

HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HOLY MASS WITH THE IMPOSITION OF THE PALLIUM UPON THE
MOST REVEREND CHRISTOPHER J. COYNE, ARCHBISHOP OF HARTFORD
CATHEDRAL OF SAINT JOSEPH – HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT
OCTOBER 14, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning! I am happy to be with you again in this Cathedral of St. Joseph. It is almost exactly one year since my last visit, when I joined you for the installation of Archbishop Coyne as Coadjutor Archbishop. Once again, I bring to you the assurance of spiritual communion and blessing from our Holy Father Pope Francis.

The readings for this Mass have been taken from the Mass for Peace and Justice; and so it is good for us to focus on the meaning of **peace**.

After the angel announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds near Bethlehem, a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel praised God saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace* to those on whom his favor rests.”¹ **The coming of God to earth in the person of Jesus is a message of peace for all who are open to an encounter with him. The shepherds received that proclamation of peace; and after they visited Jesus, they became heralds of the Gospel of peace.**

Just like those first shepherds, the shepherds of today, our bishops, are given the gift of peace by the Spirit of Christ, so that they too can be messengers of the Gospel of peace. This was already happening in the Lord’s farewell discourse with his disciples, when he told them, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.”² After the Resurrection, the first thing Jesus said to them was: “Peace be with you.”³ Archbishop Coyne has also received this gift of peace from Christ. And so, the Lord’s peace is the foundation of his ministry as a shepherd and a successor to the Apostles.

When we look at the world, which is currently on fire with wars, we ask ourselves: From where will peace come? How can we, as insignificant as we are, effect peace on a global scale? There is the temptation to lose hope. But that is why we need to focus on the *origin* of peace, to which each of us has access. As today’s Scripture readings make clear, peace comes from the Holy Spirit. It is not something that we have earned by hard work; it is a gift from God. The Spirit offers peace to the heart of each person who is

¹ *Luke 2:14*, emphasis added.

² *John 14:27*.

³ *John 20:21*.

willing to live in justice: in right relationship with God and neighbor. Peace on earth, therefore, begins in our own heart. When that peace is received first of all as a gift from above, then we can share that gift with others. One of the ways to do so is by becoming agents of what the Holy Father calls a “culture of care”. The culture of care, he said,

“calls for a common, supportive and inclusive commitment to protecting and promoting the dignity and good of all, a willingness to show care and compassion, to work for reconciliation and healing, and to advance mutual respect and acceptance.”⁴

Brothers and sisters, this is not just an “ideal” to be talked about and left to global or national leaders. The work of peace is something that must be taken up at the level of this Archdiocese and in your parishes, beginning with each one of us as individuals.

Archbishop Coyne, by celebrating this Liturgy of the Word for Peace and Justice, you are saying to your people that you desire to be both a recipient of God’s peace, and a sharer of that peace among your people – just like the shepherds who received the announcement of the Lord’s birth; and just like the Apostles who were given Christ’s gift of peace.

This kind of peace, Jesus says, is different from what the world offers. The world claims to fulfill our desires by removing the Cross from our lives. But this is impossible: we cannot be saved without the Cross. The Lord, on other hand, promises both the Cross and the Resurrection. When we are united with Christ, we share his suffering because we live in a world that remains divorced from its Creator. But even when we experience this Cross, we are able to have peace because we know also the Resurrection. When people see that we are able to offer love even in the midst of brokenness and pain, this becomes a powerful witness. As Pope Francis said:

“At a time like this, when the barque of humanity, tossed by the storm of the current crisis, struggles to advance towards a calmer and more serene horizon, the ‘rudder’ of human dignity and the ‘compass’ of fundamental social principles can enable us together to steer a sure course. ... May we work together to advance towards a new horizon of love and peace, of fraternity and solidarity, of mutual support and acceptance.”⁵

⁴ Pope Francis, Message for the 54th World Day of Peace (1 January 2021), 8 December 2020, 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*

What the Pope here describes is a work of peace: a work that begins from God, enters into our hearts, and then goes out to the people with whom we share our lives. May God bless you, the people of God in the Archdiocese of Hartford; and may God bless you, Archbishop Coyne, as together you collaborate in this divine work of spreading the Gospel of peace.