

A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

In today's Gospel reading drawn from the Gospel of John we hear Jesus tell His disciples:

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

I think that to truly understand this line of scripture we first must understand what the Gospels mean by the phrase "peace be with you." We usually use the word "peace" to mean something like "the absence of hostility." Peace is indicated and present if no one is actively harming another person or their property. However, that is not how the Gospels use the word "peace." To the authors of the Gospels the word "peace" means something closer to "in full communion and understanding with God." Thus, in the scripture passage quoted above the meaning of the first sentence is something like "You, my disciples, are now fully united to God." This is an enviable state of affairs for who among us would not want or desire to be fully united to almighty God in mind, body, and spirit.

This full communion with each other is something that is always shared between the three persons of the Holy Trinity. God the Father, and Jesus, the Son of God, always exist in peace with each other. In order to save the human race from the consequences of our sins, God the Father has sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world. At the end of this saving mission when everything necessary for salvation has been accomplished, the Son returns to the Father. However, the spreading of the Good News of salvation to every part of the world is yet to be carried out. This task falls to the disciples who are now apostles, bearers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through the saving mission of Jesus, the apostles are now at peace with God. They are in full communion with God and share an understanding with the mind of God. Now, in a similar fashion to how the Father sent the Son, Jesus Christ now sends His apostles out into the world.

The apostles whom Jesus sends out do not only number those men who Jesus was speaking directly to in that room two thousand years ago. We too here and now are called to be apostles of Jesus Christ, and we too are called to enter into peace with God, and we too are called to be sent out into the world to proclaim the Gospel. You and I may not travel to distant lands to proclaim the Good News of salvation, but we are called to offer an example of living holy lives in accordance with the teaching of Jesus for others to see and notice. We are called to speak with others about our faith in Jesus Christ and to describe what it means to be at peace with God.

Yours in Christ,

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Pastor