



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Memorial Day
May 26, 2025
Sr. Belinda Monahan

Isaiah 32:15-20
Psalm 72
1 Peter 1:3-9
Jn 14:23-29

Today's readings were chosen specifically for Memorial Day, but they fit beautifully in the Easter Season, in which we still find ourselves, particularly as we head to Pentecost in less than two weeks. They do more than paint a picture of new life, not just for us as individuals, but for the world, and, along with the Memorial Day we celebrate today, provide a road map for how we can live into that new life.

The first reading today, presents us with an oasis of "peaceful country" with "secure dwellings and quiet resting places," where the "ox and the donkey (in other words, the most valuable things that you might own) go free." And, if we can set aside the masculine language about the king and the king's son in the psalm today, it too presents us with an idyllic world, one in which the mountains yield their bounty and hills are of great abundance.

And these readings present us with more than a world based on material prosperity. The beautiful world that these readings show us is built on right judgement; on peace and justice; on the defense of the poor.

The first reading goes even further—beginning with "until the spirit from on high is poured out upon us." The new life that these readings present us with is not all our doing but is a result of the spirit being poured out upon us. That is not to say that we can sit idly and wait for the spirit nor that the spirit will do all the work for us: the first letter from Peter assures us that we will have to suffer through various trials before we attain the salvation of our souls.

And the Gospel pulls it all together for us. Jesus, as he is preparing for his crucifixion, tells his disciples that they will receive the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who will remind them of everything he has taught them—he has taught us. And, as in the first reading, the culmination of the arrival of the Spirit is peace. Peace that is not the absence of wars, peace that is not quiet acquiescence to authoritarian power, but peace that is rooted in the gift of salvation.

So where does that leave us? What does listening for the Spirit and working for justice and peace look like in our world today? What does it look like, on this Memorial Day, to honor the men and women who have done the work of working for justice and peace in the past? I do not have the answers to those questions. But I suspect that listening to the Holy Spirit starts in silence and prayer and that working toward justice and peace begins within ourselves—to quote Pope Leo, "Peace begins with each of us: in the way we look at others, listen to others, and speak about others."

If we read the headlines or listen to the news, the idyllic life promised in today's readings may seem too distant to ever achieve. But Pope Leo—who I just quoted as suggesting that peace begins within us—has also offered the Vatican as a site for peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine. As we continue to celebrate the Easter season, we remember that listening to the spirit and looking within will lead us altogether to new life.