

## Spiritual Reflection ~ Deacon Vinnie Muller

January 7, 2023 Ultreya

Prayer, peace, and preaching. It's all a part of evangelizing.

Some of us evangelize through prayer, and with our lives in how we act; not just by what we say. Others evangelize through words, through preaching.

In fact, Prayer is the heart of Evangelization. From the words of St. Paul: *pray at every opportunity in the Spirit. To that end, be watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the holy ones and also for me, that speech may be given me to open my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.* (Eph. 6:18-19) Paul tells us very distinctly that he needs prayers in order to effectively evangelize.

He tells us again in Colossians: *Persevere in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving; at the same time, pray for us, too, that God may open a door to us for the word, to speak of the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, that I may make it clear, as I must speak.* (Col. 4:2-4) He's referring to the opportunity and the ability to effectively Evangelize.

Because of Barbara's prayers and intercessions, everyone who gave a talk on that Cursillo weekend was able to speak with the words given to them through special grace of the Holy Spirit as Donna and Leyla testified to in their echo. We believe this through Faith and we're reminded of this in our first reading of daily Mass today. John says: *Beloved: We have this confidence in God, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, we know that what we have asked him for is ours.*

If her prayers helped with evangelization that weekend, how important do you think it is to pray for the priests and deacons that their preaching be made clear each week; for an effective homily that reaches out not just to the faithful present, but to evangelize the few that there who don't regularly attend Mass?

Earlier in Barbara's witness she said that at times she didn't know what to say and just didn't have the right words that would be effective. In those times we are reminded of Paul's words: *the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will.* The key word here is that God knows the desires of our heart even if we don't know what to say or how to pray. Barbara didn't know what to say. ***Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.***

Barbara acted upon the prompting of the Holy Spirit and her mother's desire for a Mass was heard. She made it happen through the guidance of Faith in Christ because the Mass was pleasing to God. Again, if we ask anything according to His Will, he hears us!

Barbara hit upon a good point when she witnessed to the peace brought to her through the Holy Spirit. I love the ocean too and I sailed it for a full 4 years when I was in the Navy. The vastness of the ocean is great. But out at sea, I was also better able to see the stars. The vastness of the universe is even greater and nearly incomprehensible. To this day, I'll sit out in the backyard and just look up to the stars in quiet contemplation of the greatness of God and let His peace permeate my whole being! "Be still and know that I am God" as Barbara's go to psalm tells us.

A few weeks back I gave a homily for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent when we lit the candle of peace. There are 3 different types of peace that we can experience. The first kind of peace is Peace WITH God. Jesus Christ made peace between God and man by taking on the punishment of our sins. We are no longer at enmity with God and we can expect to live with Him now for all of eternity. It's the greatest gift of peace.

The second kind of peace is peace FROM God. It's the calm center we can find in the midst of life's storms by placing our trust in His providential care for us. This is the peace we're talking about today in the silence of prayer and contemplation.

I said there was a 3<sup>rd</sup> kind of peace. That would be Peace with Others. It's the stillness and calm of the Spirit felt from within when the people around us push our buttons. I'm sure that many of you will agree that we usually pray for this kind of peace more intensely around the holidays! It's the Peace from Christ which we share in life's relationships with other Christians; "it's our endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace with each other" as it says in Ephesians. Sometimes words aren't necessary; we evangelize simply through the silent ministry of presence in love for one another.

So in closing, I say to you, may the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit be with you all!