



SAINT MARGARET  
PARISH

31<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A

**Rev. Mr. Steven Roth**

Walking uptown on Fifth avenue in New York City, there is a wonderful spot where looking to the left is a large statue of the Greek god, Atlas. He is depicted in the traditional way, with the world's globe on his shoulders. People are running all around this statue in the typical New York style hurry. The beeping of cars and buses fills the air. Yet, looking to the opposite side of Fifth Avenue stands the great Cathedral of St. Patrick. A beautiful, tall, stone structure ... and once inside, the typical New York rush quickly screeches to halt. The running of business people is now replaced with people sitting down in meditation. The beeping of car horns is now replaced with the hush of quiet prayer. The contrast between these places can't be overlooked. Because while it is craziness that surrounds Atlas, it is peace that permeates the cathedral.

It is that very peace that our Psalm spoke so clearly about this morning. We sang, "in You Lord, I have found my peace." Yet so often we structure our lives and decisions on just the opposite. So often our lives rephrase this Psalm from, "in you Lord I have found my peace" to "in money I am hoping to find peace. In a large home or prestigious job, I hope I will find peace." Perhaps even at times we may look to alcohol or some addiction, searching for peace, yet to no avail.

Because of God's great love for us, expressed in His creation of our free will, we can chose to spend our lives in search of peace as though we are uncertain or unaware of where peace can be found. We can spend our lives blindly assuming that our bank account will offer us peace. And so we pour all our energy into building up our account but never really finding peace. This is not only a choice for own lives, but this choice begins to effect the lives of our families. Because while we continue to search for peace in all the wrong areas, we bring others with us. So many of our high school and college students very honestly reflect this ... "My Dad told me if I choose this career I can earn a lot. My Mom told me if I go to this college, I will be set for life."

Yet we must recognize that it is our choice. It is God's desire to gift us with this peace, if only we allow Him to. Just like in New York, we can choose to walk past the cathedral and not enter. So, too, can we choose to ignore God's offer of peace in our lives.

In this sacred meal, this theme of peace, more importantly, this reality of God's invitation to peace, is so clear. We already sang our Gloria, a prayer that rejoices in the birth of Christ bringing peace. Before we receive communion we will hear a prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, You said to Your apostles, I leave you peace, my peace I give to you." The priest, then standing in the name of Christ as the presider at our Eucharist, offers us this peace when he says, "the peace of the Lord be with you." Just as our Liturgy reflects, so too is God's invitation of peace, not limited to be experienced solely within the walls of this sacred place, as the very last words of the Mass reflect this when the deacon directs us, "go in the peace of Christ." While it is the hope of the Liturgy that we find ourselves at the highpoint, the apex of our lives where here we are fed and nourished in this peace...we still must go out and spread and experience this peace in the world.

In no way am I trying to be naïve. Bills do not get paid with peace. Mortgages and tuitions can't be paid with peace. On the other hand, the debts of our hearts, those yearnings for a sense of contentment and inner peace cannot be paid with any amount of money. "In You Lord I have found my peace." And so, as Catholics we need to do a balancing act if you will. Our tradition as believers has always been to work hard and be successful in the world. But not at the price of losing our inner peace that God so earnestly wishes to immerse us in our relationship with Him.

While offered, it is our choice. I think the place on Fifth Avenue I spoke of earlier can offer us one more insight into this choice in our lives. Both the cathedral and this outdoor garden seek to depict for us, an image. On the Avenue, it is Atlas... in the cathedral, there are numerous statues of different saints. Atlas, as you may recall is depicted with the world on his shoulders. But interestingly, the weight of the world seems to burden him so, that he is unable to stand up straight despite his obvious physical strength. Yet in the cathedral, the statues of saints that surround the main altar depict something totally different. Each statue reflects the person to be standing upright. Not burdened with weight but upright and with a face of peace. Even those saints who were martyrs and bear the means in which they died on their person, even these people are depicted to stand in confidence, stand in peace.

Whether standing in the shadows of Atlas or inside the great Cathedral of Saint Patrick or even here in Bel Air, let us pray that we may not only say, but believe and find that our lives truly reflect the Psalm we just sang. "In You Lord, I have found my peace."