

Dear Parishioners,

Father Paul, Deacon Kevin and I wish you a very blessed and joyful peace for this Sunday – the Octave of Easter and the Feast of Divine Mercy. The Reflection below is from Father Paul and has a personal touch.

This Sunday is celebrated as The Feast of Divine Mercy. The word “Mercy” is spoken of frequently in the scriptures. We might ask ourselves what does the word “mercy” mean to me? What do I understand when I say that I am on the receiving end of God’s Mercy and am asked to be merciful to others.

Father Paul in reflecting on these questions himself came up with the following thoughts:

The realisation that God chose him to be a Priest helps him to realise how merciful God has been to him, helping him to get through his studies, and increasing his awareness that the gift of the priesthood came to him not through any merit of his own.

He also understands that although we are called to be good and to obey the commandments, he recognises how merciful God has been to him throughout his life.

Reflecting on our Lord’s own life what do we learn of God’s mercy? Is it the fact that Christ was born in a stable, not in a palace or within the privileged classes of society. Similarly, in Jesus’ choice of His disciples where did He get them from? Not from the army or from powerful sections of society, but from Galilee. In His choice of Nathanael, Jesus says of him “There is a person who is incapable of deceit!” Jesus chose average, straightforward men. His loving choice allows us to be ourselves

In His teaching and preaching Jesus sought always to do the Father’s work. Remember how at the age of twelve when His parents found Him in the Temple, Jesus says to them “***Did you not realise I must be busy with my Father’s affairs.***” Were these affairs above all to reveal God’s mercy? Look how Jesus treats His own disciples. When they misunderstood Him and got things wrong, He didn’t criticise them or tell them they are stupid. He reproached them with gentleness. He forgave them and thus showed them God’s mercy in action.

When Thomas says to our Lord at the last supper: ***“Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way,”*** Jesus replies ***“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one can come to the Father except through Me.”***

After the resurrection when by the lakeside Jesus asks Peter three times ***“Do you love Me?”*** Peter replies ***“Of course I love you”***. What does it mean for a man to say to another man “I love you?” Peter’s response would have included, appreciation, admiration and affection; perhaps even the idea “Lord, you are the best friend I have ever had!”

In a wider context Father Paul genuinely believes that God desires Salvation for all people. God created us to enjoy Heaven in His company. He desires that we grow in perfect love; but He also respects our freedom. However, He is not indifferent to the choices we make. We must do right and avoid wrongdoing and where injustice appears, we must oppose it. We must, for example, be the voice of the homeless.

He struggles with the philosophical arguments for God’s existence but knows for certain that God is Love and He rules with love and power! His relationship with God has never involved any dramatic revelations – it would scare the living daylights out of him if it were so! He simply trusts that God will protect him from some of the worries that come with philosophical arguments about God, and that the Lord will protect him from harm. His relationship with God is that of the penitent “God be merciful to me, a sinner!”

In a more sombre moment, travelling to Lisbon over the vast ocean, he asked himself “if I were to fall overboard would my passing be noticed?” But this also shows the mercy of God, for although we are like a tiny speck of sand on the seashore, yet God has made us to enjoy eternity with Him.

The psalmist says:

“When I see the heavens, the work of Your hands, the moon and the stars which You arrange, what is man that You should keep Him in mind, mortal man that You should care for him?

Yet You have made him little less than god, with glory and honour You crowned Him, gave him power over the works of Your hand, put all things under His feet.” (Psalm 8)

Father Paul sees Mercy and Love as being synonymous. We have been created through love and for love. All the actions of the Blessed Trinity, namely that of Creating us, Redeeming us and Sanctifying us have their source and perfection in the loving desire of God for us.

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him may not be lost but may have eternal life; for God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but so that through Him, the world might be saved.” (John 3:16)