

May 9, 2010 – Sixth Sunday of Easter
The Very Reverend Dr. Philip C. Linder

“Lord take my lips and speak through them; take our minds and think through them; take our hearts and set them on fire for your Holy Gospel.”
Amen.

Our world is less peaceful than it was in the 20th century. Today in 2010 it is not that war is more prevalent than in centuries past, but rather it is the exacerbation of war and terrorism by a 24-7 news cycle that make it seem so. The terrorist attempt in New York City’s Times Square has been before us every day this past week. And as if peace was not already a rare enough commodity, we have the constant interruptions of our hours, minutes, and seconds, by instant communications through texting, emails, and cell phone calls. If we do not consciously choose not to be connected there is never a moment of true peace.

Most recently we have been exposed to the awful phenomenon of cyber-bullying. Bullying of an individual by another or by a group has now been taken beyond the schoolyard to the realm of electronic communications. A young person being bullied can no longer go to the privacy of their home to escape it the way many of us could as children, now the bullying continues through texting, Facebook, and even websites dedicated to such. This past January, a 15 year-old named Phoebe Prince of South Hadley, Massachusetts, took her own life after allegedly being relentlessly bullied by six other teenagers from her new school.

Jesus said to his disciples, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.* How as Christians do we today hear these words of Jesus? And perhaps more importantly, how do we live and be promoters of the peace that Christ has promised to us? Jesus was clear that his was not the “peace” that the world offers, if there even is such a thing, but rather God’s “peace.” To reach God’s peace I believe that Christ was saying that you and I must think like God.

You are probably aware that our bodies are 75% water, and our brains are 85% water. However to really experience water you must immerse yourself in it or you must drink it into your body. God is the same way—you must immerse yourself in God, and you begin this journey by practicing radical humility before God. The desire is for oneness with God in Christ Jesus.

How do we think like God? Well, we begin with the simple practice that no longer will we make excuses, because God never makes excuses. So whatever excuses about anything that you came to Trinity with today, throw them out, and instead begin to lay claim to your Christian life, focusing upon the peace of God.

Can we as followers of Jesus offer peace to those who do not wish us well...to those who are non-peaceful in our presence? It was Goethe who once said, “Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them become what they are capable of being.” Jesus ultimately always chose peace, even under the brutal hands of those who arrested him and beat him—it was in peace that Christ allowed himself to be nailed to the cross.

You and I always have the ability to respond as Christ would and say, “I can choose peace, rather than this.”

For the past nine years I have been part of a clergy colleague group that meets once a month for mutual support, prayer, and wisdom. There are seven Episcopal priests from throughout the diocese and one Episcopal therapist who serves as our facilitator. This group has been one of the most significant of my life and ministry—we support one another, we challenge one another, we pray for one another. This past Thursday when we met, I was particularly rested, especially feeling God’s peace. Then when one of my colleagues said “Philip, I just came across a recent study by Peter Drucker that I thought you would be interested in. Drucker’s study named in order the three most stressful jobs in America: number 1. President of a University 2. CEO of a Hospital, and number 3. Pastor of a large church.” I thanked him for sharing as my restfulness and peacefulness began to leave me.

You too are challenged to live in the peace that Christ offers; this is what God desires for you. Your profession and work as well may be filled with stress. Certainly on this Mothers’ Day we give thanks for all of our mothers, partly because we witness that although motherhood is beautiful, it is as well very demanding and stressful.

In this morning’s Gospel Jesus was claiming the peace that we will know if we follow him as our Lord, and have this relationship be the foundation of our lives. The promise of Christ is that in living in Him and seeking Him first your life will know the peace of God. That no matter how conflicted

the world may be and no matter how stressful at times our individual lives may seem, we are to live and be the peace of Jesus Christ.

May you live and be the peace of Jesus. +Amen.