

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, May 16th 2017**

In today's gospel reading the risen Jesus tells his disciples: Peace I leave with you; my peace is my gift to you. Is this the same Jesus, who had earlier said: Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace, but the sword [Mt. 10: 34]? A superficial reader might have the impression that Jesus is talking "out of both sides of his mouth," but we are not called to be superficial readers. I personally think that the apparent conflict has its roots in our uncritical understanding of what that peace is, an understanding (misunderstanding) that is quite common in our "world". Yet Jesus clarifies the above promise of peace with the words: Not as the world gives do I give it to you.

When we think of peace, we spontaneously think of absence of tension and this is perhaps the type of "peace" that a piece of furniture could be said to have: a static peace, the "peace" that ultimately one can find totally in a cemetery. No tensions there. It so happens, however, that God is not God of the dead, but of the living [Mk. 12: 27]. We need to think outside our spontaneous box of static peace.

If we turn on a well-tuned car engine and raise the hood, we can see and hear the purring of very powerful forces in a balanced tension, in a dynamic peace that will give us a "peaceful" ride. We too experience in our lives two opposite forces: a pull toward God and a pull toward self. When these two pulls are in a balanced tension, we experience a dynamic peace. When no tension is experienced, it will be because one of the pulls has ceased to be active and we are dragged by the other pull without any resistance or tension. We know quite well that the pull toward self will never cease to be active, so a lack of balanced tension can tell us that the pull toward God has ceased to be active.

The purpose of intentional spiritual living and of prayer is not to eliminate tension and lull us into a static peace, but to keep the two pulls in balance and allow us to live in dynamic peace. The Lord offers us a dynamic peace, which the world cannot give.

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