

6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER—Year C—May 1, 2015

01. **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”** I was watching the trailer to the new X-Men film called *X-Men: Apocalypse*, which is coming out soon — and there was a scene in which the character known as Mystique, played by Jennifer Lawrence, says to Professor Xavier, **“...just because we’re not at war, doesn’t mean we have peace.”** This statement had me thinking about the definition of peace. Because peace is one of those words that everybody kind of knows what it means—and yet it can be difficult to define — because it can mean different **things** to different people.
02. Because, for many, peace is primarily a state of political and social affairs—a state of relations **between** nations, and **within** nations—a state characterized by the absence of war and conflict. And most of the official definitions of peace define it as such—as a state of harmony in the political and social realm — a state devoid of **war, conflict, and discord**. But for others, peace is more about a state of personal affairs — a state of harmony in their finances, their families, their work environment, and their homes — a state of harmony in the specific and immediate circumstances of their lives. And still, for others, peace is more about a state of mind than a state of political, social, and personal affairs — a state of harmony **within** rather than **without**.
03. But what kind of peace is our Lord talking about in today’s Gospel — because He came to give us peace, but not as the world gives it. And, I would add, that He came to give us peace, but not as the world **defines it either**. Because the Lord’s understanding and the world’s understanding of peace are very different. And the peace **the world tries** to give us is the common understanding of peace — which is freedom from war and conflict — freedom from

political and social unrest — freedom from difficult and unpleasant circumstances in our personal lives.

04. The problem is that, in the entire history of the human race, the world hasn't really been able to give us this kind of peace. Also, the problem is that, as the Mystique character from new X-Men movie said — *“just because there is no war, doesn't mean we have peace.”* And, in the same way, just because we may be free from difficult and unpleasant circumstances in our personal lives — doesn't mean we have peace either. Because true and lasting peace is far more than just the absence of something bad — far more than just the absence of war, conflict, and difficult personal circumstances.
05. But the main problem with the kind of peace the world tries to give is that is based on things **outside ourselves** — because the world tells us that real peace can only be found in things like political and social stability—financial and professional security—the freedom to pursue life's goods and pleasures without any moral restrictions—the power to control others, and to control one's circumstances. But this kind of peace has no regard for others — and depends on being able to control things outside ourselves — which, in reality, is a false kind of peace—one that will ultimately leave us **fearful, restless and troubled**. Because we will **never really have control** over our circumstances.
06. Because true peace CANNOT be achieved by **getting our own way** — because true peace does not lie with things outside ourselves — true peace can only be found **within us, not without us**. This is the kind of peace the Lord wants to give us — a peace that transcends this earthly reality — a peace that does not depend on things outside of us which we cannot control, but on things within us — a peace that depends on the state of our **minds, hearts, and souls**. Because the peace the Lord wants to give us is a peace far beyond anything this world understands and this world can give — a peace that won't leave us fearful, restless, and troubled — a

peace that doesn't depend on harmony **around us**, but on **harmony within us**.

07. Because the peace the Lord wants to give us touches us at the **very CORE of our being** — that place where **mind, heart, and spirit** converge. It is there we will find true and lasting peace — the peace of knowing that we are a child of the one true God, our Father in Heaven — that He holds us in the Palm of His Hand — that His plans for us are plans for peace, not disaster, reserving a future full of hope for us — that we are profound sinners who are profoundly loved — and that nothing can separate us from that love.
08. This is the kind of peace the Lord wants to give us. And we see evidence of this in the early Church. Their world was in just as much turmoil as our world is today, if not more so — and yet the early Christians had the gift of peace — the gift of knowing that despite all that is happening around them—despite the persecutions, hardships, and unrest they were living in the midst of — despite the lack of control they had over their personal circumstances — that despite all this, Jesus is still Lord — God is still in control — and Christ is still victorious.
09. Because the early Christians knew that God is the **ONLY source** of true and lasting peace — that this peace can only be given by Him and can only be found within us — that this peace doesn't depend on **OUR kingdom** coming and **OUR will** being done, but on God's Kingdom and God's Will — and that this peace doesn't depend on harmony **around us**, but on harmony **within us**.
10. This is the kind of peace that **nothing or no one** can take from us. Because no matter what is happening around us, no matter what is happening in the world, no matter what is happening in **our** lives — nothing can change the fact that God is with us, that God loves us, and that we belong to Him. Because no matter what the circumstances of our life — the peace that God gives us transcends

these circumstances, and is victorious over them — so that these circumstances are no longer an occasion for fear and worry, but occasions for **faith, hope, and trust**.

11. Because the Father Who created us, the Father Who loves us, the Father Who gave us everything He could possibly give to us, everything that He has to give, **has made His home with us** — and nothing can ever change that—not even war, disaster, famine or persecution — not even loneliness, addiction, sickness, or death. Because the Father **has us FIRMLY in His grip**, and although these things may **touch us, affect us, and even hurt us**, they will never destroy us. And that which does not destroy us, can only make us stronger.
12. During my spiritual journey, I have always tried to find peace and harmony **within**, by creating peace and harmony **without**. Even though I may not have consciously believed this, there was a big part of me that was truly convinced that if I could exert enough control over my circumstances, and create harmony among them, I would have peace of mind. But this is the message of the world and the lie of the evil one. Exercising control over others, control over our circumstances, only leads to frustration, and only results in fearful hearts and troubled minds — because, again, we are never really in control, because control is an illusion. And so, I learned that in order to have peace of mind, I have to let go of control.
13. In my own search for peace, I also learned that in order to **find peace**, I have to **make peace** with imperfection — make peace with my own imperfections, the imperfections of others, and the imperfections of my circumstances. And similarly, I also learned that to find peace, I have to let go of my expectations — my expectations **of God, of myself, and of others** — my expectations of how the circumstances of my life should be and how my life should unfold.

14. Peace is something that all of us want — political peace and personal peace — peace in the world, peace within our borders, and peace within our homes. And yet, peace is something that still eludes many of us. But it's only when we **truly have peace within**, that we will have peace **without** as well. Because it is only when the peace of Christ reigns in each of our hearts, that we will truly have peace within our world, within our borders, and within our homes.
15. Because the key to **peace in the world**, is peace **WITH ourselves**, and peace **WITHIN ourselves**. The peace of knowing that no matter what we have done, and no matter what we are going through, that Christ is **with us**, and has made His home **within us** — because He loves us with an infinite, everlasting love, and nothing can ever change that. This is the peace Christ came to give us and this is the peace that Christ is offering us today — a peace that transcends our earthly reality and our personal circumstances — a peace that will forever heal our fearful hearts and transform our troubled minds.