

Easter 6 Yr C 22 May 2022

My peace I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled

John 14:23-29

Today many people live in fear, fear about many things. We are terrified by the enormity of evil in the world. In conversations with other people, each of us in the last months has probably heard about their experience of the anxiety they are going through; maybe we shared such feelings with others—fear of war, fear of further electricity and gas bills, fear of rising food prices.

In today's Gospel, we have a scene from the Last Supper where Jesus tells the Apostles: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27).

Jesus gently tries to prepare the disciples for the day when he will no longer be with them in bodily form. We know the story, but they did not know what was coming next, so they are confused. God helps them, God helps us to grow even in times of confusion.

Jesus invites us not to cling to his physical presence but to be open to a deeper way of being in a relationship with Him. I think, often, we find it hard to let go and embrace the new. But in clinging to the past, we are in danger of allowing the present to become dead to us.

What destroys peace is not the number of difficult situations but how we experience them. Jesus does not offer a life without hardship. Jesus never and nowhere said that He would take away all difficulties from our lives. What Jesus offers is the correct way to perceive them.

"Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with (abide with) them" (John 14:23). The word "abide" is John's "preferred and primary" way to describe discipleship. Abide signifies to stay, to remain, to dwell, to lodge, to last, to persist, and to continue. God does not want to be a guest in our lives, only appearing there temporarily. God wants to be with us constantly.

How can we prepare our hearts to host a guest who is going to take up residence within our lives? How can we prepare ourselves for Jesus to abide with/in us?

In the original Greek text of John's Gospel, Jesus says that "Those who love me will keep my word" (John 14:23). The term *tereo* (to keep) literally means: to guard, to protect. We prepare for Jesus to abide in us by being faithful to his teachings in the absence of visible signs of His presence. Jesus invites us to do more than focus on difficulties and problems. A mature way of experiencing difficulties is achieved through spiritual progress, day after day, moving towards higher horizons.

Jesus says today that He gives us a different kind of peace than the world gives. Why does Jesus call this peace "different"? At the time of Jesus, the world is "enjoying" a kind of peace—called "the pax Romana." This Roman peace was founded on Roman military prowess, funded by Roman taxation, and maintained by Roman soldiers. It is dominance rather than peace.

Jesus uses the word "shalom" when speaking of this different peace. Shalom in Hebrew and Aramaic was both a greeting and a farewell. Originally it meant soundness of body. And over time it began to be used as the liberation that the Messiah was expected to bring. This word means the health, wholeness, and integrity that comes from God.

This word is close to the heart which longs for the fullness of life. Shalom means prosperity, the prosperity of everyday existence, the harmony in which man finds himself in relation to God, other people, all nature and himself.

Peace for Jesus is not simply the absence of violence and conflicts. It is something much more positive, much more profound. Paradoxically, it can exist side by side with times of great

turmoil. It is something internal, not external. It comes from an inner sense of security, a conviction that God is with us and in us and that we are in the right place. It is something that not even the threat of death can take away.

St. Augustine, in one of his sermons, said: "In fact, God is not far away. You are the one who makes God far or near. Love, and He will come closer. Love, and He will live in you. The Lord is nearby. Don't worry about anything" (Sermon 21).

The fruit of God's presence in our life is peace. Only this peace in our hearts, can be the foundation of peace in the world and can spread peace to our communities.

Jesus today gives us the certainty that if we trust in Him, He will fill our hearts with true peace - that peace that lasts forever, not one that is just a passing feeling. Our lives may contain disappointments; people may let us down, but God will never fail us.

The following prayer, known as the Peace Prayer of St Francis, is perfect to pray when we seek to live in genuine peace. This prayer is a beautiful reminder of what that peace looks like in everyday life.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.