

April 12, 2015 Divine Mercy Homily

Brothers and sisters, in the recently published, *The American Catholic Almanac*, there is one entry among the three hundred sixty five entries (one for each day of the year) that bears repeating, especially on this Second Sunday of Easter. In one of our nation's cemeteries, there is a simple and humble gravestone: Just a marker in the ground. The epitaph reads: " My Jesus...Mercy", and the name of the deceased... Al Capone. It is an unlikely epitaph for one of America's most notorious gangsters of the first half of the twentieth century. Al Capone died with his only hope...Christ's mercy... carved into his gravestone.

On this Divine Mercy Sunday, we are reminded that mercy is in reality the core of the gospel message. In our gospel reading (Jn.20:19-29) Our Risen Lord appears to his disciples on Easter Sunday night. His conventional greeting, "Peace be with you" (no less than three times in the reading) is more than it seems. It conveys assurance and a sense of forgiveness. Let us recall that only two days earlier, on Good Friday, the disciples seem to have severed relations with their master. Virtually all of them deserted Jesus during his passion and death. One can only imagine their shame and embarrassment once Christ returned to them after his resurrection from the dead.

As the French Canadian author Jean Vanier writes in his commentary on this gospel reading: "He (Jesus) does not criticize or judge them for their fears and their moments of infidelity. He does not make any critical remark to Peter, who denied him. He does not make anyone feel guilty. Jesus confirms his love of them... they are his beloved ones and he is there for each one of them". Hence, is it any wonder that the disciples of Jesus experienced joy and gladness?

Let us admit that one of our greatest fears is the reaction of someone whom we have failed or disappointed. That person may be a parent, a spouse, a longstanding friend, a teacher or even a coach. To be harshly condemned for our failure is painful and deflating. In those dreaded moments, we desire... most of all, mercy. Unfortunately, enduring another person's wrath can, and has, leave lasting negative impressions... Believe me; I have the emotional scars to prove my point!

In the early church, the Bishop would begin any major feast by repeating the words of Christ, "Peace be with you" and he did so for a reason, namely, to remind the members of his flock of Christ's presence. And it is not without significance that we greet each other with the sign of peace before approaching Our Lord for Holy Communion.

Mercy illuminates the Face of the Church and is manifested in the sacraments. On Easter Sunday Night, Christ instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation. On Divine Mercy Sunday, we celebrate the Lord's merciful love and forgiveness. May Christ's peace reign in our hearts!

Amen.