

The Prince of Peace

by the Rt. Rev. Louis B. King

Then said Jesus to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you (John 20: 21).

Easter Sunday celebrates the culmination of the Lord's work on earth. The incidents of that first Christian Sabbath represent or symbolize the wonderful things which the Lord accomplished here. His rising from the tomb on the third day, the sorrow of the women who were so faithful in their love to the Lord, their joy when the angel came and rolled back the stone from the door, the fear and helplessness of the Roman guards when the earthquake sounded, and, finally, the wonder of the Lord's appearing to His disciples in the human form in which they had known Him, but which had since been glorified—these were the wonderful happenings which show how the Lord, during the whole of His life on earth, had successively and gradually released the power and light of His holy Word, which the Jewish church had imprisoned within its external ritual.

Now the first thing the Lord said to His disciples when He appeared to them after His resurrection, was, "Peace to you!" The inmost element of blessedness is peace. There is, in fact, no blessing apart from something of inner peace. And peace is the product of innocence. And innocence is a willingness to be led by the Lord. When we are led by the Lord, He sends His peace—inner peace—and we are blessed. So He said when He left the world: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14:27).

It was because the human race fell away from innocence that inner peace departed, and it became necessary for the Lord to come down and, by glorification, make His assumed humanity innocence itself. The Humanity which the Lord put on became innocence by willingly following and becoming united with the Divine itself. So the Lord united the human to the Divine in Himself, restoring to the human race that innocence and peace which the evil of their cumulative sin had annihilated. He became the "Prince of Peace" by casting out of His human nature the *prince of this world*, thus perfecting His humanity and, through it, returning genuine innocence and peace to people. "My peace," He called it, for it was the sole result of uniting the Divine and Human natures in His person.

In the new will and understanding of a regenerating mind, the Lord's peace is present. It is present because, in the regenerating person, the Lord works a miracle of rebirth. This corresponds exactly to the Divine work which He wrought in Himself by glorification. And the peace He gives is not as the world gives it. Worldly peace savors of passion gratified, not conquered. It is temporal, not eternal; external, not internal; and infected with enmity, dissatisfaction and deceit.

The Lord's peace, which He leaves with a person, is not one of self-pride or self-satisfied dominion. Instead, it is the selfless humility and gratitude of someone who, with the Lord's help, has overcome the world—even as He overcame it for us. And where the Lord's Divine good and truth are united in a person there is a blessed delight of self-forgetfulness called peace.

Isaiah prophesied that His Name would be called “the Prince of Peace.” Majestic yet gentle, omnipotent yet loving, omniscient yet calm, with absolute conviction, He said, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” He would wash His disciples’ feet, enter the humblest of homes to serve the needy, and yet He was a Prince of Peace. “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof,” cried the centurion of great power and wealth. “Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord,” cried Peter from his fishing vessel. And the same disciple, on the night of the Last Supper, exclaimed, with vehemence, “Lord, You will never wash my feet.” Even the angry mobs of the Lord’s home province, having backed Him to the edge of a certain precipice in Nazareth with the intent to hurl Him down to the rocks below, when they beheld His gentle countenance, fell back in sudden helplessness as He passed quietly and untouched through their midst.

There was no lack of royalty, of power, of majesty in Him. A hero of war, a mighty conqueror, a king, He had been called, “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” How quickly and completely the children of Israel seized upon these names, echoed forth from ancient prophecies, to champion Jesus Christ as an earthly king who would restore their ancient throne and the scepter of the House of David. But after their self-oriented hosannas had died away, when they realized that He sought no earthly kingdom, no victory over nations nor any peace such as the world gives—they rejected Him and the rule of His love.

