



YEAR C – APRIL 28, 2019

Have you ever gone to Mass, well prepared, but the homily that day doesn't touch your heart. Good news. Now you get reflections on the readings of the day from all over the world. Let me give you just one example. This one comes from the Oblates of St. Francis De Sales and can be found on their website:

“The readings this weekend offer so many points to break open that no one homily could include them all -- without a lunch break, that is!

Our Gospel comes from near the end of the first of two distinct endings to John's Gospel. It celebrates Jesus' appearance to the apostles as well as the coming of the Holy Spirit – the Pentecost experience. John does not place Pentecost 50 days after Easter. For him, both the Resurrection and Pentecost happen on Easter Sunday, one before dawn and the other, in the evening.

The Apostles were huddled behind locked doors “for fear of the Jews”. There they were: immobilized with fear, terrified that they might be next. They were also guilt-ridden for having abandoned Jesus so miserably.

Jesus came through the locked door and stood before them. We might expect Jesus -- who was betrayed by Judas, denied three times by Peter, and abandoned by all except John -- to lambast the men he had called “friends” at the Last Supper. Some friends! His greeting was “shalom”. He repeated it – perhaps because of the startled looks on his Apostles' faces when he did not fulminate at them.

He allays their fears with his gift of peace – shalom. He did not remind them of their misdeeds. His one word evaporated their fear and dissipated their guilt. Shalom “made it all better.” Today's gospel reminds us of Jesus' prayer to his father on the cross, “Father, forgive them...” The Jewish and Roman authorities that condemned him to death...the throngs that had been amazed at his miracles...wonder-filled at his teaching-with-authority...sated with bread and fish in their empty stomachs...people who had strewn palms in his path when he entered Jerusalem – and screamed “crucify him... We'll take Barabbas by the end of the week.

It is not by chance that the worldwide Catholic Church recognizes Jesus' magnificent forgiveness in today's remembrance called Divine Mercy Sunday. Pope John-Paul II initiated it in 2000 at the urging of Sr. Faustina Kowalski. Private revelations usually do not move me but celebrating the extravagant abundance of compassion by Jesus in this Gospel seems appropriate on this day.

Jesus gave us the two great commandments. Surely contained within love is forgiveness, mercy. Today's celebration of divine mercy highlights a most important aspect of love that is often overlooked, or not even recognized as being, perhaps, the most important and most difficult aspect of love: forgiveness. Disagreements inevitably do happen. There is a solution. We, the Church, must finally recognize that forgiveness is to love what grease is to gears. In the long run, if there is not forgiveness the relationship of love grinds to a screeching halt.

The apostles' experience of forgiveness in today's Gospel keeps us rooted in Jesus who forgave his apostles without condition and forgives us the same way. With his loving forgiveness and its effect on us, he sends forth his disciples and us to preach and to practice what we preach.”

**Do you practice what you preach?**