

6th Sunday of Easter (C)
(Acts 15:1-2. 22-29 / John 14:23-29)
26.05.2019
My PEACE I give to you

Dear brothers and sisters,

As we continue to celebrate Easter and welcome the presence of the Risen Lord in our lives in the here and now of our existence, the liturgy invites us to mull over the words of Jesus' last will and testament. One of the things we read therein retains my attention this morning. I share it with you:

“Jesus said to his disciples:
Peace I bequeath to you,
my own peace I give you,
a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you.”

I ask myself: What is the difference between the peace the world offers and the peace Jesus gives?

The peace the world offers is based on the good will of human beings. Its goal is the absence of conflicts. Those who propose this way invite people to enter into dialogue with one another in order to resolve their conflicts and in an effort to make them journey and work together. This is no small matter. It is not an easy way: Just think of the Brexit negotiations or the Stormont talks... Another earthly peace is the peace of mind offered to us by a world of innumerable insurance policies to cover every risk and all eventualities. This too is good and useful, but it is not enough. It is not fully satisfying. When it comes to peace of heart, we are looking for more than the human efforts just mentioned.

The peace offered by this world does not deliver us from the anguish of death. It leaves us with the question: what is death? What will happen to us after death?

The peace offered by the world does not offer us the forgiveness and deliverance we need from the guilt and shame we feel because of past actions.

The peace offered by this world does not provide us with an assurance of the presence of the one who created us and in whose image and likeness we are called to live so as to enter in his rest and peace. We all have in mind the famous words of St Augustine's Confession: “Our heart is restless until it rests in you, O Lord”.

The peace offered by Jesus is not something created by ourselves; it is a gift from God. It is a presence; more than that it is the inhabitation of our hearts not only by Jesus, but also by the Father and the Holy Spirit. We heard in today's gospel passage:

“If anyone loves me he will keep my word,
and my Father will love him,
and we shall come to Him and make our home with him”.

If we want to experience the presence and the peace of the Risen Christ within us, we have to keep his word. It is through his word that the Lord comes to us and distillates his own deep peace within us. And so, my dear brothers and sisters, how vital it is for us to listen to the Word of

God... and to do so on a regular basis! It is vital for our well-being that we meditate upon God's word, keep it and put it into practice if we want to experience the presence of the Risen Lord and the peace which proceeds from it. Day after day, the Word of the Lord enlightens our minds and hearts and brings us peace.

The Risen Lord who dwells within us is the one who suffered his passion, died on the Cross and rose from the dead. He is alive for ever. He promised us to share with us his victory over death. In the beginning of the same chapter fourteen of St John's gospel, we read:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled...

I am going now to prepare a place for you,

and after I have gone and prepared you a place,

I shall return to take you with myself, so that you may be with me where I am”.

Thanks to Christ's passion, death and resurrection, death is no longer a senseless end, but a passage, a beginning, a birth to eternal life with Christ. If we meditate upon Christ's promise day after day, the Lord will set us free from our fear and anguish of death. We shall know peace even when the thought of our forthcoming death comes to our mind. Please God, we shall be at peace when the event of our death itself occurs.

Christ died on the Cross for the forgiveness of our sins. The fact that the Father raised his Son from the dead is the sign of the outpouring of his forgiveness upon our world. The presence of the Risen Christ deep within us is a reminder that we are reconciled with the Father, that our sins are forgiven, that our shame and guilt have no reason to continue to overwhelm us. By the Lord's resurrection, our sins are forgiven; our shame and guilt are dissolved. We are at peace with God, with ourselves and with all others. Such peace is a peace the world cannot give; it is a peace that the Risen Christ alone can bestow upon us.

Let us open our hearts and minds to receive the presence of the Risen Lord and the gift of his peace in this Eucharist. Amen.