

Many years ago, in my studies in Engineering, I took a class in Thermodynamics. It was not one of my favorite classes; and seemed to me at the time, very complicated and convoluted.

The First Law of Thermodynamics relates to the conservation of energy - namely that the total amount of energy in a closed system remains constant over time.

One way to understand this is that once you've put gas in your car, and begin running the car, the energy released by the burning fuel is converted to heat and motion. The engine gets hot ... the car moves.

But, once you've burned up all the gas ... the engine cools off and the car stops moving. It's time to put gas in ... the closed system has exhausted all of the energy that was put into it.

In an effort to simplify the complexity of what we were learning in Thermodynamics, we students would summarize this first law in a more relaxed way as:

*There's no such thing as a free lunch.*

In today's Second Reading, St. Paul speaks of peace in a three-fold statement about peace, Paul tell us:

*[Jesus] is our peace ...*

*[Jesus] establish[es] peace ... [and] ...*

*[Jesus] preach[es] peace ...*

Our understanding of peace is limited by our own understanding of what peace is. For most twenty-first century Americans, peace means the absence of violence. As if violence is a positive attribute, and peace is the empty space when there is no violence.

Yet, for St. Paul, *peace* means *shalom*. I'm sure we've all heard the Hebrew word *shalom* before. Maybe in a song, maybe on a decoration or a poster or a t-shirt, maybe in a reading or when used as a greeting.

But *shalom* has a broader meaning than what the English word *peace* conveys. The meanings for *shalom* include:

*completeness, safety, soundness, health, welfare, prosperity, quiet, tranquility, contentment, friendship, relationship ...*

as well as the meanings we associate with the word *peace*.

In this way, the chaos in the First Reading, which the Prophet Jeremiah says that God will un-do ... can be seen as the re-establishment of *shalom*.

And the all-too familiar Twenty-third Psalm describes a state of *shalom*.

As well as in the Gospel, where Jesus takes his apostles “*away ... to a deserted place ... [to] rest ...*” is to get them back to *shalom*.

Yet, in our own daily hustle and bustle, our culture drives us to distraction ... into an almost totally *shalom*-free existence ... where we run around without any real chance of seeing an end.

Something has to give. How can we tear ourselves out of our own daily chaos without upsetting the the appplecart of our own lives ... without doing violence to ourselves or to those around us?

The answer, in St. Paul’s letter, is: *by the blood of Christ*.

The world gives peace through the bloodshed of war and violence. Jesus Christ gives us peace through the shedding of His Precious Blood on the Cross. His peace ... not as the world gives peace.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ - let us ask Jesus to truly be for us ... our safety ... our health ... our prosperity ... our tranquility ... our contentment ... our friend ... our *shalom*. May the graces which pour forth in this liturgy, re-establish in us the peace we need ... may our relationship with Christ strengthen the peace within us ... and as we go forth from this place, may we be examples of the Peace of God - which surpasses all understanding ... to the world at large.