



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

Easter 2022

The Greeting of Peace to you at Easter:

It is my sincere hope and fervent prayer that individuals and the whole world will one day hear the words Jesus spoke as the evening's twilight brought that first Easter Day to a close. His words recorded in the Gospel of Saint Luke "*Peace be with you,*" (Luke 24:36) he said, as he appeared to the disciples in the Upper Room. This was the first time after he rose from the dead that Jesus went to see his frightened believers. He went to them and broke their stunned silence with the words, "*Peace be with you.*" He pierced the shock and awe that held them paralyzed even as they saw his side that had been pierced with a lance. "*Peace,*" he said to them again and eased them out of their disbelief.

Saint Paul refers in one of his letters to "peace beyond understanding," and it seems that this is what Jesus brought to his disciples after a day of hearing others speak of His being raised from the dead, appearing and speaking, and being very much alive. What the disciples heard were words and words and more words about something they could not believe or even imagine. And why would they feel otherwise? They were bothered by inner feelings of their own guilt, remorse, infidelity, hatred perhaps for those who brought about the death of their hope. A day of listening to others' joy is hard to take when a personal world is shaken or even on the verge of collapse.

Perhaps these thoughts affected Saint John who records something very peculiar in his Gospel. Saint John writes a lengthy recollection of the words Jesus spoke at the Last Supper. At a certain point he records that Jesus said, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you.*" (John 14:27). How does the world give peace? Often by imposing it by means of constraint, or threat, or exertion of power. After all, this was the experience of Israel under Roman rule. Such peace is only a façade, behind which a powder keg of opposition is prepared for counterattack. But Jesus said, "*my peace I give to you.*"

The peace that Jesus gives is the inner harmony that exists between Jesus' complete love for his heavenly Father and his subsequent love for all of his heavenly Father's children. The peace that Jesus gives comes from "a better place." We can experience it when we are our "best self." We can experience this peace that Jesus is eager to share with his disciples of every age when we are able to avoid those displays of envy, getting even, wanting to rule by fear and intimidation, allowing hurt feelings to fester and turn to bitterness when we could have recalled our best self.

On that first Easter evening, after a day of others' happiness, Jesus went to the suffering disciples and showed them his best self: his greeting of peace despite the wounds in his hands, feet and side. He accompanied them and understood their personal inner feelings that offered more pain to themselves and so he showed his best self as he extended his personal greeting of peace that he gives, "not as the world gives." The Son of God rose from the death that an uneasy world imposed on him. Jesus, true God and true man, triumphed over the temptations of the devil and gave to us the means to do the same.

As the daylight fades on Easter's evening, let Jesus into the room of your heart. Let his best self speak to your best self in a quiet moment of prayer. He is eager to speak to you about many things, but his first word to you in your innermost room of your soul will be, "*Peace.*" Then, go to meet him during these next Easter days. Go to daily Mass and hear the Easter Gospels; there are so many and we get to listen to another and another and another and all the while we are getting a glimpse into this "peace beyond understanding" and where it comes from.

Let us pray for ourselves, and for one another, and for the world. Let us pray for those who love us, and for those who hate us, and for the world. Let us pray for humanity's best self to rise to the glory of heaven and let us pray that no one is left behind to wonder why they are so unhappy.

A Blessed and long-lasting experience of Easter's evening Peace to all.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter A. Libasci". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci, D.D.
Bishop of Manchester