

A decorative scrollwork design consisting of several large, elegant, swirling flourishes that frame the text on the top and right sides.

**Holy Father God,** give us peace in the midst of the storms of life. Strengthen us in Your truth and grace. Help us to replace complaining with contentment, being grateful for every situation we are in, every person we encounter, and every lesson we are taught. Make us willing to sacrifice for others and to be thankful for the opportunity to live a life that is meaningful.

**In Jesus name. Amen.**

**FATHER ANTON’S WORDS OF WISDOM:** As a child I never cared much for the language used in today’s epistle reading, and I still don’t today. Jesus never intended for his Kingdom to be likened to anything on earth. He never spoke of armies or the use of violence to be used to “convert” people. Here again we see that even the apostles had difficulty in understanding Jesus’ message. Paul speaks the way he does because violence was so common in the time of Jesus, and continued to be throughout the lifetime of the apostles.

Sadly today violence still exists as a way of “conversion” in many instances, and at times seems the only way humanity can respond to oppression and injustice. It’s not surprising then that Paul is likening the virtues of Christianity to the armour of a soldier in battle. We are not soldiers, for the good news must never be spread by violence or coercion, but rather by word and example. We are ambassadors of Christ – spreading the good news as our way of life. The “armour” of God is faith, for without it we are helpless. Truth is necessary so we may keep firmly grounded in the light of Christ’s love. The “breastplate of righteousness” reminds us that our heart must always be of the same Spirit of Christ... filled with love and compassion, for without it we are filled with self-righteousness which is the opposite of love. Our feet must be willing to walk the way of the Lord, to lead others when needed, but more often than not to walk

beside them as a companion who shares their journey. The “helmet” of salvation is described as the sword of the Spirit, which is God’s word.

In other words we listen to God speak, and meditate on what these words mean to our present generation – we understand this in faith, and practice it with common sense – producing spiritual fruit and not “religious nuts.” Jesus in today’s gospel affirms all of the above when challenging the leaders of the temple with regard to a “literal” interpretation of the scriptures and the laws of the temple. We are gifted with intelligence and reason as well as conscience – we know deep within our souls when something is right, and when something is unjust and we are expected to act accordingly. We live in a world of brokenness and as Christians we are called to bind wounds and to heal them. We are called to ease suffering and pain wherever possible and to speak out against injustice and oppression. This takes courage and conviction, but with Christ all things are possible.

**LET US PRAY:** *Lord Jesus; your message was so simple, yet we still fail to understand. Your Kingdom is not of this world, but it begins here. You refused violence as a way to bring others to you, help us to remember when the opportunity arises to share your good news with others, it is our words and actions that will draw them to your love. May I never judge others regardless of race, color or creed for we are all your children. I will learn to be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Amen.*