

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 22, 2022

Reading I

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

R (4) O God, let all the nations praise you!

Reading II

Rev 21:10-14, 22-23

Gospel

Jn 14:23-29

Jesus said to his disciples: "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me. "I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I will come back to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe."

HOMILY:

There is vivid terror in Erika's eyes when she talks about her traumatic experience in Ukraine. She speaks of the bombing that started when she was at home with her friends. Since that time, she recounts, it had been a nightmare. "We spent five days in the bombing shelter. I thought that it would never end. ***I don't want to go back.*** In a few hours, I will take the bus to the Netherlands. The Netherlands is a safe haven," she says, while struggling to manage her emotions and feelings. Alina, Erika's mother, is optimistic that very soon Ukrainians will be able to return home to Ukraine. Erika then adds, "We are a strong nation. We will win this war and peace is very close. I will visit Netherlands and ***very soon I will return to my beloved Ukraine.***"

Erika is a woman whose soul is divided. She does not want to go back to her homeland, where she experienced such trauma. At the same time, she dreams—hopes—for that day when she will return, when war, vanquished, gives way to peace after her visit, temporary, to her Dutch safe haven. She is divided in her soul—she is not at peace.

The experience of Erika speaks to the very nature of what it means to be at peace—real peace. Jesus, the Peace of God, promises us this truth: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you.” The Biblical word for this peace is *eiréné* (εἰρήνη), literally meaning “joined together into a whole,” when we are no longer divided, fragmented. This being-made-whole, Jesus promises, comes when we hear and listen to his word, when his Father and the Son who are love comes to dwell within us, that indwelling of love being what we have come to know as the Holy Spirit. For when that Holy Spirit of love comes to dwell fully in us—and then alone—are we no longer divided within ourselves. Instead, so fulfilling, so overflowing is that love that we become single-minded in hearing the Word of God that says, “Love one another as I love you.” It will be in this overflowing, loving-others that peace will finally come to our souls and to the world. Love alone overcomes the divisions within and between us—and only the perfect love of God can bring perfect peace.

Erika—and, with her, her whole fragmented, war-torn nation—is not yet at peace. But she and her nation are not the only ones. Neither are we at peace. We are not yet at peace because the peace the only Jesus can give, does not yet fully, definitively, reign in our divided souls. For we still long for another other “peaces”—fragments of peace that seem attainable by the things of this world—food, wealth, and even our relationships with others. Rather, it is when we seek Him only, love Him only, serve Him only—each time in the face of our sisters and brothers—that we then will no longer be divided in our souls, that we will no longer be longing for “something else,” that we will finally be free, finally be at peace. For peace must come from beyond our finite, fragile selves and beyond the finite things of this world. For the Peace that Jesus offers is the peace of a soul no longer divided. It is the peace of the soul completely immersed in His Love and ready to fulfill the needs of others. Let us come to Peace, receive Peace, and then dispense Peace. And let us do so with single-minded minds, hearts and souls, overflowing with divine Love—the sure and single fount of the Peace for our souls—and the world—that only Jesus can give.