

June 2017 Lesson: *In Intimacy with Jesus:*
To Be of Service & Sowers of Peace (pp. 117-129)

Opening Prayer

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.*

Reflection

"In the thought of God, all human beings are my brothers and sisters." Fr. Parent

I would like to begin this reflection with a question: How do we make this thought of God our thought as well? As I was reflecting on this quote by Fr. Parent, I remembered a similar quote I heard during my first year of Philosophy, "...the world is not full of strangers, only sisters and brothers I haven't met yet." My sisters and brothers, you and I have a direct mandate from our Lord Jesus Christ; you and I are called to love, to love God, to love one another, and to love equally.

If we are to truly have the "thought of God" and see one another with the eyes of God, my sisters and brothers, Jesus leaves us a very simple and concrete vocation; "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you so you should also love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn 13: 34-35) Sounds simple and straightforward, but we know that it is anything but simple. In whatever walk of life we find ourselves, we know that our daily living of the Three Fives is a challenge and a goal. Furthermore, our vocation to be of service and instruments of peace is another way we manifest God's loving presence towards us, and it becomes our calling to be that same expression to one another, without exception. In last months reflection we were invited to reflect on two of our charisms, the Absence of Complaint and the

Absence of Criticism. We all know how difficult these can be at times; I know for me they are a daily struggle. However, my sisters and brothers, to truly live them each day, you and I are called to love...and love equally. How do I go about living my daily life in this service of my sisters and brother?

To Be of Service: Love our Neighbor

How often in our lifetime have we asked ourselves: "Who is our neighbor?" I often feel that this is a very intimidating question, because it invites us to think outside the box, outside of our comfort zone. If we are to be called true Christians, our understanding of "neighbor" must go far beyond those who live in our immediate proximity; or those who live adjacent to us in our neighborhoods, and moreover those who accept us or simply like us. Our "neighbor" is every opportunity we have to love God and love our neighbor as perfection. It is easy to love those who love us in return. Our calling is to love those who don't. In Spanish there is a saying: "Haz bien y no mires a quien" "Do good, and don't look to whom." Am I a person of service? Fr. Parent puts this lived experience into perspective: "Do others feel comfortable with the services I give? Have I preferences, limits? Have I exigencies?" furthermore, Fr. Parent says that "To overflow with love is to give one's life for others." In what ways do I concretely "give" my life for others?

To Be of Service: in Love

No one said it would be easy, nothing that requires us to sacrifice our very freedom, our very will, our very self for the service of love should be! St. Paul tells us that we are called to serve everyone, even those who persecute us and speak ill of us. This often times is the most difficult and painful expression of all. It is easy for us to love and serve those who love and offer service to us. Still the invitation becomes, can we truly become agents of love in the service of God and our sisters and brothers? Only in God and through God is this at all possible.

To Be of Service: Following Jesus

We are called to love God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our strength. It is impossible to love God and not to love our brothers and sisters. Fr. Parent tells us "God accepts our love insofar as that love places us at the service of others." Fr. Parent goes on to say that "the first step to obeying who commands us to love is to see ourselves with human eyes: indulgent and tolerant eyes. When I start to have esteem for myself, I will begin to see others favorably. That will be the beginning of service." How does Jesus become our daily model of love, service, tolerance, acceptance, grace, compassion, mercy and sowers of peace? Do I truly follow Jesus with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength?

Sower of Peace: Peace that Comes from God

Lord peace can only come you! How do I let the Lord's peace in and live each day with my sisters and brothers in peace? Let our prayer be: "Lord, Help me to look at and consider others – whatever they may be – as beings whom you possess and inhabit, as children who are precious in your sight." Lord, may your Spirit in me, grant me your light, your energy, and your love. Does my everyday life, with its challenges and graces, reflect the peace that only comes from God? How do I share this peace with my sisters and brothers?

Sower of Peace: Interior Liberty

Lord, you call me to become a sower of peace! "Your grace and your call are daily invitations not to complain; to accept all as Jesus did, as the Virgin did, so that I can reach that abandonment that nourishes peace." Help me Lord, to be attentive to your presence and your actions in me; to then manifest respect for my neighbor in seeking to avoid all destructive criticism both interior and exterior. How do I live freely each day in the presence of God bringing His peace to everyone I encounter? Do I allow God to dwell in my heart, to be strengthened by Him so as to become an instrument of his peace? Do I trust God and His son Jesus? Do I see the Virgin Mother as my role model on how to live a life of unconditional surrender and "yes" to God? I ask our Heavenly Father to give me the strength to live in the freedom of His sons and daughters, and to be in their service of love and peace.

Sower of Peace: Renewed in the Lord

Lord, I trust in you! Open my eyes each day to see your hand in everything that I attempt to do. I place myself in your loving embrace so that I may be your presence in the world. "Give my heart enough energy to do all that you ask of me to preserve and spread peace." Help me to live with my sisters and brothers in the same mercy you show me, especially those who persecute me and wish me harm. Lord, give me always your mercy; let it never leave me so that I may serve my sisters and brothers in the same mercy. Fr. Parent says, "Give me your mercy so that I can act with others as you act with me." Do I live my life towards my sisters and brothers in this spirit of God's mercy?

Sower of Peace: the Lord in Me

Fr. Parent challenges us each day to be open to Christ's gift of peace in us, through us, in all of our sisters and brothers, and all around us. How do we seek to be nourished by the peace that only Jesus can give us? How do we not only share this interior peace but also manifest it to our sisters and brothers? Peace in Jesus Christ is the Light in the darkness, never to be covered.

Peace is really you, my Lord, who rests in my soul, in my life, in my behavior. It is your usual climate; it is your presence that allows me to live beyond all tension, all friction. It is your calm that draws others to rest, that which made Jesus say: "Come to me all you who labor and are burdened and I will calm you, I will give you rest." (Mt. 11:28)

Closing Prayer:

The Servant Song...

*Will you let me be your servant
Let me be as Christ to you
Pray that I might have the grace
To let you be my servant too*

*We are pilgrims on the journey
We are brothers (and sisters) on the road
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load*

*I will hold the Christ light for you
In the night time of your fear
I will hold my hand out to you
Speak the peace you long to hear.*

*I will weep when you are weeping
when you laugh, I'll laugh with you
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.*

*When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony
Born to all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony*

My sisters and brothers know that you are blessings to me and I thank our Heavenly Father and Mary our Good Mother for each of you and for letting me love you and be of service to you!