

Pastor Bill Mugnolo

St. John/Zion Parish

March 2020 Newsletter Article: "A Time of Peace"

Amidst the compelling narrative of the early Church's history, Acts 9:31 seems like a mere footnote. It reads, "So the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied."

At this point in its early history, the Church had already endured many challenges. There was the dramatic growth in the aftermath of Pentecost. There had been the first persecutions that led to the martyr's death of Stephen. It had just witnessed the dramatic conversion of its great enemy, Saul—later known as the Apostle Paul.

At this point, there would still be challenges that lay ahead. James, the brother of John, would become the first of the Twelve Apostles to die for the cause of Christ. The Church would also receive its first non-Jewish, or Gentiles, members. The Church's center for its mission activity would leave Jerusalem and become centered to the north of Israel in Antioch.

The phase of the Church recorded in Acts 9:31 was a time, we might say, where it was "catching its breath". The Lord gave to it a time of peace to reflect upon where it had been in the past and to prepare for the unseen challenges that still lay ahead. But it certainly didn't stand still as it was being built up and its numbers even multiplied.

In my tenure as your pastor, I would have to say that both St. John and Zion are going through a similar "time of peace". We are past the times, in both Elyria and Lorain, of massive de-industrialization that greatly impacted our congregations' membership and ministry. Ahead of us are both unseen challenges and those that we can see and must face. Among them are the continual upkeep of aging facilities that were built over a half century ago for much larger memberships. Then, there is the challenge of reaching out to a younger generation that has become disconnected from Christ and His Church in what is being called a "post-modern", "post-Christian" society.

Having come out of a very conflicted parish in New York, and then through an all too brief first pastorate here in Ohio, I've welcomed this "time of peace" where I've been able to "catch my breath". May the Lord continue to grant us rest as He prepares us for what lie ahead and the challenges it will involve (Jeremiah 29:11).

Your Brother in Christ,

Pastor Bill