

Homily – San Fernando Cathedral

January 1, 2019

This morning we return to the Christmas story of one week ago – the stable in Bethlehem and the message of the shepherds, the first evangelizers, who announce that the Savior has been born. The gospel comes first to the poor and lowly in spirit. And Mary treasures and reflects on the shepherds' message in her heart.

Our attention today is drawn to Mary, the Mother of God. Her motherhood is a blessing from God that brings salvation to the Church. Mary is the Mother of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Today is the 52nd celebration of the World Day of Peace by the Church.

In his message for today, Pope Francis describes peace like “a delicate flower struggling to blossom on the stony ground of violence. We know that the thirst for power at any price leads to abuses and injustice. . . . When political life is not seen as a form of service to society as a whole, it can become a means of oppression, marginalization, and even destruction.” The Holy Father points out that “if exercised with basic respect for the life, freedom and dignity of persons, political life can be an outstanding form of charity.”

However, peacemaking is the challenge of everyone, not only politicians. Pope Francis says that “authentic political life, grounded in law and in frank and fair relations between individuals, experiences renewal whenever we are convinced that every woman, man, and generation brings the promise of new relational, intellectual, cultural and spiritual energies. That kind of trust is never easy to achieve, because human relations are complex, especially in our times, marked by a climate of mistrust rooted in fear of others or of strangers, or anxiety about one’s personal security.”

We need only think of the xenophobia, racism, and lack of concern for the natural environment so prevalent in our society today. More than ever we need what the Holy Father calls “artisans of peace who can be messengers and authentic witnesses of God the Father, who wills the good and the happiness of the human family.”

Let us listen again to the song of Mary, the Mother of God and Queen of Peace, in her *Magnificat*: “He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm; he has scattered the proud in their conceit . . . and has lifted up the lowly.” Dear Mother Mary, help us to be “artisans of peace!”