

Life seems like a roller coaster sometimes. There are dramatic highpoints that suddenly descend into the scariest low points only to be followed by more highs and lows. Over the course of the last year, we have been locked out of churches, let back in with severe limits, and let back in at 50 % capacity. In some bush communities, parishes have gone for better than a year and a half without their pastor. Visa restrictions have hampered some priests from traveling to see their families. Those who have been lucky enough to go one way, often find it very difficult to return.

The development of multiple vaccines has brought hope for an end to all of the restrictions to travel and a return to normal. In some communities, high rates of vaccination have brought a sense of peace and security. In urban areas with more people objecting to receiving the vaccine, we have seen a new and dangerous surge.

The world does not know peace in the sense that wars continue to flare up. Senseless violence continues to take the lives of the young. And the coronavirus continues to claim lives and to humble the proud without discrimination to the young or the old.

Under the pandemic there have been 3.2 million deaths worldwide with an anticipated death toll in the US alone of 600,000 before month's end. Amidst all of this we hear the Gospel Message: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you" (Jn 14:27a). When Jesus spoke of peace, he most likely used the traditional Hebrew greeting "Shalom."

"The peace offered by Jesus is a peace between God and man. We are reconciled to God through Christ's suffering and death so the soul of the Christian enjoys peace and is left undisturbed by the strife of the world. The Christian must follow Christ by wishing peace to all he or she meets as Christ greeted the disciples ... "Peace be to you." Christians must live in peace with one another and proclaim the gospel in the world and so bring peace among individuals, families, and nations."ⁱ

We might think of the Blessed Mother at the foot of the cross. She knew her Son, Jesus, was fulfilling the will of the Father. She knew from the time of the dedication of Jesus in the Temple, that a sword would pierce her heart. She knew what a great scandal the cross was. Those he came to save, put him to death. But amidst all of the heartache and trauma, there is an inner peace acknowledging that God is in charge. He will draw good out of evil through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

"Shalom" is the gift of salvation for mankind and that gift has a cost, the life of our sinless Savior. Despite all of the things that are wrong with the world and with our times, God will not break his covenant. Each soul that passes will be judged and the righteous will know true and lasting peace for eternity. "Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid" (Jn 14:27b).

ⁱ Hahn, Scott. **Catholic Bible Dictionary**. Peace – Pg 688-689).