

Sunday, May 26, 2019

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

2nd Reading: Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23

Responsorial: Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8

Gospel: John 14:23-29

Receiving Jesus' Gift of Peace and Giving it to Others

My peace I give to you. (John 14:27)

Wouldn't you like a little more peace in your life and in the world? News reports are full of stories of conflicts, both national and international. Relationships suffer from discord or disagreements. Even our own thoughts and desires can be conflicted at times. Where can peace come from?

From Jesus, of course! In today's Gospel, when he offers peace to his disciples, the word Jesus uses is the Hebrew word shalom, which means welfare and wholeness. Shalom is used as both a greeting and a farewell—usually between two friends wishing the best for each other.

But Jesus doesn't simply wish his disciples peace; he gives it to them. The peace of salvation. The tranquility of knowing that he has restored them to his Father in heaven. The joyful certitude that everything has been put in its proper order, and all hindrances to peace have been removed.

Jesus gives that peace to you too. It starts internally, as you come to know the mercy, love, and salvation you have received in Christ. Every time you go to Confession, every time you pray before the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus' peace takes a greater hold in your life. It matures every time you stop yourself from getting agitated by what you see around you or within you. Every time you pray "Come, Holy Spirit," you are reaching out to the One who speaks peace into your heart. Gradually, your heart opens up to trust that God's love for you can overcome any conflict you see.

As you cultivate that internal peace, it will begin to extend out from you into your relationships. You'll be less likely to respond in kind if someone blows up at you. You'll find it easier to keep smiling when someone cuts you off in traffic. You might even seek reconciliation with an estranged relative or show kindness to an unfriendly neighbor.

And from there, who knows? As each of us cultivates peace, it will make the world a more and more peaceful place.

"Jesus, thank you for the gift of your peace!"

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion:

1. The first reading tells us of the actions of the early Church in addressing conflicts. It includes this letter sent by the Church leaders: *The apostles and the elders, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia of Gentile origin: greetings. Since we have heard that some of our number who went out without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind, we have with one accord decided to choose representatives and to send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ... "It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right. Farewell."*
 - In what ways does this letter demonstrate the importance that the leaders of the early Church placed on unity, and the authority they had in resolving conflicts?
 - How does this relate to the role of the Church today in maintaining unity and resolving doctrinal issues and conflicts?
 - Are there any areas in your life, your family's life, or the life of your parish where there is disunity? What steps can you take to be a peacemaker and to help resolve conflicts?
2. The responsorial psalm begins with these words: *May God have pity on us and bless us; may he let his face shine upon us. So may your way be known upon earth; among all nations, your salvation.* It ends with these words: *May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you! May God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear him!*
 - In what ways do the words of the responsorial psalm apply to you personally, and to us as a nation?
 - What reasons do you have to personally praise the Lord? Why do we as a nation need to especially praise God?
3. The Second Reading from the Book of Revelation describes St. John's vision of our new heavenly city. It opens with these words: *The angel took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal.* The reading ends with these words: *I saw no temple in the city for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb. The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb.*
 - In what way does the imagery (precious stone, jasper, crystal) of this reading express the inexpressible wonder of living eternally with God in Heaven?
 - Our life on earth is very short. Our life in heaven is very long. How important to you is it to focus on your future life with God? How can you allow the reality of your heavenly destiny have a greater impact on how you live your life?
 - What do the ending words of the reading mean to you?
4. The Gospel Reading begins with these words: *Jesus said to his disciples: "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. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me. I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid."*
 - What is your understanding of these words of Jesus?
 - How would you describe the role of the Holy Spirit in deepening the life and love of Christ that is within you?
 - What steps can you take to open yourself even more to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?
5. The meditation is a reflection on these words from the Gospel reading: *My peace I give to you* (John 14:27). It summarizes the Gospel reading with these words: *Jesus doesn't simply wish his disciples peace; he gives it to them. The peace of salvation. The tranquility of knowing that he has restored them to his Father in heaven. The joyful certitude that everything has been put in its proper order, and all hindrances to peace have been removed. Jesus gives that peace to you too. It starts internally, as you come to know the mercy, love, and salvation you have received in Christ.* The meditation ends with these words: *As each of us cultivates peace, it will make the world a more and more peaceful place.*
 - How would you describe the difference between the peace Jesus wants to give us and the peace the world wants to give us? Do you know this peace?
 - What steps can you take to open your heart in a greater way to the Lord's peace?
 - What can you do to give this peace away to others in order to help *make the world a more and more peaceful place?*

Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for his peace, and for the grace to be an instrument of his peace for others. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Jesus, thank you for the gift of your peace!"

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National Fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]