People will always recognize physical strength. They will rally around it and sacrifice, even their lives, to partake of its glory and victory. But the Lord, though He came to establish His power among people, wished to deliver them, not from an earthly force such as that of Rome, but from a more malignant bondage of which they were unaware. With His own arm, He would engage the enemy of a person’s spiritual life—the hells. He would be a hero of war, but the insignia upon His two-edged sword would be that of “Prince of Peace.” Yet people were not, indeed, are not, anxious to rally about such a symbol. For does it not seem too discouraging to set aside tangible force and fight *from and for the spirit alone*? Is there, in our make-up, sufficient patience available to conquer evil from love through truth? Are we not prone to shun this kind of inner combat? Is it not more enticing, indeed, delightful in contemplation, to be a prince of this world, to retaliate against force with force and achieve dramatic victory in the eyes of people, to overcome might with might, to glory in the display of outward courage and valor?

How easily the Lord could have succumbed to this temptation. With what ease He could have destroyed His outward enemies with fire called down from heaven! How readily He could have achieved the whole world, with a single sweep of His arm, but at the expense of its soul or human freedom! And how the hells tried to infect the Lord’s love with this desire for earthly dominion. How they tried to substitute the kingdoms of men and their glory for the kingdom of truth and its justice which He had come to establish.

So, in the wilderness, the Devil took the Lord up upon a high mountain and then to the pinnacle of the temple and urged Him to seek the temporal goals of a fallen humanity, promising Him all the vast kingdoms stretched out before His eyes and the allegiance of myriads of people if He would only worship the Devil. Yet how cheap, how gross this dominion would be to the Son of God. The Lord knew well that the prince of this world—the love of earthly dominion and lust of material gain—must be cast out. So He answered the tempter and all that he personified, saying,

“Get you behind Me Satan... man does not live by bread alone.... You shall not tempt the Lord your God.” Let us never forget that the Lord came not to be tempted, but to conquer. Temptation was necessary *only* so that hell might have access to His love and thereby be ordered by His truth.

The subtlety of this temptation—to abandon His love for the human race and for its salvation and freedom—was with the Lord at every step, throughout His earthly life. Even the disciples whom He loved continually suggested force as an expedient, such as when two of them urged the Lord to bring down fire from heaven, as Elijah had done to punish those who forcefully ejected him from their homes. And remember how Peter, in the Garden of Gethsemane, drew his sword and smote off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest. But the Lord rebuked Peter for his violence and healed his enemy’s ear. And, not many hours later, an overcast sky was filled with frenzied cries of challenge: “If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him!” So His crucifiers taunted, as the Lord hung in physical agony before their eyes. Could He not forsake, for even one moment, the kingdom of the spirit and perform one single miracle to benefit His own worldly comfort, to secure some small measure of peace from affliction—peace such as the world gives it?

No! Worldly force and comfort and release from physical pain, worldly peace, had no place in His kingdom of heaven. The “lo here” and “lo there” of earthly force and physical victory would never reveal to people the whereabouts of His kingdom of the spirit. For it is hidden deep in the hearts of those who would be persecuted for the sake of righteousness, of those who are of a humble spirit, who would be taught and receive His truth, who are willing to bear hardship and anxiety without feelings of enmity and anger, and without resorting to force. Of such and for such is the kingdom of heaven. And He who rules its domain is and was and always will be King of kings and Lord of lords, the Prince of Peace.

Prince of Peace! Was this crown won and worn through passivity? Not so; it was through struggle and pain endured more deeply and intensely than is possible in the natural world, where force is met by force and where honor, reputation, and gain are the prizes of victory. Even as Pilate stood face to face with the Lord and judged Him to death, so the prince of this world will always attempt to pass judgment upon, condemn, and destroy the Prince of Peace.

Yet the more they railed upon Him and abused Him with false accusations, curses and maltreatment—the calmer, the surer, the more merciful and forgiving, He became. He proposed no greater *earthly* kingdom than Caesar’s, but He revealed a higher, everlasting kingdom which moth and rust and hatred and might could not corrupt. And to us, who intermittently oppose the kingdom of this world, but again and again fall prey to its seductive ways, it is a marvel that the Lord entirely subjugated every thought and feeling, every word and deed, which looked to self and the world.

