

July 22, 2018

JESUS ALONE CAN GIVE US REST AND PEACE!

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am delighted to be back in Waldorf! This has been a long and difficult road to recovery. I am glad the most difficult part is over. It is a good feeling to be home with all of you. I am grateful to God for all your personal prayers, your kind and comforting words, and for all the Masses offered for my healing! During this long recovery, I kept all your get-well cards in my room as a constant reminder that I was not alone. Your support meant so much while I was away.

As I was preparing for my Sunday homily this weekend and meditating on the Scriptures of this Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, two words kept coming to my mind: **Rest** and **Peace**! In Mark's Gospel (6:30-34), we are at the beginning of Jesus' Ministry. Jesus is in Galilee. He appointed his 12 Apostles and sent them two-by-two to announce the good news, to ask people to repent, and to heal the sick. His apostles had just returned from their mission and had gathered together with Jesus to report all they had done and taught. The first thing **Jesus** then tells them is: "**Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.**" Jesus knew that much more was to be asked of them, and He wanted them to be refreshed physically and spiritually.

In his letter to the Ephesians (2:13-18), St. Paul professes: "**Jesus is our peace...He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through Him we both have access in one spirit to the Father**". Jesus' desire for **oneness** is what **peace** is all about. Following His ascension into Heaven, **Jesus** sends **His Spirit** to us. He does not leave us alone. He remains the **mediator** who leads us to the **Father** and **His Spirit** who is active on earth.

We will be constantly reminded in this **year of the Holy Spirit** that Jesus is not only present to us **today** through **His word** and through the **Eucharist**, but **He** is present to each one of us at any time through **His Spirit**, who is both the **Spirit of the Son and of the Father**, as the Father and Son are **one**. We call this **spirit** the **Holy Spirit**, who is active in the seven Sacraments. This **oneness** in the **spirit** brings us **peace** when we allow the **Holy Spirit** to take over our lives. However, as we have been created in the **image of God**, we are **free** to make our own choices, including rejecting the Holy Spirit guided by our own self-centered interests. It is that self-centeredness of individuals, including elected officials and nations, which leads to tensions and a lack of peace, or worse, to wars.



Through the Prophet Jeremiah (23:1-6), the **Lord** promises: "*I myself will gather the remnant of my flock from all the lands ...and bring them back to their meadow...I will appoint shepherds for them so that they need no longer fear and tremble.*" This will be a time for **rest and peace**. This is echoed by the Psalmist (Psalm 23): "*The **Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.***" We know that **Jesus** is the one who gives us **repose** in verdant pastures and leads us to these waters of **rest**.

We believe that **Jesus alone can give us rest and peace**. Without **Him**, we are like sheep without a shepherd; lost to our own conflicting desires that lead to individual confrontations, battles of minds, and intense conflict. We are reminded of Jesus telling each one of us, "***Come to me all you who are laboring and wearied, and I will give you rest,***" (Matthew 11:28). Only Jesus brings rest and peace. Alone, without **Him** as our good shepherd, we cannot find rest. St. Augustine says it beautifully following his conversion after having experienced a sinful life, "***You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.***"

Are our hearts restless? Are we seeking peace in the pleasures of the world (food, drink, money, sex, power, stature)? Or do we hear Jesus' invitation to come to Him and let Him take care of our daily worries? Do we trust in **Him**? Over these last few weeks, my own heart has been restless. In a literal sense, my heart rate was much too fast following the surgery (over 120 pulses per minute). This was worrisome, not peaceful...and this was only the beginning. Once my heart rate returned to normal, the desire to return quickly to the parish made me restless – I was not listening to God! Finally, only when I could accept my new, physical limitations, was I able to transform those weeks of forced inactivity, into a "time to be with the Lord in a deserted place" as Jesus was with His 12 apostles after they returned from their two-by-two missions. Yes, sometimes we need to be in a desert; a place where there is no one and nothing to do but **trust in Him**. We call this today a time for **spiritual retreat!**

May we all ask the Holy Spirit to help us make use of these summer months as a time of rest for our bodies and minds!

One in Christ,

Fr. Alain