O Lord,
in which we have participated,
profit us, we pray,
for even now, as we walk amid passing things,
you teach us by them to love the things of heaven
and hold fast to what endures.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

R.