

I have come to set the earth on Fire – (By Fr. Stephen OMI)

My dear parishioners, on this 20th Sunday of Ordinary Time, in the Gospel of Saint Luke Jesus tells us that He came into the world to establish division and to set earth on fire.

Jesus is known to be the prince of Peace. But in today's Gospel He said that He did not come to bring peace but division. In the first place, He has come to establish true peace—one that is based on **truth, justice and love**, the peace that ONLY GOD can give us. He did not come to establish peace that the world knows—one that is achieved through political maneuvers, or through lies and half-truths, or through the force of arms. That is not true peace. What kind of peace do we have right now: true peace, or superficial peace? This must be our first point of reflection on this Sunday.

Then in the Gospel, Jesus says that has come to bring division. This undoubtedly means that one who decides to follow Jesus must have (no choice but) to put him/herself on the side of **truth, justice, love and holiness**. And this position does not accept any compromise. Jesus said, "**He who is not with me is against me.**" There are people, and they can be our loved ones, who are on the other side. If we are faithful to Jesus, we will come to a point when we have to make a decision. Whom do we choose to side with: Jesus or our loved ones? God or creatures? We ask God that we may be given the wisdom and courage to always choose Jesus over and above anything and anybody in this world.

Then our last point of meditation should be to understand the words of Jesus in the Gospel when He said "**I have come to set the earth on Fire.**" How many of us Catholics know that FIRE is God's way of purifying us before we see Him? In the Gospel, when Jesus connects that **fire with His Baptism**—which is the starting point of His earthly mission—it is very evident that what he meant was "the forgiveness of sins, purification and redemption of humankind" for which He was sent to the earth.

My dear friends, today Jesus invites each and every one of us to live our BAPTISM, and help Him to accomplish His wish on earth that the FIRE He started will be blazing everywhere in the world. The tongues of fire with which we were CONFIRMED on Pentecost will drive all of us into the world to purify the world with the fire of the Holy Spirit. The heat of that fire may burn and cause divisions, even in our own homes. But finally it will bring us TRUE PEACE.