

Do you think that Jesus came to establish peace? Yes, of course. Isn't Jesus called the prince of Peace? Doesn't everything we learn about Jesus speak Peace? Yet, in today's gospel, the answer is no.

What a conundrum. Imagine what it was like for the early followers who heard it for the first time. Just when they thought they understood Jesus, he says something like this: I have come to set the earth on fire and how I wish it were already blazing.

Harsh words for his followers who thought that he was the One that would change their world with a show of force. They wouldn't have to do anything. Jesus would do it all!

Jesus speaks of this baptism of fire that he must endure – the Cross – that will redeem and free the world with his own life.

The consequence of the baptism of fire: We are free, we are redeemed – AND we are called to do the same – to give our lives, our time, our talent, our treasure to free those who are not free – to those who are enslaved, imprisoned, homeless, jobless, burdened by today's oppression.

Today may the Word of God, harsh and stark as it is, wake us up to our call to set the earth on fire with Christ's redeeming love.