

Divine Mercy Parish  
*Feast of St. Faustina*  
*Friday Oct. 5, 2012*

Hosea 2,16. 21-22  
Colossians 3, 12-17  
Psalm 27  
Mark 3, 31-35

This Triduum of Masses began on Wednesday with the image of an Afghan. Just like strands of wool are woven together to weave the afghan, I have preached like a weaver sewing together strands of dialogue between God and humans. Before we complete the tapestry tonight let's review the pieces of faith dialogue woven together so far.

The first strand was taken from the reading from the Book of Job. It is a story of dialogue between Job and his friends and between Job and God. The spiritual lesson the story teaches us about engaging God in our tragedies is not to ask WHY we suffer, but to look outward, to contemplate God in the suffering by asking, "can you see me suffering, can you come and be with me in my sadness, can you come and help carry my pain?" The open-ended questions keep the dialogue with God open. They get us out of our heads where we obsess with explaining things, and keeps the heart ready for a divine revelation. They help us to not miss God when He breaks in and invites us to look interiorly for the consolation of his presence.

Another strand of spiritual dialogue was in St. Paul's letter to the Galatians. He encouraged them to give witness to the cross of Christ in their life as the centerpiece of their Christian life and to not be tricked into avoiding the cross by talking about circumcision. To talk about the cross is to share faith with others about the ultimate kind of love Jesus has for them.

Another strand of dialogue was in Jesus's conversation with the seventy-two disciples about the new job requirements to meet the urgency of preaching the kingdom without distractions. Down-sizing, less is more, don't get sidetracked with idle chatter and don't be tricked into rebuking towns that reject you are ways they can talk back to the false idols that will trick them into getting distracted from their mission.

Tonight we weave a new strand into our spiritual tapestry. The book of Hosea is a collection of prophetic speeches. The central theme of marriage is a symbol revealing the Hebrew God's personal love of his people, faithful even in the face of their gross failings. The marriage imagery captures the concept of the covenant between Yahweh and the chosen people.

Chapter two begins with an indictment of Israel as the Faithless Wife. The chosen nation had begun to serve the lesser god of Baal turning them into a lesser people. Hosea refers to this behavior as adultery and calls for the divorcee to restore their relationship with Yahweh. Baal was more than a competing cult. It had contaminated

the very worship of the Israelite Sabbath. So Hosea calls for Israel to return to the desert, not as a place of withdraw, but as a place of re-establishing contact with Yahweh, the place where they will fall back in love with the divine. This is the background of the Oracle in today's first reading.

God will allure Israel his spouse to the fertile land to find Yahweh again. God will tease the people back into a love-relationship. There God will espouse himself, the gift the groom offers to take Israel back as his bride. For Hosea, God is the faithful groom and Israel will know that when they recognize that their part of the marriage covenant is keeping his law. Hosea's oracle is calling for Israel's response, namely love should call for love.

In the second reading St. Paul writes to his faith community in Colossae how they can allure others to Christ by their behaviors. He addresses them using the endearing term, *beloved, chosen, holy*. This is language used to describe Israel of Old. Paul uses it to express the new Israel, the new community of God's people and that their relationships should reflect this esteemed identity.

This greeting then leads to a list of five virtues expressive of the inner transformation necessary to become "a new personality," that of Christ. *Kindness, humility, meekness, patience and forgiveness* are the new garments of Christ. The final garment that binds them together is *love*.

The presence of Christ in the community will manifest itself by words, psalms and hymns because music is a spiritual source of peace and harmony and when it's done in the name of the Lord Jesus then we conform our lives to his and we lure others to join us in the renewal of our love relationship with the Son of God.

Mark's gospel reading addresses Jesus' true family. At first his response sounds disappointing like he doesn't care about his kin. But, Jesus radically subordinates his kin to a higher bond of kinship. The reign of God makes demands on the personal commitment of a disciple; which must transcend at times all natural bonds of family or ethnic grouping. The dialogue between Jesus and the crowd is intended to stretch their understanding of the New Covenant family of faith. Those who will risk following him will become brothers and sisters and family to one another.

The voice of Hosea's is God speaking with the unfaithful spouse. God's desire is to lure back Israel like a new bride to Yahweh, the bridegroom. God seducing, God attracting, God enticing his people back into a covenantal relationship says volumes about God's unrequited love for his people.

The theme of dialogue in the second reading of St. Paul's letter to Colossians is his way of exhorting them to live in such a way that others would be attracted to their communal life, not by designer cloths but wearing the clothes of humility, patience, kindness, forgiveness. This is how God will lure others to join the faith community in Colossae.

The theme of dialogue in the gospel was in Jesus's new teaching about his family. Discipleship transcends kinship making us all brothers and sisters.

Finally, the theme of dialogue was woven into the pieces of Francis and Faustina's story. It is one love story scripted differently in the lives of two saintly people. The cry of love of humans for God mingled with God's cry of love for humans.

The cry of Francis was for poverty. The cry of Faustina was for humility. Both cries ended in a legacy that has brought many to Jesus, the font of Divine Mercy.

Both are venerated as being instruments of Divine Mercy. Both had conversations with Divine Mercy; they knew how to dialogue with Jesus. Francis received the Stigmata, Faustina received a vision. Francis left behind the rule of a religious community. Faustina left behind a Chaplet, a way of dialoguing with the divine; to obtain mercy, to trust in Christ's mercy, and to show mercy to others.

I present that to you as your mission in this "Year of Faith."

*Story of Episcopal Church in Cleveland: "Ye Servants of the Lord, Enter Here."  
Sign of every sacristy door: "Servants Entrance."*

*Sign inside your gathering space: "Enter Here to receive Mercy."  
"Go forth from here to show Mercy."*

The better you get at living the Chaplet, which is a noun that expresses the personal pronoun, Jesus, God will lure others here because they will see that you have something they don't have, but want. They will see the face of Divine Mercy on your faces, they will hear the voice of Divine Mercy in your voice of kindness, they will be healed by Divine Mercy in your forgiveness, they will touch the presence of Divine Mercy in your peacefulness.

In this Year of Faith, don't just tell people you are members of Divine Mercy Parish. Tell them you are instruments of Divine Mercy. Be the next St. Faustina, the next vessel of Divine Mercy by showing mercy to others. *My Fair Lady – don't just tell me – show me!*

Are you sitting next to the first saint from Singapore? Are you sitting next to someone who will start a new religious congregation devoted to the beneficiaries of divine mercy? Talk about these things during the Year of Faith.

- Keep diaries and journals of your faith-sharing. Invite people to read some entries before Masses on Divine Mercy Sunday.
- Have a weekly column in your parish newsletter entitled "Sharing Mercy/Sharing Faith."

- Since St. Faustina served as a gardner, plant a Mercy Garden and when the flowers bloom take the housebound, the poor and share Mercy through flowers.
- Cook Mercy meals during Lent and deliver them to people struggling to put food on their tables.

These are some ways to keep St. Faustina's legacy alive in Singapore and keep your hearts open to ongoing spiritual renewal which is fed by the real presence of Christ in the sacraments, in your charity and in your faith-filled hearts.

Amen.