

Monday, March 26, 2018, Reflection of the Day

"...the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil."

Our Catholic Church has always been known as a church with all the "smells and bells." I love it when we use incense on special occasions and on Tuesday evenings when Father incenses the monstrance right before Eucharistic Adoration. Watching the incense rise to heaven reminds us that our prayers are lifted up on high as well. And then the whole church is filled with that sweet smell and it reminds us that Jesus is present in this holy place.

I imagine the scene in today's gospel was bittersweet for all those at dinner at the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. His friends and followers knew Jesus was in danger and wanted the precious time with him to last. Judas was already disappointed that Jesus was not the leader he expected. Mary, fearing the end was near, made a gesture of love and honor and thanksgiving for all Jesus had been to her by anointing his feet with perfumed oil. The fragrance was a reminder to all present of who Jesus was to them and a reminder that no matter what the days ahead may hold, his love would remain with them just as the fragrance filling that holy place.

As we journey into this holiest of weeks, may all the smells and bells and rituals and celebrations remind us once again that we are standing on Holy Ground and we are filled with the presence of Jesus in all we do.

Peace,
Dinah Tichy

Tuesday, March 27, 2018, Reflection of the Day

"The Lord called me from birth, from my mother's womb he gave me my name."

We all like to hear the stories surrounding our birth and the choosing of our name. I began my life being born to an unwed mother and a father who had deceived her and fled. Lucky for me and for my Mom, my grandmother accepted us unconditionally and our little family was formed. When I was six months old, my Mom took me to a priest at St Bridget's and asked for me to be baptized. Now my Mom was not Catholic nor was my grandmother or any other relative so that priest could have said no. But he chose to baptize me because my Mom promised to raise me in the church. Mom had to come up with a saint's name for me, so I began my life as a Catholic as Dinah Lee Frances. And true to her word to that priest, Mom raised me Catholic sending me to Catholic schools and making sure I celebrated all my sacraments. (My Mom finally became Catholic herself at age 65 but that's a story for another day.)

I often wonder what my life might have been if not for that wonderful priest who took a chance on my Mom. Like many of you, I am so thankful for this wonderful Catholic faith. It has brought me through so many hard times in my life but has also been there for so many joyful times- watching each of my children and grandchildren get Baptized, Confirmed, make their First Eucharist, get married. I can't imagine getting through the losses in life without my faith and the caring Catholic community who supported and held me in my grief. I know that God truly called me from birth just as he called each of you.

During this Holy Week, may each of us embrace with gratitude this holy faith that we entered as a child, as an adult or are entering this Easter.

Peace,
Dinah Tichy

Wednesday, March 28, 2018, Reflection of the Day

"Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, ' Surely it is not I Rabbi?' "

I have always had great sympathy for Judas. I truly think he thought he was doing what was right. How often do our actions that we are so positive are "right" end up hurting someone else ? I'm a big fan of the movie Jesus Christ Superstar and the portrayal of Judas falling on his knees in agony seeing the results of what he has done rings true to me. How often in life do we regret the things we have done?

A priest friend of mine used a dream he had as a homily. In his dream he saw Jesus descending into hell. As he walks through hell he is searching among the damned for a person. Over in a dark corner he sees a man curled up, sobbing with his arms covering his head. Jesus reaches out, lifts him up and looks in his eyes and says, "Judas, I forgive you! Now you must forgive yourself!" It may have been a dream but a powerful image of the guilt we carry with us when we sin and can't accept God's abundant mercy. The difference between Judas who put himself in hell and Saint Peter who also betrayed Jesus then went on to lead the Church is that Peter was able to accept the forgiveness of Jesus. Judas felt his betrayal was unforgivable.

During this Holy Week, can you accept the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus and forgive yourself for your betrayals and offenses? Then you can truly enter into the joy of Easter with a heart that is free.

Peace,

Dinah Tichy

Thursday, March 29, 2018, Reflection of the Day

"I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

By this Holy Week St. John Paul II will have completed our first Service Day in which many parishioners, young and old, have made a difference in our community. Reaching out to those in need is a direct command by Jesus on the night before he died. Service to others is part of our religion curriculum at St. John Paul II and Providence Junior and Senior High School plus our Confirmation preparation. We sponsor a sister parish in Haiti including sponsoring young students' education. We stock a community pantry by our donations each week. We serve at Exit Zero. We contribute generously when hurricanes, earthquakes and other natural disasters take place. We are a parish that takes service very seriously.

Each Holy Thursday at St John Paul II we have the opportunity to literally wash someone's feet and have our feet washed in turn. It is a powerful symbol of how we are called to care for the Body of Christ. St Theresa said, "Christ has no hands on earth but yours, no feet on earth but yours." We are called to be Christ to one another. I am always moved to see parents wash their children's feet, elderly husbands wash their wives feet, children wash their grandpa's feet, a sibling wash the feet of a handicapped sister. As important as the service we do for the community and other places outside our parish is the service we provide right inside our own homes. Each time a parent picks up a crying baby in the night they are caring for "the least of our brothers." Each time we reach out to an aging parent, an ailing sister, a lonely teenager, we are following the model given by Jesus.

If you have never experienced the foot washing at the St. John Paul II Parish Holy Thursday Liturgy, I encourage you to attend this evening at the St. Paul campus. I guarantee you will see the command of Jesus with new eyes.

Peace,

Dinah Tichy

Friday, March 30, 2018 Reflection of the Day

"Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured."

I had a friend who used to say that Jesus could have saved us simply by dying in his sleep, he didn't have to go through all that suffering. And I agreed with her, after all he was God, he could accomplish all things in his own way. That is, I agreed until the year my son died. The Good Friday after Jon died as I looked upon the cross I

realized for the first time why Jesus had to endure such a painful death. Jesus wanted us to understand that he knew well the pain of the human condition. He knew what it felt like to be abandoned, to be in pain, to grieve for what might have been. I knew he identified with my broken heart and he wept with me and for me.

I had always been moved by the Good Friday procession to venerate the cross but I don't think I ever realized why before then. You see, each of us brings to that cross our own brokenness, our own suffering. I see the single Mom trying to keep her family clothed and fed on a meager salary. I see the widow who spent 53 years with her love and is now so lonely. I see the mentally handicapped adult who has endured bullying and rejection in his lifetime. I see the pregnant young woman so terrified of what her future holds. I see the friend just diagnosed with cancer and the elderly gentleman whose heart has already been through several operations. I see the wide eyed child, not totally understanding but gently kissing the cross holding on to her mother's hand. And I see my husband whose grief for our son is etched on his face as it is on his spirit.

I pray that each of you have the opportunity today to experience a Good Friday service and a chance to carry your sufferings and lay them on the cross as you venerate what Our Lord and Savior has done for you. But even if you don't make it to a service today, realize that Jesus embraces your pain and wants to walk with you through your suffering whatever it may be.

Peace,
Dinah Tichy