

August 18, 2019

**From Fr. Jim . . .**

**About the Gospel and the sign of Peace:** Today's Gospel discomforts the comfortable. Living in relationship with the Lord, it is most likely that disciples of Jesus can receive the same kind of rejection that the Lord received. Everyone doesn't want to believe what we believe or love others as the Lord loves them or make the sacrifice of self that truly builds the kingdom of God. Everyone doesn't want to change in the way that the fire of God's love can purify them. The Gospel has its enemies and disciples of Jesus will have enemies too that they will want to learn how to love as Jesus shows us. These people could be members of our own families.

At the heart of our belief, Jesus wants that we give up our lives even for those who would hate us – even for those who we do not like or love. We realize this in the celebration of the Eucharist. We cannot be a eucharistic people without dying to our own needs, wants, desires, preferences, likes and dislikes in order to seek the good of others.

At Mass, just before we receive communion with God and each other, we exchange the sign of peace. Here, we rehearse having the mind of Christ and showing the sacrificial kind of love that brings us to communion. The rubrics of the Roman Missal say that this sign "expresses peace, communion, and charity." (128). Realizing that we can hurt others even when we are not trying to hurt them and that others can hurt us and knowing that the Gospel is difficult to live and accept at times, for the sign of peace to be authentic, we must seek daily to share peace with those with whom we have not been peaceful. If we are to show that our sharing in communion is credible then we must keep trying to love those we have harmed, those we have judged, those whom we believe are unworthy of God's love. Also, we must see the foreigner, the outcast, and the sinner as one with us and in need of God's mercy and offer a sign of reconciliation with them. To live in communion with God is to be reconciled to God and each other and to become reconcilers for God in the name of Christ.

The Sign of Peace prepares our hearts to authentically share in the Eucharist and reminds everyone that God came more for unity than division. The peace of the Lord be with you always!

