

Weekly Reflection

Reverend Steven M. Pautler



Sunday, May 25, 2025 | Sixth Sunday of Easter | Echoes in a Small Town: A Peace the World Cannot Give.

“Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you.” – John 14:27

When I hear the words of Jesus in today’s Gospel—*“Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him”*—my mind returns to a small town of 850 souls, where I was just a boy of 14 serving at a funeral Mass for a young man who never made it home from Vietnam.

He had only days left in his tour. He had a mom and dad, classmates, a parish, and a whole town that felt the sting of his absence. His father, the town barber—one of those classic old-time shops where you didn’t just get a haircut, but heard stories, traded wisdom, and talked about the weather, the Cardinals, and life. He was a man of grit and heart, who had sent his son off in love and pride. And now, with a white-knuckled kind of grief, he buried him.

That day, walking from the church to the cemetery, I remember thinking, *“In four years, I might be walking into this myself.”* It sobered me. It formed me.

And yet—Jesus promises something today that is deeper than the grave: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you.”* That kind of peace isn’t shallow comfort. It’s not the peace of tidy answers or sentimental slogans. It’s the kind of peace that walks beside a barber in his darkest hour. It’s the kind of peace that enters a family’s kitchen where there’s one less chair. It’s the kind of peace that kneels beside an altar server who’s too young to understand death, but old enough to feel the weight of sacrifice.

Today, we remember the heroes whose names are etched in stone and those whose names are written only in the quiet corners of our hearts—those who wore uniforms and those who wore aprons or scrubs or held hands through long hospital nights. We remember the “non-heroes,” as we sometimes call them, but who in the eyes of God, have kept His word through quiet fidelity, through love of neighbor, through acts of mercy no one else saw.

And that, brothers and sisters, is exactly what Jesus meant when He said *“We will come to him and make our dwelling with him.”* God is not far from suffering. He moved into the neighborhood. Into our pain. Into our cemeteries. Into our memories.

So on this Memorial Day, let us honor the fallen by living with courage. Let us keep Christ’s word by loving as they loved—sacrificially, wholly, and even quietly. And let us never forget: the peace Christ gives is not the peace of escape, but the peace of presence. The peace of a God who walks with us, weeps with us, and raises us—every single one of us—in glory.

Sunday Homily

Reverend Steven M. Pautler



Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 25, 2025 – Cycle C

Acts 15:1–2, 22–29, Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6, 8, Revelation 21:10–14, 22–23, John 14:23–29

Theme: From the Barber's Chair to the New Jerusalem: A Memorial of Sacrifice, A Gospel of Peace!

There are days on the calendar that feel more like heartbeats than holidays. Memorial Day is one of those days. It beats with the memory of sacrifice, the ache of loss, and the stubborn hope that even in death, love remains.

I remember serving at a funeral Mass when I was just 14 years old. A young man from our parish had been killed in Vietnam—just days before he was supposed to come home. It shook our little town of 850 people like an earthquake. The ripples reached everyone. His father was our barber—an old-fashioned, small-town kind of man who had seen everything and could talk about anything. But even he couldn't find the words for the grief of burying his son.

I remember walking from the church to the cemetery that day, cassock heavy on my shoulders, wondering if in four short years I'd be drafted too. Wondering if my parents would ever feel that kind of pain. Wondering how peace could possibly make a home in a world where such goodbyes are forced upon us.

And yet... Jesus says something to us today that dares to enter into that grief. *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you."* The world offers peace through power. Jesus offers peace through presence. The world tells us peace is the absence of conflict. Jesus tells us peace is the presence of God. *"We will come to him," He says, "and make our dwelling with him."* (John 14:23) Even in the broken barbershops. Even in the casket-lined cemeteries. Even in the aching hearts of grieving families.

That's what Acts reminds us of today—that the Church, even from its earliest days, knew that faith had to be practical. The Apostles didn't burden the people with extra requirements; they chose instead to lift burdens. "It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities."

Isn't that the role of faith today too? Not to add weight—but to lift it. Not to demand more—but to remind people of the One who has already given everything. Memorial Day is more than patriotism. It's more than a flag or a speech or a barbecue. It is a holy echo—a call to remember those who gave up everything for something greater than themselves.

And Psalm 67 sings that song today: *"May God have pity on us and bless us... May the peoples praise you, O God."* This is a day of blessing and gratitude. A day to praise through tears, to remember through silence, and to honor through lives lived well. But Revelation gives us the final word—a vision of a city where there's no need for sun or moon, "for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb."

That's the end of the story. That's where it all points. Not to a battlefield, not even to a grave—but to the New Jerusalem. A place where every sacrifice is redeemed, every tear wiped away, every fallen hero welcomed into a light that never fades. So yes, today we remember that young man who never made it back from Vietnam. We remember his mother and father, their grief carried in silence. We remember all those who sacrificed not only on battlefields, but in homes, hospitals, fire stations, classrooms, and churches. And we do so not with despair, but with hope. Because Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, has made His dwelling among us—and has promised that His peace will last longer than war, longer than sorrow, longer than death. And in His peace, may we find the strength to love, to remember, and to carry forward what others laid down their lives to protect.