

“Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.” Wow, what is our Lord Jesus talking about in today’s Gospel? These words can make us uncomfortable, especially now in 2019 when our nation is *so bitterly divided* over partisan politics and the many issues of the day.

And so hearing these powerful, tough words from our Savior can honestly make us squeamish, especially since this *seems* to contradict other aspects of Divine Revelation when it comes to peace and unity. I mean, isn’t one of the Messianic titles of Christ “The Prince of Peace” and doesn’t our Lord Jesus pray for the unity of His Church at the Last Supper? So what is going on here with these words of Jesus?

Well first of all, it’s important to understand that there is *no contradiction* between these powerful words of Jesus and other aspects of Divine Revelation which speak about peace and unity. *Of course our Lord Jesus passionately desires peace and unity everywhere!*

So with Jesus saying that He has basically come to establish division and not peace on earth, Christ is affirming a few basic truths about the nature of His identity and His mission. The most important

lesson from today's Gospel is that our Savior, out of His great love for us, is being *totally honest* with us about the nature of our commitment to Him and *the consequences* of our relationship with Him. Our Lord Jesus is basically saying, "this is what will happen if you love Me and surrender your whole life to Me as one of My disciples. This is what will happen if you remain faithful to Me and My Church."

So let's flesh out these powerful words of our Lord. First, the peace that our Lord promises us is *not* an *earthly* peace which is defined by personal, physical security and the mere absence of conflict. Let's not delude ourselves: our Lord Jesus *never* promises us an easy life on this earth that will be free of all pain, suffering, and conflict. In fact, Christ promises His followers the *exact opposite*, and today's Gospel is yet another example of that. Rather, the peace that our Lord promises us is a unique *Heavenly peace*, which comes from the presence of Divine life and love in our hearts. Heavenly peace can be enjoyed *even in the midst* of conflict, division, and suffering and this is a peace that the world cannot give or take away.

Secondly, our Lord Jesus is affirming the self-evident truth that in a midst of a fallen world that is consumed by sin and selfishness, ***He is divisive (not in any evil way, but by virtue of His identity and mission)!*** I mean, just look at our Lord Jesus' own life, His public ministry, His suffering and death! Look at the bitter enemies that our Lord Jesus had because of His preaching and His actions. There were people who truly ***hated*** our Lord Jesus with every fiber of their being and they wanted to destroy Him and His disciples with everything they had! There were people who were seriously offended by our Lord Jesus, by His words and actions. We see this throughout the Gospels—we see the division and conflict that comes from our Lord's public ministry.

And so our Lord is simply being honest with us by declaring that the Gospel and our fidelity to Him and His Church will ***inevitably*** be a cause of division and conflict within our fallen world, ***even within our own families***. In fact, I'm sure many of us are living in this painful and challenging reality of familial division and conflict over faith, if you, like me, have family members or relatives who are either anti-Catholic or they simply reject having a strong relationship with the Lord ***in and***

through His Church. Obviously, we don't want this division or conflict, but such hostility to the Gospel is practically inevitable in the midst of a fallen and broken world where many are oppressed by sin and suffering.

The best thing we can do as Catholics in such situations of family division over the Gospel, is to *always love* our family members and relatives, pray for those who are hostile to Christ and His Church, reaffirm our supreme commitment to Jesus, remain faithful to Him *in word and deed*, and live our Catholic faith in its fullness with love, courage, joy, gentleness, and prudence. How many times does our Savior encourage us saying, "Do not be afraid"?

As Catholics and disciples of Christ, we must honestly acknowledge a few basic truths if we're *serious* about loving our Lord Jesus and remaining faithful to Him and His Catholic Church with every fiber of our being. *First*, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is not politically correct. *Second*, our Catholic faith, fully rooted in the Gospel teachings of Christ, is *not* politically correct and yes, many people consider our faith to be offensive, which is just sad considering that we don't hate anyone and we're certainly not *intending* to upset anyone. We simply

want to love and be faithful to Christ and His Church. Third, our Lord Jesus does not call us to be popular—He calls us to love and to be faithful to Him *in and through* His Catholic Church.

Brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus did not come to pander to us like some expedient, power-hungry politician. Our Lord Jesus did not come to *please us*—*He came to save us from sin and death*. Our Lord Jesus came to lovingly invite us to share in His own divine nature for all eternity. Our Lord Jesus *never* proclaimed: “Go and please everyone by forfeiting your faith! Do whatever you have to do to be popular!” Our Savior *never* said, “Go and conform yourselves to this secular world and culture, changing everything I taught you in order to fit in and succeed.”

#ThingsJesusAbsolutelyNeverSaid

Rather, our Lord Jesus *did* say, “Go...and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” Brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus doesn’t always tell us what we *want* to hear,

but He always tells us what we *need* to hear—and what we *need* is His merciful and sanctifying love that truly saves us and sets us free!

Ultimately, division does *not* come from God—but rather it comes from the devil and from *us*: weak, imperfect sinners, who at times selfishly and deliberately reject God out of pride. Division comes from us when *we* reject our neighbor, Christ’s love, His message, and the teachings of His Catholic Church, which our Lord established to teach and sanctify in His name and to keep us close to Him always.

The words of our Lord Jesus in today’s Gospel are not the words of some ethical guru who just wants us to “be nice” and “go along to get along.” No these words today come from the Son of the living God and the Savior of the human race who passionately desires our entire life. Again, Christ *must* come *first* in our lives, before our own family! And so if we make Christ first in our lives, then our love for Him should naturally overflow into all of our other relationships, so that by loving others, especially our family, we’re loving Christ Himself.

Brothers and sisters, all of this is obviously not easy, yet our Lord never asks us to do the impossible. And so as we prepare to worship and

receive Christ Himself in the Most Holy Eucharist, let's beg Him for the grace to make Him first in our lives and to follow Him *always*, regardless of the costs, divisions, and conflicts that may result; for such *temporary* suffering *pales in comparison* to the *eternal* glory that awaits us if we persevere in love for Christ our King.