

What did Jesus mean by saying he didn't come to bring peace on earth? Didn't we just sing about peace in the gloria? Don't we have multiple references to peace during and after the Eucharistic prayer? Don't two of the forms for the dismissal at the end of Mass say, "Go in peace?" Isn't Jesus the Prince of Peace? What's all this stuff about division? Jesus came to proclaim the explosive good news that he was here to rescue us from sin and death. He came proclaiming the Kingdom of God. He came to set the earth on fire with the spark of faith and divine love. He came offering peace to those people of good will who accept what he has to offer. He came knowing that many would reject him. It is our response to Jesus and the gospel that brings about division.

Concrete example time. I have worked with a bunch of people seeking to enter the church through OCIA. In almost every group I have worked with, there was at least one person who was being disowned by his or her family because they were becoming Catholic. There are some places in the world where conversion to Christianity is a death sentence. We also see division when we put other things, such as politics, above Jesus. We cannot choose to accept or reject passages of the gospels because we like or do not like them. We can't pick and choose which teachings of the church to accept or reject. Some teachings can be applied in different ways—for example how to respond to climate change or how to best serve the poor—but we don't get to determine for ourselves what is right and what is wrong. That is what Adam and Eve sought to do for themselves and we have been paying the price ever since. True peace will only be found in Christ when we seek to do his will instead of our own.

So what about Jesus setting fire to the earth—which is not a pleasant image in the middle of August. He came to set the earth ablaze with the spark of faith and divine love. The key to understanding this passage isn't what Jesus says about fire; it's what he says about His baptism. "There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!" He is not referring to his baptism in the Jordan because that already happened. The baptism he is referring to his own death on the cross. What is baptism? It is death and resurrection. When we are baptized, we go under the water—this symbolizes death to our old selves. Then we come up again—we are resurrected—as new creations free from the stain of original sin. Through the Cross, Jesus died and rose again. This is the baptism he had to undergo. He had to suffer the baptism of the Cross before he could ascend into heaven and send the Holy Spirit down to set ablaze the flame of divine love in the hearts of the Apostles at Pentecost. The anguish Jesus spoke of: yes he did truly suffer

throughout his life, just like each one of us suffers. We could also say, however, that his anguish was that extreme sense of anticipation and excitement we experience when we desperately long for some great event to take place. Jesus was in anguish as he awaited the completion of his rescue mission so that the gates of heaven could be reopened for each one of his brothers and sisters...for each one of us.

Jesus is in anguish until the whole world is aflame with his love. How can each one of us help spread the flames of faith, hope and love in the world?