

Peace I leave You

6th Sunday of Easter Γ C6Easter – May15, 2004

Every year shortly after Easter,
The priests and pastoral administrators
from throughout the Diocese of Rochester
meet for a Convocation with Bishop Clark.

This year we gathered for three days
At a hotel in Rochester to renew friendships,
pray together and listen to two excellent speakers
on the subject of Catholic spirituality.

Fr. Richard Rohr and Fr. Timothy Radcliff come from very
different backgrounds within the Church.

Fr. Radcliff is a Dominican priest from England who for several
years traveled the world as head of the Dominican Order of
Preachers. His spoke to us of the need to find inner peace in
the midst of life's storms.

Fr. Rohr, a Franciscan priest lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico
where he directs the Center for Action and Contemplation
which promotes the integration of social action and
contemplative or "centering" prayer.

Fr. Rohr also travels the world giving lectures on this ancient but
increasingly popular form of prayer which involves spending time
each day with God in quiet contemplation as a way of finding
inner peace.

Then two Sundays ago, Fr. Peter and I visited Mount Savior,
a Benedictine Monastery located near Elmira
to listen to Fr. Carl Arico, a priest from Newark, New Jersey
who spoke to us of yes - Centering Prayer
spending time each day in silence with God
as a way to find inner peace.

This Lent, as some of you know,
 was not the easiest time for many in the parish.
 Some days, the anger, and hurt and inner turmoil
 just seemed too much to take.

I remember comparing in my weekly bulletin article
 how some segments of the parish (myself included)
 were like the disciples who
 following the news of the resurrection,
 hid themselves in a room with the doors locked out of fear.

It took Jesus himself,
 breaking through the locked doors
 and in time sending his Spirit,
 to bring healing and peace they so badly needed.

Shortly after writing those words,
 Jesus sent into my life - three wonderful spiritual teachers
 – four if you count Fr. Peter
 All with the same message . . .

- Even in the midst of life's storms - peace is at hand
 Inner peace is available and waiting

And we can tap into that inner peace by

- stepping out of the noisy fray of daily life
- and quietly searching within - for the Spirit of God
 which resides in each of us.

Now does it sound familiar – like what we just heard Jesus tell
 his disciples in today's Gospel?

Shortly before his return to the Father
 Jesus shared with his disciples the very same principles.

He called them gifts –
 and indeed they were gifts – valuable gifts.

1. The first gift was the understanding that
 - The Father's love would come and dwell in them
 - And the Spirit of God would instruct them how to tap into that powerful love.

2. The second gift was that they would find peace.
 - The storms of life would not go away – but still they would find true and lasting peace.

These same gifts – Jesus has given us

1. The Spirit of his Father's powerful life-giving love – rests universally within the human spirit
 - It is not reserved for only Christians
 - The Spirit of God rests in all –
 - in Christians, in Jews
 - in Muslims and Buddhists
 - in agnostics and even atheists

2. We can tap into that power within us and enjoy its special gift - the gift of peace.
 - Not the temporary peace that the world offers
 - Not the occasional freedom from war
 - Not just the temporary distraction from our problems available through drugs or alcohol, or TV

But the permanent state of peace that comes with

- being able to tap into the river of peace that flows within all who remain connected to the Source of true peace.
 - Connected to the Father
 - Connected to the Spirit

We see this wisdom at work in the early Church
In our first reading:

Conflict within the Church is prayed over.
And the Spirit of God leads Paul and the Church
to come up with a decision that would
open the gates of conversion and membership
to more and more of the Gentile community.

Throughout the generations,
People have discovered that
the Wisdom that Jesus shared with his disciples – really works.

We can have inner peace – even in the midst of uncertainty.

We can have inner peace – even in the midst of great conflict.

We can have inner peace – even as our life itself
Is being threatened by illness, dis-ease, and death.

But to find that peace we must seek the Spirit of God within.

For the kingdom of God is not somewhere out there.

- It is at hand.
- It is within ourselves.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.”

You have not been left orphaned by God.

God's gentle Spirit will lead you to peace.