

What a guy!!! Of course, I'm talking about Jesus...There He was with His disciples just hours before He would be crucified...Knowing He was about to be tortured and would suffer a horrifying death,...was He worried about Himself?...No, His main concern was for His disciples...He knew they were anxious and worried about how they would go on without the one who had been their teacher and leader for 3 years? ...How would they handle the troubles and persecutions they would surely suffer after He was gone?...So, Jesus tells them *do not to be troubled or worried*...He tells them not only would He send the Holy Spirit to comfort them and guide them and remind them of all He had told them,...but He would also leave them His peace...Listen to His words again: "My peace I leave with you...My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, do I give to you.

Jesus knew the troubles and persecutions His disciples would face as they took His Gospel message into a hostile world...He knew that most of them would suffer terrible deaths in His name...So, what was this peace He gave to them – this peace only He can give,...that the world cannot give ...What is this peace He gives to us?...This peace that we pray upon one another at Mass every time we say "Peace of Christ be with you."..Just what is this Peace of Christ?

Here's a story that might help answer that question: one day a wealthy man commissioned an artist to paint a picture that would perfectly depict true peace....After a great deal of thought, the artist painted a serene country scene with green fields, cows lazily grazing, birds flying overhead, and a little village nestled in a distant valley...When the artist showed the picture to the man, the man took one look at it and disappointedly said to the artist, "This isn't a picture of true peace...Go and try again." ...The artist went back to his studio, thought about peace for a long time, then began to paint...When he was finished, he ran to the wealthy man and showed him a beautiful picture of a mother tenderly cradling her sleeping baby in her arms, smiling lovingly at the child...But again, the man said the painting was not a picture of true peace, and he told the artist to try one more time...The artist was tired and discouraged, but not ready to give up,...so he decided to pray for the inspiration to paint a picture of true peace...As he prayed, he was hit with an idea, and he began to paint as never before. When he finished, he ran to show it to the wealthy man...The man studied it carefully for a few minutes, then he exclaimed, "Now THIS is a picture of true peace!"...So, what was this picture of true peace?

The picture showed a stormy sea with great, angry waves pounding against a cliff,... the wind furiously whipping black rain clouds laced with streaks of lightning that filled the dark, thundering sky...And there in the middle of the picture, under the cliff,...the artist had painted a small bird ...safe in her nest, snuggled securely in the rocks...sitting peacefully, her eyes closed,... her wings covering her little ones ....mother and children at peace in the midst of the raging storm.

The peace depicted in that painting was a picture of the true peace that only Jesus gives...a peace St. Paul tells us in his letter to Phillipians, is "peace that is beyond all human understanding"...Peace that comes from total and complete TRUST that there is a rock that will shelter us when storms and troubles come into our lives,...and that rock is Jesus Christ...It's a peace that comes from trusting that God is in control....That little mother bird was waiting out the storm...She knew it would eventually die down and the sun would shine again. She was doing what she needed to do, protecting her young, and God would take care of the rest. When storms hit us, we need to do what we can do, and trust God to do what ONLY God can do.

My friends, we think of peace, and look for peace as the absence of those things that disturb our peace – troubles,...crises,...disasters,.. wars...But that is a peace that our fallen world will never know until Jesus Christ returns to vanquish the powers of evil and set everything right...Until then, it's like this:

How many of you have just come through a troubling situation ?...How many of you are dealing with a troubling situation right now?...How many of you will sometime in the future be hit by some unexpected trouble ?...That just about covers all of us...There is no avoiding troubles,... trials,... hard times...When they come,... Jesus says, "You want my peace?...Then trust Me. ...Trust Me as I trusted My Father as I carried out His plan for your salvation....Trust Me. "

When Jesus says Trust Me,...He doesn't mean just sit back and I'll take care of everything...We have to do our part too...It's like the old Middle East proverb: "Trust in God, but tie up your camel."...I guess we can update this to: "Trust in God, but lock your car doors." ...There's a verse from the Book of Proverbs that says: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart.and He will direct your paths."...If we trust the Lord *with all our hearts*, He will direct us, show us what we need to do to ride out the storms...How will He do this? ...Well, we shouldn't expect an e-mail or a text message. What we can expect is that:

- (1) Jesus will speak to us in our prayer...if we will shut up and listen; ...
- (2) He will speak to us through the words of His Gospel and the words of the preacher during the celebration of Mass;
- (3) He will speak to us through the people He sends to us, and even through things like a message on a roadside billboard or outside a church. There's no end to the ways the Lord will try to reach us, ...to direct us...but, we need to listen with minds and hearts open to His voice.

Now, Jesus knows first hand how hard life on earth can be, ...how bad things can happen, how one bad thing can pile upon another...And He knows that when they do, it can be hard for us to experience His peace,...hard for us to trust that He is right there with us every step of the way, ...that He is with us through the Holy Spirit who He sent to guide us and comfort us and remind us of all that He told us,and that He is with us in a more physical way in the Mystery of the Eucharist...When we take His Body and Blod into ourselves,...He becomes part of us,...and He gives us the strength and the courage to ride out the storms in our life,...and the faith and the trust to accept God's will,...and His peace becomes our peace.

You know, it's a lot easier to preach, "Don't worry ..Have faith, trust God, trust Jesus, and everything will be OK."... than it is to practice it....I struggle with trusting as much as anybody else...When I am struggling, I often come in here and look up at that cross into the eyes of the One who is asking me to trust Him, the One who is offering Me His peace,...and I am reminded once again that there is no one better to trust than the One who opened His arms and accepted the pain and suffering of the cross to show me how much He loves me.

My friends,... my prayer for all of you and for me is that when storms of trouble come into our lives, we will feel those loving arms enfolding us,...protecting us...just as that little mother bird protected her chicks,...and we will rest in His peace as He helps us through the storm.

May the Peace of Christ that surpasses all understanding be with us now and forever. AMEN!