

A MISSION OF MERCY

How many homilies or sermons do you think you have heard in your lifetime? From my early years until I was ordained I figure a thousand just on Sundays, 20 years and 50 weeks. In the seminary we had a homily every day at Mass plus other times. $40 \text{ weeks} \times 10 \text{ years} \times 7 \text{ days} =$ roughly 2800 sermons/homilies. So just up until the time I became a priest I probably heard 3800 sermons or homilies.

Since I was ordained 44 years ago I have preached pretty much every Sunday at least once, often twice or more. That's $44 \text{ years} \times 50 \text{ Sunday homilies} = 2200$ Sunday homilies. And I preach each day at daily Mass which would be about $50 \text{ weeks} \times 44 \text{ years} \times 6 \text{ days} = 13,200 + 2200$. Over 15,000 homilies given and almost another 4000 heard. I am getting close to 20,000 homilies. So I ask myself: how come I am not farther along the spiritual way than I am? The answer of course is that God is not done with me yet. AND, because of sin, my own or those committed against me, my own heart is sometimes divided and sometimes it has grown hardened.

I go into all of this because God's Word is so powerful. I could not live without it. And I realize I need to hear that Word over and over again. I also realize that there have been so many moments when the Word of God came to me in what I heard that it changed me, really helped me. It united the divide in my heart. It renewed my soul. It softened the hardness of the heart that is mine. God's Word is Jesus. That is why God's Word became flesh—so we could hear God's voice. And that Word has been handed on to those who believe in Him and have been chosen to preach that word, to speak it to you and me. Faith comes through hearing, the apostle says.

This week we have a parish mission. The week of the Divine Mercy. It is a Mission of Mercy. We will have a priest come to preach God's Word Tuesday evening, Wednesday evening and Thursday evening. He will preach for one hour, from 7pm until 8pm in the church. Then he will go downstairs to Friendship Hall and preach a second hour in Spanish so that God's Word will get the widest possible hearing. His name is Monsignor Edward Chavez. He is the Vice-Rector of the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. He is a priest full of life and enthusiasm and love for Our Lord. He has written over 25 books in his lifetime. He has travelled internationally to preach in many countries. He was the priest postulator for the cause for the canonization of Saint Juan Diego, the Mexican peasant to whom Our Lady appeared in 1531. He knows a great deal about our faith and has a great love for Our Lord and Our Lady. I have heard him preach in Spanish and I was able to understand him and in English too.

So, I invite you to come out for each of the three nights of the parish mission. I believe it will be worth your while to do so. I want you to think about this. Yes, last Sunday was Easter. Today is Divine Mercy Sunday and we will have a holy hour from 3pm to 4pm with an hour of confessions beforehand. And here I am asking you to come out three more nights. Yup. And if you do, the Lord will reward you. Here's the question: What would you like to see changed in your heart? In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles this morning Saint Luke said that the early disciples of Christ were devoted to 1) the apostles' teaching, 2) the communal life, 3) the breaking of bread (the Eucharist/the Mass), and 4) prayer.

What would you say you are devoted to in your life? What would you like the Lord to do for you, give to you if you were to open your heart wider? For me I would pray for the grace of singleheartedness and a greater devotion to the Way of Jesus personally. What would you desire? I have heard many people confess that they wished they had a truly forgiving heart, or had true peace and patience in their soul with their family members. I have heard people pray for a renewed purity of heart or a genuine compassion for

each person. Still others desire a true grit to be able to stand firm in the truth of their faith with a personal integrity. Has your heart hardened? Would you want Our Lord to soften it some? Do you sense in yourself a helplessness at times? Would you like some help in learning how to turn that over to Our Lord? Then this Mercy Mission is for you. Yes, it is three nights but it is worth it. You are worth it. And that is where we often let down. We often give up the very things—not that someone else needs—but that we need, I need. You do have to push yourself to do the things that are good for you, especially when it is extra and you are tired after a long day and you may not feel like it. But you know that the Lord always rewards us when we make the effort. Look at Thomas in today's gospel. He couldn't push himself to be with the others that first Easter. And he missed out. He pushed himself the next week and the Lord appeared to him. It is really not so different.

Don't look at this Mission of Mercy as one more thing you have to do. Look at it as a little treat you owe to yourself. Then let the Lord feed you with his Mercy and his Truth.