

“Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you”

Today the 6th Sunday of Easter is the last Sunday before the solemnity of Ascension (next Thursday or Sunday). The readings are a continuation of the previous week's readings. Jesus continued his farewell discourse to his disciples, filled with challenges and encouragement. He challenges the disciples to remain in and share his love and gives them the gift of a unique piece. "Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you." The peace Jesus gives is the same as his presence. That is the gift of ever-abiding presence with them through the person of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, is his last command to them in Matthew's gospel: "Look, I will be with you till the end of time" (Matthew 28:20).

The disciples experienced this peace- presence, and the presence sustained them in their ministry as we read in the book of the Acts of the Apostles throughout the Easter season. Uniquely, in today's first reading, how this presence-the gift of peace and the unity the Holy Spirit brings helped them to resolve the great dilemma that arose after the conversion of the gentiles. Paul and Barnabas were instrumental to the transformation of many Gentiles to Christianity. However, some men, the newly converted Jews, brought the issue of circumcision and threatened the salvation of the newly converted Gentiles. This led Paul and Barnabas to make the hierarchical recourse of going to Jerusalem, the headquarters of the Church then. James, the less is the head of the Church there, presided. They made a decision and sent it sent through Paul and Barnabas. Silas and Judas, called Barsabbas, were also sent to attest to the written order. The letter's content showed that their decision was based not on any bias or prejudice but the influence of the Holy Spirit, the unique gift of unity and peace given to them.

Our Eucharistic liturgy offers us an excellent opportunity to encounter the same risen Christ who showers us with the same gift of peace, his presence. We also use the exact words of the gospel today to pray for this peace after Our Lord's prayer. We ask God to give us his peace despite our weaknesses and unworthiness because of our faith. Christ's peace we experience makes us instruments of peace. At the end of the Mass, we go in peace and begin to share the same peace with people we meet in our day-to-day lives. We cannot become channels of God's peace if we do not remain in the love of God, the source of our peace. Let us ask our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, to shower his peace in our hearts and make us peace instruments. Amen.