

Chaplain's Bulletin April 7, 2024



Dear Folks,

As we celebrate the second Sunday of Easter, we continue to consider what it is to be an Easter people. We see in our Scriptures today Christian generosity (Acts 4:32-35), forgiveness of sins (John 20:19-23), and the power of wounds (John 20:24-49).

Generosity is not just giving, but giving from the heart, and finding joy in the giving. It includes not just giving stuff, but also time, patience, empathy, and understanding. We all have responsibilities and limited resources, so there is only so much we can do, but we look for opportunities to be good to others as we would hunt for treasure. Faith includes believing that giving of ourselves for the love of Jesus is a greater source of happiness than the world can give.

Jesus breathed on the apostles and gave them the Holy Spirit for the power to forgive sins. The Catholic Church understands this as the origin of the sacrament of reconciliation, but forgiveness is a key part of being Christian. We remember it is a form of healing, healing our hearts, and, if possible, healing the relationship. Some relationships can't be healed, and then we have to settle for healing within ourselves. I recommend Desmond Tutu's book "No Future Without Forgiveness" and the sequel that he wrote with his daughter Mpho, "The Book of Forgiving."

Jesus showed Thomas his wounds, and even invited him to touch them. His wounds were now marks of glory and showed that it was really Him and really raised. It moved Thomas to a powerful expression of faith. We remember how early Christians went to their deaths in the arena singing hymns of praise, and this moved people to want to know more about Christianity. Being able to endure suffering, hardship, even mistreatment without becoming mean and bitter makes a statement. In Mark 16:18 when Jesus is talking about believers handling serpents and drinking deadly things without harm, He's not encouraging us to play with reptiles or drink poison. He is saying His followers can face the evil in this world without being defeated, without becoming evil. Victor Frankl, in his book "Man's Search for Meaning" spoke about how he had seen many people who had suffered terribly and became kinder and more generous, while others who suffered relatively less became hard and mean. He suggested the difference had to do with the meaning people found in their suffering. The ultimate meaning of our suffering can be found in taking up our cross and walking with Jesus for the sake of the Kingdom. "Now I rejoice in my suffering for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church (Colossians 1:24)." Dawn Eden's book "Remembering God's Mercy" talks about healing the wounds of our hearts from a Catholic perspective.

For all of this to happen, of course, the first step is to fall more deeply in love with Jesus. It is His work in our lives that transforms our minds, our hearts, and our lives. If people notice that difference in us, that may lead them to the Gospel.

Alleluia!

Blessings,
Fr. Jim