

Easter 6, May 22, 2022 (Jo 14:23-29; Ps 67; Acts 16:9-15; Rev 21:10, 22-2:5)

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, he filled the land with all kinds of living creatures. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness. . . .”

So God created humankind in his own image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. And they lived in the Garden called Eden, where they were surrounded by every blessed thing they could possibly need.

But it wasn't enough for them. When the opportunity arose to get more *knowledge*—to maybe even become as wise as *God*—they couldn't resist the temptation. Ever since then, we've known the difference between good and evil. And so we were banished from the Garden where God's perfection dwelt.

With *that* loss, we also lost the perfect peace of God. For thousands upon thousands of years humankind as a whole has been striving for *more*. More knowledge, more power, more control, and especially in our western world, more *stuff*.

Into this unsettled world comes Jesus. Speaking only hours before his arrest in another Garden—Gethsemane—he tells his closest friends he'll be leaving them soon. And he tells them not to worry. **The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, he says, will be sent by my Father and will remind you of everything I've said to you.**

But the most important thing Jesus says to them is this: **Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I don't give to you as the world gives. Don't let your hearts be troubled. Don't be afraid.**

Listen to Jesus from Matthew's gospel: **Come to me, all you who labor and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your soul. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light** (Mt 11:28-30).

What, exactly, is the *yoke* of Jesus? He tells us in the first verse of today's gospel: **Those who love me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.**

Are you *yoked* to Jesus in following his commands, in fulfilling his words, in *obeying* him? **Those who love me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.**

Remember that the kingdom of God and eternal life begin here and now, in *this* world. You entered the kingdom of God when you were baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, *sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever*. As his beloved, precious child, you are already yoked with him. And by living out that yoke, *you* can be an agent of his perfect peace that passes all understanding.

All the politicking, all the legislation in the world, won't stop the insanity of random shootings or mass killings, the cruelty of bullying, the brokenness of abuse. That kind of healing will never come from the top down—it has to begin from the ground up, from the *true peace* that lives in one heart and life at a time through the power and humility of Jesus, our Savior.

Those who love me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

When we pray, **Your kingdom come, your will be done**, we're praying we can open our hearts, souls, and lives to God, so he *can* make his home with us—so that *we* may be agents of peace in this life.

The eternal life that we live in now is a foreshadowing of the eternity to come. John describes that in today's text from Revelation. The New Jerusalem will have no temple in it, because the Lord Almighty and the Lamb will be the center of worship. There won't be any sun or moon to shine on it, because the glory of God will be its light.

In that divine and holy light, all nations will walk—not only the originally chosen Jews, but all who believe and are able to see the glory. And the center of the city is a garden that is truly paradise, a counterpart to the *first* garden in Eden.

Here flows the river of the water of life. Here grows the tree of life, which gives fruit for every season, and *the leaves of this tree are for the healing of the nations*. At last, in the new world created by God's undying love for us, we'll dwell in the peace Jesus gives that's so different from the things of this world.

God has promised to be with us here, in this life, at all times and in all places, through every situation of this world. That doesn't mean we won't suffer, or watch those we love suffer. It *does* mean we can cling to God and his promises to find the strength and courage to go on. That's the peace Jesus offered to his disciples, and to us.

That's the perfect peace he gives us in his very own body and blood: the peace that comes from assurance of forgiveness of all our sins.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, now and forever (Philippians 4:7). Amen.