

“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.” I want to preach today about this peace God alone can give us – and where it comes from. [Some of this comes from a Fr. Jon Ricardo homily – just like Rerouting! For those who were at Acts 29 last week, parts of this will sound familiar.]

The peace Jesus gives us comes from knowing Him and knowing what He has done, and what he will do, for us. Most of us don't know that Gospel story. We may know some facts about Jesus, but not the Gospel story's plot. (Like me and Game of Thrones). But if we don't know the story then the Good News isn't Good News – it's just news, information. And if that's all it is, then we won't know why we're here, or who we are, and so won't gain the peace Jesus wants to give us!

The basic story of the relationship between God and us humans is known as the Kerygma. It can be summed up in four steps, or themes. Fr. Ricardo has an acronym for remembering the Kerygma: CCRR.

We've been Created in God's likeness, Captured by Sin, Death, and the Devil, Rescued by Jesus' death and resurrection, and so we need to Respond to Him in faith. These four themes, created, captured, rescued, respond (CCRR), make up the flow of both salvation history, and our own individual relationships with Jesus. Today, in order to get at that peace Jesus wants us to have, I really want to focus on the second and third themes, Captured and Rescued. I'll speak about the fourth theme next week.

But let's start with the Story as Good News. Here's an analogy. Imagine you're French, living in 1944, during the Second World War. For the last four years life has been hell. Your country has been occupied by a demonic Nazi regime and army. You have lost loved ones in the war. There's no escape. Your country is defeated, spirit broken. Life is bleak and overshadowed by death. You literally have no peace.

Then one day a neighbor whispers to you, "The Allies have landed in Normandy!" How would you react? Would that just be news – or

Good News!?! That's the Gospel. It tells the story of a spiritual war, of our capture and the rescue by Jesus that brings peace.

So, do we realize we're each in a war – that our life's struggles and suffering, and lack of peace, are part of this larger story? Let's look closer at the theme of "captured." Just as with the Good News, if we don't know the Bad News, then the Gospel, again, is only "news." Let's go way back to the Exodus story. Passover is the central experience that giving Jewish people their identity. They had been slaves for centuries – until they experienced God as Liberator. But while the Passover was a real event, it was also a type that would be only fulfilled fully in Christ. Pharaoh is the Devil. Egypt is hell. Physical slavery is slavery to sin. Moses is Jesus – as types.

We may not know the peace Jesus brings to us, because we don't even believe we're living in Egypt, that we've been captured and sold into slavery. We don't get the Bad News – and so don't think we need to be rescued. We don't believe we have any need of a Liberator.

It's as if we're suffering from spiritual Stockholm Syndrome – Stockholm Syndrome is the experience of some who are kidnapped and held hostage by terrorists, who come to identify with the terrorists and their cause. They no longer believe they're prisoners. Similarly, we don't think we're prisoners, captured by Sin and Death, so don't see any need to be rescued! We can vaguely feel something is wrong, but we can't identify the cause. That's why we don't know the peace that comes from trusting that, despite all that's going on in my life, I'll be OK because I have a rescuer in Jesus.

What to do to gain the peace that Jesus gives? Fr. Ricardo suggests this way of praying: Imagine a situation where you feel absolute despair. Why? Because if God had not done for us what he did in Jesus we would have absolutely no hope. This week take 20 minutes. Get quiet – and ask the Holy Spirit to help you imagine you've been abducted by a human trafficker. There are more slaves today than at any time in history (not as a percentage, but in absolute numbers).

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you feel what it's like to be captured, enslaved, chained, to know deep in your bones that life as you know it is over. Nobody knows where you are. You are in the hands of a demonic person who couldn't care less about you – your future as a trafficked slave you don't want to even think about.

But then imagine being rescued from that trafficker by someone, who snuck into your cell and took your place under the blankets on the cot there. The trafficker periodically looks in, checking up on you, thinking the rescuer is you, giving you time to escape. And when the trafficker finally finds out he's been tricked, he tortures the Rescuer to death: while you return to your loved ones for a joyful reunion. How would you respond to that experience?

Captured and rescued: that's you and Jesus. The point of this meditation is to understand what Jesus has done for each of us. "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." As a people, and as individuals, we

are enslaved by Sin, Death, and the Devil. That's what's wrong with us and our lives. We exist in the middle of a war or struggle against those Powers. We need a Liberator because we can't win that war ourselves. The Good News is that Jesus is that Liberator. In Him we are freed. Knowing that truth, is the peace the world can not give. Pray for that faith, because with it, your heart will not be troubled or afraid any longer.