

Anglican Church of Freiburg
Sunday Service of the 2nd of January 2021
Homily

Four Prayers for the New Year

As we bid adieu to 2021 and journey into 2022 what is our primary impression of the year bygone and what is our primary hope for the new year. Yes, the Pandemic though not as harshly as the previous year did make 2021 a year of uncertainties, yet life went on. We have much to thank the Lord for. The very fact that we are alive and together in worship albeit with restrictions is in itself something to rejoice in the Lord. New Year's Day is normally a day of new resolutions, new hopes and new dreams. What are our dreams for us as a person, a family, a church and a nation?

I would draw your attention to four promises which could be our prayers for the new year from the Psalm that we read today.

Psalm 147:13-15

For he strengthens the bars of your gates;

 he blesses your children within you.

¹⁴ He grants peace within your borders;

 he fills you with the finest of wheat.

Protect Us O Lord

The Bars of the Gate is an imagery not very familiar in the digital age for several people but most of the elderly or those from rustic settings would understand the imagery. The gates of the fortified cities were protected with bars so that the enemy would not be able to find their way into the city- there was little scope for security breach once the gates were properly secured.

The very fact that we are able to celebrate a new year despite all the turmoil and turbulence of the year bygone is because the one keeping watch did not slumber. The Lord ensured that the bars of the gates were secure.

As we enter into the new year our first prayer is the same, Protect us O Lord. This protection is for our personal lives, our family lives, our community lives, our ecclesial lives our national lives and our lives with creation.

The Lover of the Song of Songs relishing the sight of full-grown grapes is reminded- Beware of little foxes. (2:15) I would perhaps pray with you this morning- Protect our Lives from Little Foxes. Our personal lives can be devoured by a little fox called BUSY. Our family lives can be put astray by a little fox called 'NO TIME'. Our faith life could be challenged by a little fox called "Sufficiency". Our community life can be disturbed by a little fox called "Insensitivity". We can go on.

Let us therefore pray- Strengthen the bars of our gates O Lord so that we are under your mighty protection through calm terrains and turbulent terrains

Bless Our Children O Lord

The Psalmist affirms that the Lord blesses our children within in. I particularly like the word within. Being with children within the homes, within the churches is a great blessing that cannot be easily explained. The Lord promises to bless our Children.

What are the basic blessings for a child? In no particular order they include- a happy home, caring parents, food to eat, education, recreation, space to play and the right of leisure. In a world where millions of children are denied of these basic rights our prayer should extend to all the children of the world with a strong conviction that no child should be denied a happy childhood. . The fundamental right to non-discrimination in the name of class, caste, colour, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, first language, nativity or nationality status. The right to be heard. The right for justice and protection from abuse.

Our children live in a very complex world. The predators are not only waiting to pounce on them in cyber space and the dark web but also around them in several forms and to be blessed as children is a wonderful experience in that context.

How can we as a church be a blessing to children and the young people? This would be a primary question that we should keep seeking answers together.

Grant Us Peace O Lord

Peace in the borders is a big wish for several people. In a year that saw several people fleeing their borders and seeking asylum in alien nations Peace is a complex reality.

Talk to an asylum seeker and try to understand their story where they faced conflict, realised they could no longer stay in their home towns, thought of fleeing and launching out not knowing where they were heading to. The Plight of the Boat Peoples and Paperless Peoples should be something that our youth groups and bible study groups seriously ponder and discuss.

Peace is also a personal experience. To be at peace with oneself and with God is a great blessing. Peace within our homes is as important too. Some homes continue to be Heavens on Earth and some others MidSummer Night Mares. A peaceful home is a great gift of life.

Peace within the church- given the stories that are being unearthed each day where we try our best to make it safe spaces but are numbed at the historic aggressions in the garb of religion.

As we pray this prayer- Lord grant us peace- we should also be asking this question What is Peace. Can I have Peace Unless everyone else around me is able to equally Live in Peace.

This prayer is therefore is a revolutionary prayer that calls us to a pro-active intervention for the sake of peace. Jesus said- Blessed are the Peace Makers for they shall be called the children of God.

Our Prayer for the new year- Grant Us Peace O Lord.

Satisfy Us O Lord

This World has enough for each persons need but not for each person's greed. Exploitation of resources happen when people give priority to Profit rather than Justice. The Pandemic, the Eco System alterations and Climate Change has increased hunger and poverty around us. About 15 percent of the food produced is wasted before it reached the market and we could imagine the food wastage in the consumeristic society when the world is reeling under poverty.

Contentment or Satisfaction with what is basically needed should be a priority if we are seriously concerned about a God of justice and equality. It is basic human nature that we are always satisfied only with a "little more".

A content heart values each of the small and big gifts from God. Instead of complaining of what it does not have it rejoices at what it has. It is like a calm canoe unfaced by the storm. A seed if contentment produces a harvest of peace- so the old adage goes.

The image of Manna should be a reminder for all of us. When there was hunger Manna was a gift from- Enough for Everyone. On the day before Sabath double the portion. Even then people tried to gather more than they needed and found that it was not useful to them. Being satisfied is therefore a great gift.

Satisfy the world with enough Justice O Lord, Enough Truth O Lord, Enough Righteousness O Lord.

Have a blessed 2022

Vinod Victor