Harmony at Home

Teacher Background

In the Gospel of John, Jesus’ parting gift to his disciples was peace: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.” And his first greeting to them after the resurrection is of peace: “Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you’.” Jesus’ ministry was that of a peacemaker. Through his teaching, healing and forgiveness of sin he sought to bring peace to the hearts and lives of people.

Peaceful Relationships

The peace Jesus worked to establish is much more than the simple absence of conflict. It starts in the individual. The person who is ‘at peace’ is one whose beliefs and conscience and actions are all in harmony. That person experiences integrity, wholeness. Such inner peace sets its stamp on the relations of a person with others. A peaceful person desires and works for the good of others, creating relationships that are life-giving and peace-filled. This deep-down peace that shapes a person is a gift of God, as Jesus pointed out to his disciples. It is a sharing in Christ’s own inner peace, which nothing could take away.

As with other spiritual gifts, Christ gives us his peace not just for ourselves, but to be shared. Through baptism we are committed to carrying on his ministry in today’s world. Hence Christians must work to establish peace in the lives of individuals, in families and communities and in the world at large. The Peace Prayer of St Francis portrays beautifully the many dimensions of this challenge.

Choices and Consequences

Human freedom is one of our most precious gifts. It is what distinguishes us from other living beings. We are conscious of alternatives available to us in life, and are able to choose between these. But with choice comes responsibility for the consequences of our choices. Christians accept that there is a divine purpose in all of human living. Hence our actions always have a moral value. They are in accord with God’s plan and contribute to good living; or they are out of step with God’s purpose and lead towards a breakdown in morality. Conscience guides us in our making of moral choices. It not only considers the moral worth of a particular choice, but also examines what flows from that choice. It looks at the consequences for the individual, for others involved and for society at large. In making a choice, we accept responsibility not only for our actions, but for all that can be reasonably seen to flow from them.