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## Father Cantalamessa on Peace

### Pontifical Household Preacher Comments on Sunday's Readings

ROME, MAY 11, 2007 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of a commentary by the Pontifical Household preacher, Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, on the readings from this Sunday's liturgy.

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My Peace I Give to You

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 15:1-2,22-29; Revelations 21:10-14, 22-23; John 14:23-29

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14:27). What peace does Jesus speak of in this Gospel passage? He is not talking about an external peace that would consist in an absence of wars and conflicts between different people or nations. He speaks of that peace on other occasions, for example, when he says: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

In today's Gospel passage he speaks of another peace, an interior peace of the heart, of the person with himself and with God. This much is clear from what Jesus immediately adds in this passage from John: "Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." This is the most fundamental peace. Without this peace, no other peace can exist. A billion drops of dirty water do not make a clean ocean and a billion troubled hearts do not make up a human race at peace.

The word that Jesus uses is "shalom." The Jews greeted each other with this word and still do; Jesus himself greeted the disciples with it on Easter evening and he orders the disciples to greet people in the same way: "In whatever house you enter say first, 'Peace be to this house'" (Luke 10:5-6).

To understand the meaning of the peace that Christ gives we have to look to the Bible. In the Bible "shalom" says more than simple absence of war and disorder. It positively indicates well-being, rest, certainty, success, glory. The Scriptures speak indeed of "the peace of God" (Philippians 4:7) and of the "God of peace" (Romans 15:32). Peace does not mean only what God gives but also what God is. In one of her hymns the Church calls the Trinity "ocean of peace."

This tells us that the peace of heart that we all desire can never be totally and stably possessed without God, outside of him. In the "Divine Comedy" Dante Alighieri synthesized all of this in that verse that many consider the most beautiful in this work: "In his will is our peace."

Jesus makes us understand what is opposed to this peace -- worry, anxiety, fear: "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Easy to say -- someone might object. How do we placate anxiety and disquiet, the worry that devours us all and keeps us from enjoying peace? Some people are by temperament more disposed than others to these things. If there is some danger, they blow it out of proportion, if there is some difficulty, they increase it by 100%. Everything becomes a reason for anxiety.

The Gospel does not promise a remedy for all these problems; to a certain extent they are part of our human condition, exposed as we are to forces and dangers much bigger than ourselves. But the Gospel does indicate some remedy. The chapter from which Sunday's Gospel passage is taken begins: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and have faith in me too" (John 14:1). Trusting in God is the remedy.

After World War II, a book was published by the title "Last Letters from Stalingrad." They were letters by German soldiers who were awaiting the final Russian assault on Stalingrad, in which all were killed. The letters went with the last plane that was able to make it out of the city. In one of the letters, found after the end of the war, a young soldier wrote to his parents: "I am not afraid of death. My faith gives me this beautiful certainty."

Now we know what we are wishing each other at Mass at the kiss of peace. We wish each other well-being, health, good relationships with God, with ourselves and with our neighbor. In other words, we are wishing each other a heart filled with "the peace of Christ that surpasses all understanding."

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