

After the Heart of Jesus ...

Jesus said to his disciples:

"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!

... Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth?

No, I tell you, but rather division.

From now on a household of five will be divided,

three against two and two against three;

a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father,

a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother,

a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law

and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

Luke 12:49-53



Most of us want religion to comfort and console us rather than disturb us. Today's readings, however, are profoundly disturbing because the words of Jesus are words not of peace and tranquility but words of division and struggle. We're given startling, discomfoting words to reflect on today. Jesus says, "Do you think I have come to establish peace on the earth? I assure you, the contrary is true. I have come for division."

These have always been troubling words to me. How can Jesus not want peace? A thought came to me as I reflected on today's gospel again. When couples get married in most Catholic churches these days, one part of the preparation process involves filling out a FOCUS inventory to help a couple see what areas of a marriage relationship they need to work on. One of the statements on that survey that each person is asked to agree or disagree with is: "I value peace at any price." The preferred response is to disagree with that statement -- peace *at any price* is not desirable. The statement tries to uncover attitudes of people who feel it is better to sweep issues and thoughts under a carpet rather than discuss them because they are afraid to rock the boat. It helps us discover if there are some issues that people are reluctant to talk about because they are afraid of conflict or being hurt or disrupting a peaceful household.

This may be a helpful analogy to keep in mind when we consider today's gospel, because while Jesus came to bring peace, he didn't come to bring any old peace. He came to bring peace that wasn't afraid to seek justice and compassion -- in fact the peace that Jesus sought, the peace of knowing we are united to one another and together connected with God -- that peace cannot be experienced apart from living justly and compassionately.

Nonetheless, the words of Jesus today remain a challenge. It is as if Jesus is saying: "If you simply try to play it safe and avoid ruffling feathers, you will never be my disciples. I won't recognize you as my own on judgment day, and you won't have eternal life with me. But if you risk your life on behalf of the wronged of this earth, then you will find life with me."

NEXT Sunday, August 26, is the long awaited Parish Community Fest. The Fest will take place on our parish grounds from 1:00 to 6:00 PM. I've come to realize our parishioners like a good party and to gather wherever there is food. The Fest promises something for everyone, with some kiddie rides, games, Bingo, the Chunky Monkey concert, other music, and plenty of food. The ministry fair will take place during this year's Fest, so it will also be a time to learn about ways of becoming more involved in the parish and of sharing your gifts to make a difference. Please join us!



This month we continue to learn more about the good works that Catholic Charities and the St. Vincent DePaul Society does in our name for the poor, for abused and neglected children, for the disadvantaged, and for those needing counseling. This weekend we are taking up a collection for both Catholic Charities of DuPage County and our local St. Vincent DePaul Society. Envelopes are available in Church for this special collection. Please make your gift either this week or next weeked.

St. Walter Catholic School begins this week. I met with our dedicated teachers and staff this past week to encourage them in their role not only as educators but as witnesses to the faith and as models for living Catholic virtues. Father Mario and I are looking forward to being involved in the education and faith formation of all our students at St. Walter School. Let us pray for all of our young

people and their teachers who begin school these coming days, both in our Catholic and public schools. .

If you have an intention that you would like Father Mario or me to pray for, feel free to send them to us at the Parish House. You can put them in an envelope with "Fathers' Prayer List" and we will be happy to add them to our daily petitions as we pray for all in the parish.

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- *Father John*