

You just heard the Lord's invitation in the first reading: "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her, all you who love her!" (Isaiah 66, 10-14c). At the same time, we all hear what is happening in the Near and Middle East, the conflicts in which Israel is involved. So, you might ask yourself, "can Jerusalem itself rejoice?"

In fact, the Jerusalem Isaiah referred to is not the one for which Israel and Palestine have been disputing for. Rather, it is the new Jerusalem that Saint John saw "coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev 21:2).

If you look more closely, you will see that the prophet was speaking in the future tense. So, the Jerusalem he was speaking of refers to the Church. She is truly a mother to us. She gives birth to us through Baptism. She nourishes us with the milk of the Scriptures and the other sacraments, especially the Eucharist. She announces to us the eternal joy and peace, toward which we are journeying.

This peace is not something that the mighty of this earth can claim to provide. In fact, those in position of power offer peace by asserting their strength, saying, "I am more powerful than you are. I possess many more advanced weapons than you. I require you to do this and not to do that; so, you must comply. If not, you know what can happen to you." It's the law of the strongest... Our world is in dire need of peace, but not peace with weapons. Our world needs the peace of God.

Peace is what makes us children of God: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." Peace is one of the last gifts that Jesus gave to the disciples before the Passion: "Peace, I leave with you; it is My peace that I give you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you!" (Jn 14:27). This peace is the first gift of the Resurrection. If you remember, when the resurrected Lord appeared to the disciples, He did not blame them for having abandoned Him, but, instead, He said to them: "Peace be with you!" (Jn 20:19).

It is also this peace that the priest communicates to you at the beginning of each Mass, when, instead of good morning, he says "the Lord be with you!" It is the same peace that we share just before receiving the Eucharist. In the same peace, you are dismissed at the end of the Mass: "Go in peace...!" But what is peace?

"Peace is not merely the absence of conflict and war. Peace is a virtue, a state of mind, a desire for kindness, trust, and justice" (B. de Spinoza).

In the Jewish culture, when people meet or part ways, they say "Shalom!" This word means more than just "Hi" or "Bye." It translates to "peace" and encompasses various forms of peace, including peace between individuals, inner peace, calmness, serenity, wholeness, completeness, strength, health, security, prosperity, and stability. This peace reflects the fullness of God's presence. It is this peace, which the world cannot provide, that Jesus sent the 72 other disciples to share.

The number 72 symbolizes all the nations known during Jesus' time. It is a way of saying that the Good News should be proclaimed to everyone around the world. It is meant for all people, including Christians who no longer attend

Church, those facing crises, those who promote war, and those who may mock the faith. Everyone, everywhere, should have the opportunity to hear and embrace this good news.

The Lord appointed seventy-two other disciples whom He sent ahead of Him in pairs. This emphasizes that our faith journey cannot be undertaken alone. We are a community; we are called to trust and transform together. This is what the Archbishop invites us to do in the letter read to you last weekend.

The Lord sent them to every town and place he intended to visit. This reminds us that the mission is not solely ours; it primarily belongs to the Lord. The main work is done by Him. We are not responsible for making people believe, rather just sharing the message. But keep in mind that like Jesus and the disciples, we may face rejection or indifference, since the battle is not physical, but spiritual, cultural and against family.

Jesus sends us to proclaim a culture of life and hope in a world dominated by death, the pursuit of wealth, and the abuse of power. If we fulfill our mission as we should, we will triumph over evil with good.

When Jesus sent out the disciples, His focus was more on their behavior than on the message they were to convey. He reminded them to behave as peacemakers. So, it begs an important question: where are you with your own peace? Have you laid down your weapons, as we prepared to celebrate the Holy Eucharist? Have you let go of any jealousy, resentment against others or enmity toward anyone? Have you reconciled with your neighbors, the Lord, and yourselves?

Brothers and sisters, we all desire peace, but where do we look for it? Don't we look for it in things unrelated to it and incapable of providing it? We need to get rid of the idea that peace can be attained by persecuting our neighbors or driving them away.

There is no peace in discrimination or any form of persecution, regardless of the pretext. Peace cannot be achieved through conflict, war, hatred, separation of families. True peace is the ultimate result of love, truth, understanding, compassion, mercy, justice, and all other virtues. Jesus calls all of us today to share His peace with our brothers and sisters and demonstrate, through the quality of our lives, the true meaning of peace.

The celebration of the Eucharist is our opportunity to say to one another, "Peace to the house of your being / this house," meaning peace to the Church we wish to build; peace to this community where trust can flourish because we strive to do what Jesus did: to offer everyone the joy of being loved.

I want to conclude with this anecdote: Two brothers were playing in a room; they were so noisy that their dad, who was working a room next to theirs, stepped in and said, "I want some peace and some quiet!" After a moment, the oldest replied: "I'll be quiet!" and the younger continued: "I'll be peace!" Their dad thought the boys kidded him; he felt offended and was so upset that he banged on the door... And yet, this is what Jesus calls of us to be: the expression of His peace.

With all our hearts, let us be peacemakers, let us be bearers of peace in truth and love so that all may be able to recognize that the Kingdom of God is at hand.