

Dec. 5-6, 2015

Thoughts from the pastor,

We are starting the second week of Advent. Last week I mentioned the themes of thanksgiving and hope. This week we have different things to focus on. As I look at the calendar for this week the things that strike me the hardest are the Remembrance of Pearl Harbor and the two Marian Feasts. We have the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Not having lived through the horrors of Pearl Harbor means it has not had as big an impact on me as with the generation ahead of me. But watching all the news on ISIS terrorist attacks makes it very real this year. It is not hard to remember that there is evil in this world. And that is not just from terrorists. There are many who seem to be filled with disdain for their fellow human beings and many others who are filled with hate.

The Marian feasts are on the other side of that coin. The conception of Mary without sin is a reminder that God can overcome sin, which is all about levels of selfishness. Sin comes as we turn away from love and compassion for others and only want what is good for ourselves. Mary fulfilled this great gift from God by her willingness to then conceive and bear a Son whose name would be Jesus. If she had said no to God's invitation to be the mother of His Son, that gift from God would have born no fruit. Because she said yes it has born great fruit. This unselfishness or sinless behavior sets a totally different tone from the hatred and disdain that too many others have shown throughout history.

Mary helping out the people in Mexico and beyond, which we celebrate with the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Saturday, 12/12, is one of the many signs that she is not resting on her laurels but continues to reach out unselfishly to try to bring more people into the family of God.

This actually gets me to the theme that I encourage you to focus on this week and as Pope Francis suggests, for the next year. December 8th is the day he has chosen to start the Year of Mercy. This is more than just Divine Mercy Sunday expanded. The pope is hoping to help us understand mercy better. It is such a great gift from God but some simply see it as a get out of jail (or hell) free card. They think that because of God's mercy we can do what we want and God will look the other way. So Pearl Harbor can be bombed and terrorists can destroy people's lives and it will all be overlooked. That is not mercy and it is certainly not love for it shows no interest in the people who have been hurt by these kinds of violence.

Mercy is something much more complicated and yet it is simple. It is simple because it is based on love. It is complicated because love is not simple. If you don't believe that you are obviously not a parent. Parents are constantly weighing their decisions on how to best help their children grow out of selfishness and towards compassion for others. God the Father is in the same situation. He is willing to give us some slack if He feels that it will help us turn away from sin. Many mistake that for the other thing that God has to do occasionally, which is to give us enough rope to hang ourselves.

As we go through this Year of Mercy we will have many opportunities to come to understand the Lord's ways. But a simple start is to meditate prayerfully on the actions of Mary. With Tuesday being a Holy Day of Mass obligation, God is hoping that we will take extra time to do just that. As you notice there is even time from 8pm to midnight on Tuesday night when we will have Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the Chapel to pray about this and the worst terrorist attack that we have going on in our society, in which millions of innocent lives are destroyed around the world every year, abortion.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank