

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

Pastor – Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Victoria, BC, Canada

After experiencing real peace and joy in Jesus, St. Paul exclaimed in Ephesians, 2:14 “For He is our Peace”, referring to Jesus as the Peace who unites everyone and everything; the one who breaks the walls of division and expels hostilities from our lives.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus states a promise: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.” The peace that Jesus offers is different, in that it is consistent and concrete. To love Jesus, in essence, is to feel the presence of ‘the Peace’ in us. The restless soul never finds peace and is unable to love Jesus. In his famous autobiography, *Confessions*, St. Augustine wrote: “You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

The peace that Jesus gives is sown in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, teaches everything, reveals everything, and keeps us mindful of the teachings of Jesus. The main question, in this chapter, is what would happen to the disciples after the departure of Jesus? In answer, Jesus assures them that in his absence, the Holy Spirit will provide the guidance that will be needed: as their helper and defender in a hostile world. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, will ensure that the disciples will not be led astray by the falsehood of an unbelieving world because: “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans, 5:5).

The kind of peace that the world gives is temporary in character and is conditional. Let us consider this scenario: a child cries relentlessly for their parents to provide some chocolate. To pacify the child, chocolate is given, and the child stops crying; happily consuming the chocolate. For a moment, in the silence of the child’s delight, the parents are also given the reprieve of some momentary peace. However, after the chocolate is consumed, the child may begin to cry and demand for chocolates again; crying until the child is given what they want. Until then, the momentary peace for the parents is lost until the child stops crying again. This cycle may continue, with the child waiting for the next opportunity to make their demands again.



Our life also undergoes this cycle of identifying some kind of emptiness or void to fill, and seeking to satisfy it, going from one craving to another in an attempt to stop the crying of the ‘craving child’ within us, to find peace.

In the Gospel, we are told that the world cannot and will never give everlasting peace; that the so-called peace the world gives cannot satisfy our inner desire for real peace. We are also introduced to the Holy Spirit as being in opposition to the world. From this perspective, the world is presented as everything that is opposed to Jesus, who is the Truth; making everything else a lie. Jesus as the Truth has nothing in common with Satan, the father of lies. This is revealed through the three temptations of Jesus, illustrating how the world tries to bind us to a false concept of peace that is always conditional, temporary, and always prefixed with the provisional condition: “If you do this...”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, § 2304 states:

Respect for and development of human life require peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is "the tranquillity of order." Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity.

This is what Jesus meant when He said: “Whoever loves me will keep my word” (John 14:23). Keeping the word of Jesus is a life in communion with everyone, and is the real peace that Jesus offers. True peace is knowing that our lives are in God's hands. St. Francis De Sales said: “Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset.”

With St. Francis of Assisi, then, let us pray:

“Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.”