Over every form and manifestation of evil the Lord gained supremacy in Himself. Every faculty of the natural mind and appetite of the physical body, every human appearance of truth and every human affection of truth, He subordinated completely to the will of His Infinite love. “I have overcome the world,” He said. Who but the Prince of Peace, the conqueror of the world, could feel only sorrow (genuine sorrow) in Himself as Judas betrayed Him with a kiss? Who but the

Prince of Peace could remain utterly silent in the midst of false and condemnatory witnesses? Who but the Prince of Peace could look with eyes of pity upon the cruel soldiers who spit upon Him and smote Him with reeds? And who but the Prince of Peace could utter whole-hearted forgiveness for those who, with profane and sadistic enthusiasm, nailed Him to the cross? Who but the Prince of Peace could look into the inner proprial loves of devils and satans, will to save and uplift them to Himself, and sorrow when they would not!

Such attitudes and actions on the Lord's part were not the restraints of self-compulsion, such as you and I are capable of in our better moments. They were the sincere expression of Divine love—the inner love of One who had so completely overcome the world in Himself that the Divine love for the salvation of the human race had descended into every degree of His humanity, endowing it with peace, peace which no earthly power or hatred could destroy. The Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of the world, was born on earth, lived, died and rose from the dead to become the Redeemer and Savior of humankind, the Giver of heavenly peace. The human, which He had put on, He made the Divine truth—the Word made flesh. And then He united the human essence to the Divine essence so that it became the Divine good, the Divine love in human form. By doing so He restored to humankind spiritual freedom and incentive to regenerate and become receptive of and responsive to the blessed and eternal joy of genuine peace.

Whenever spiritual victory is won in the Lord's name, as of self, there follows a state of peace.

He who supposes that the external person can be reduced into correspondence without combats of temptation is mistaken; for temptations are the means of dissipating evils and falsities, as also introducing goods and truths, and of reducing the things which are of the external person into obedience, so that it may serve the interior rational person. These things are effected by temptations (Arcana Coelestia 1719:3).

When a person is in the combats of temptations he is by turns gifted by the Lord with a state of peace, and is thus refreshed (Arcana Coelestia 1126).

Peace, after temptation, is like a spring morning at Eastertime, when memory of the empty sepulcher and all that it connotes makes life vibrant, new and exciting. Such peace is not to be confused with our frail ideas of silence, inactivity or dormancy. It is a joyous re-awakening of all life's creative forces in an ever-upward effort to establish and perfect the order and beauty of human uses.

Peace is a time of joy and strength and inner vitality, a time when spiritual truths from the Word and charitable affections from heaven, which have lain as if dead in the sepulcher of a person's inner memories, awaken into life and come forth victoriously, to possess the whole of his conscious being. The soul then feels a joyous strength in the Lord's presence and complete trust in His omniscient leading.

As the spiritual mind, newly resurrected, expands and extends its order and delight into the natural mind, fears disappear, darkness gives way to light, solicitude for the future melts away and the old contentious self-confidence defers to humble acknowledgment of the Lord Who is risen, into whose hand all power in heaven and on earth has been given.

Standing forth as the visible Lord of heaven and earth, the Spirit of Truth in His Second Advent, the Lord says to all who would worship Him in spirit and in truth, "Peace to you! Grace, mercy and peace, from Him Who is and Who was and Who is to come, be with you all."

Amen.

Lessons: Isaiah 9:6-7; John 20:1-21; *Arcana Coelestia* 4180:5

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The case is this: Before the Lord came into the world the Divine itself flowed into the whole heaven; and as heaven then consisted for the most part of the celestial, that is, of those who were in the good of love, through this influx, by the Divine Omnipotence, there was brought forth the light which was in the heavens, and thereby wisdom and intelligence. But after the human race had removed itself from the good of love and charity, that light could no longer be produced through heaven, nor, consequently, the wisdom and intelligence that would penetrate down to the human race. For this cause, from the necessity of their being saved, the Lord came into the world, and made the Human in Himself Divine, in order that as to His Divine Human He might become the Divine Light, and might thus illuminate the universal heaven and the universal world.