

On the night of the Last Supper Jesus spoke to His Apostles “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him and we will come to her and make our home with them.” Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. The Gospels are saturated with love and peace.

But today’s Gospel seems to speak a different story. Jesus speaks “I have come to set the earth on fire.... Do you think that I have come to establish peace on earth? No, I tell you but rather division.” How can we square these two different teachings of Jesus?

My homily might be short this morning but I have spent hours trying to figure it all out. I’m sure they are compatible but how?

Well, we’ve got to take it to another level where peace and love; fire and division are somehow intertwined.

About 30 years ago four church women; Ita Ford and Maura Clark both Maryknoll Sisters, a sister from another religious community and a lay woman were working with the poor in El Salvador. They were assuring the poor of God’s great love for them and about their dignity, their worth as human persons and as God’s beloved. One night as they were returning to their Mission Post from the airport these women were attacked by the Salvadoran military. They were beaten and raped and finally murdered and thrown into the river. They went to El Salvador to teach about God’s love, but they encountered fire and division. This was real love.

In your own lives you encounter suffering, sometimes rejection and perhaps even violent words; and more. Because your life is committed to love, to God, you suffer but you stay faithful. In our own lives as well, in our secret inner lives there can be suffering. Anger flares up within us but we are called by God to love. We are left out, rejected. We want to strike back – fire, division.

To be real we have to acknowledge our own self-centeredness and seek God’s love, God’s peace, God’s healing.

I have come to bring fire and division.
Peace I leave you, peace I give you.