

The month of May is getting busier than the month of December. Making Christmas preparations used to drive everybody crazy. Now in May there are graduations, weddings, anniversaries, baptisms, confirmations, first communions and receptions in addition to Mothers Day to help us lose our minds. If you have a birthday this month you'll be lucky if anybody remembers. If you ask people, "How are you," they're likely to answer, "Busy."

In today's gospel, it's hard to know how to react to the words Jesus says to the disciples: "Peace be with you." He says it twice, in fact, "Peace be with you." If we are anxious about many things this month, these words might bring comfort. But when we're meeting ourselves coming and going, peace seems annoying far away.

At the Easter vigil when we celebrated baptism, we also celebrated confirmation. I imposed hands on the newly baptized, prayed for the coming of the Holy Spirit and anointed them with chrism. Then, I said to each of the newly confirmed the same words that Jesus said to the disciples, "Peace be with you." Doing this ritual sounds easier than it really is. The newly baptized were standing here dripping wet and holding candles. I'm always afraid when I say Peace be with you and embrace them, that they will either get me soaked or set me on fire. It's an awkward moment, like many other moments of love.

Confirmation is the first time that the newly baptized share Jesus' gift of peace as Christians. Normally we exchange a sign of peace at mass just before communion. It signifies our unity in one way before we signify our unity more deeply in the eucharist. The newly baptized came to the eucharist for the first time, but they also shared peace as Christians for the first time. We Christians are supposed to be adept at peace.

Peace is an awkward thing, but we saw some advances this week. President Carter visited Cuba, a country that has been estranged from us for too long. And the United States and Russia agreed to eliminate many nuclear weapons in our stockpiles. It is awkward but important to let go of resentments and remnants of the cold war.

On Pentecost we celebrate what Christ gave the disciples, the gift of the Spirit, the gift of peace. With that gift he commands us to forgive and to bring a peaceful presence to the world.

In the busy month of May, and at other times in our busy lifestyles, it is hard for us to find peace within. But once we do, once we welcome the Spirit that Christ gives, we can help the world find what Christ wished for his disciples, the gift of peace.