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Today's Gospel is a challenging one, to say the least!

Jesus says, "if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

The ultimate gift we bring to the altar is ourselves. So, to me, this message from Jesus is about peace, which comes through forgiveness. Think about the peace you receive after reconciliation. Our burdens are removed because Jesus so willingly accepts them. Each of us, at some time or another, has felt wronged or betrayed by someone and may have even held a grudge against that person. We look to Jesus as our guide and follow His example in forgiveness, so that our hearts won't be filled with the heaviness and anxiety that comes from refusing to forgive.

In the Beatitudes, in Matthew, chapter 5, Jesus reminds us : "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Jesus wants us to have peace -- and it is so desperately needed in our world today! It is not just the work of our political leaders. It is the work of all sons and daughters of God. As the leader of our religious education program, this is one of my prayers for our children. I truly want to convey to them the importance of settling differences, of making amends, of being the best they can be through a relationship with Jesus. If someone upsets us, or we hear they are saying something bad, we need to go to that person and try to make peace with them rather than taking other people's word for what happened.

The news is filled with instances of people who did not settle their disputes peacefully. Imagine, how much violence and hatred could be avoided if we all learned to forgive and reconcile with each other. Let's pray together for peace, and like the beautiful hymn, recall these words throughout the day -- "Let there be Peace on Earth, and let it begin with me!"