

HOMILY ~ MAY 21/22, 2022

6th SUNDAY OF EASTER

I recently went to the dentist in the early afternoon. My dentist is in Royal Oak, so he is not really close; but I left in plenty of time to get there on time. I was doing okay until I got on to I-696, and traffic was totally stopped. That is just so irritating. After sitting there for a few minutes, I started to think *"I am going to be late for my appointment; and if I am late, they will probably take someone else before me which will make me really late getting back. I have appointments all afternoon and a meeting at 7:00. There are a few things I want to do to get prepared for the meeting, and now I will not be able to do that. I will probably be late getting back for my first meeting which will make all of the meetings late."* Now I am on the radio trying to get a traffic report so I can find out what is going on. My anxiety level is up to here by now! The longer I sat there, the more anxious I became. After sitting there for about 15 minutes, the traffic started moving; and I got to my dentist appointment on time. I had created this whole problem scenario for myself, and it was totally unnecessary!

In the Gospel Reading, Jesus states: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid."* How does the world give peace? The world looks at peace as a lack of war and conflict. The world tells us that in order to find peace, we have to go off to someplace like Cancun on vacation, or buy yourself an extravagant gift, or go golfing or take a bubble bath. These are only temporary distractions at best. The peace that the world gives is dependent upon what is going on in our environment. The peace that Jesus gives comes from within. This peace does not depend upon what is going on in our environment. How do you get this peace? In order to get this peace, you have to stay connected with Jesus. This is a form of prayer.

When things happen in our environment that we did not foresee or things are not going according to what we had planned, we tend to think that this is a problem. And how often does everything go as planned? Let's take a look at my trip to the dentist. I immediately identified the traffic stop as a major problem. The first step to connect with Jesus is to stop and acknowledge your feelings. I was feeling irritated, angry and anxious.

If you do not acknowledge your feelings, you will react immediately rather than responding to the situation. Were you ever with someone and they were really ramping up and you say something like: *"Just calm down."* And they respond: *"I AM CALM!"* Probably not a good approach. If we do not stop and acknowledge our feelings, we will probably react in a crazy way. That is why people start exiting the freeway by the entrance ramp and other equally stupid reactions. You have probably witnessed a whole range of these. Let life be what it is at the present time. Then be aware of Jesus' presence with you. Know that he loves you and cares for you, and things are going to be okay. Just allow life to be what it is at that moment and stay in the present moment. Then you can determine how you are going to respond appropriately to the situation. As Jesus says in the Gospel Reading: *"Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him."* Give yourself a moment and ask yourself: *"What would Jesus do?"* Stay in the present. Do not create that whole crazy scenario like I did. We frequently complicate our own lives unnecessarily.

Another example of this is when you are going to be seeing someone with whom you have a conflict. That creates some anxiety and maybe some anger. Then we prepare for the meeting. I anticipate what you are going to do to make me angry. I go back and ruminate about the past. Do not go back to the past. You have already been there. I now prepare the speech that I am going to use to blast you. How positive do you think that meeting is going to be? Instead, acknowledge the anxiety and anger you are feeling and then put yourself in God's presence. Preparing to act with loving kindness instead of hostility is probably what Jesus would do. You have no control over what the other person will do, but at least there is a chance that things will go well. We can find the peace that Jesus gives us, but we must stay connected with him.

Love & Peace,
Fr. Jim