

Divine Mercy Parish – Singapore
Triduum Mass Homily – Sat. Oct. 5, 2013
Baruch 4:5-12, 27-29 & Luke 10:17-24

In the world of psychology FEAR is a negative emotion.
In the world of spirituality FEAR is a demon.

Psycho-therapists help people befriend their fear so they can transcend it and reverse an unhealthy behavior pattern by learning how to lean on trust and growing into a new pattern of behavior. People who have a fear of flying have to unlearn an old pattern in order to lean on the power of trust when it comes to a breakthrough by taking the risk of flying in an airplane. People who have a fear of roller-coasters or other theme park rides have to unlearn an old pattern in order to learn that only in taking risks do they discover something new about trust and come to befriend it thus defusing the power of FEAR to control their lives.

Spiritual Directors help people surrender their fear to the higher power we call Jesus Christ. He then becomes the dominant voice in one's life. The spiritual director guides people how to turn down the volume on FEAR and to turn up the volume on TRUST. That process of discerning how to clear out the static in the interior life caused by fear brings a pilgrim on the spiritual path to a place where they achieve a deeper level of interior freedom from fear clearing the way to grow into how to yield to trust.

As a certified spiritual director a lot of my ministry is spent helping people cancel out the voice of the evil spirit so they give their hearts to the Holy Spirit. Only by the fruit do we know which voice rules us. If there is desolation and darkness inside then the evil spirit is in charge. If there is consolation and light, then the Holy Spirit guides our choices and decisions. The mission of every Christian is learning how to pick the fruit first then live and make choices that empower us to taste of the good fruits of the Holy Spirit.

One of the techniques I use is encouraging the practice of chanting mantra's. If I may be bold as the preacher I invite you to imagine that Baruch did that in the first reading.

“Fear not, my people!” is a mantra. And when it is chanted enough it becomes an antidote to the demon FEAR. Baruch uttered it hoping it would get off his lips and into their hearts. He wanted them to download it into their interior life so whenever they abdicated their faith to fear, they would upload it and utter it themselves as a way to get free and allow the Hebrew God to rule their lives again.

Baruch's oracle was spoken to the Jewish people who were suffering the shame of the Babylonian exile in 587 BC. First he tells them that God does not wish to destroy them, but only to punish them for a time because they had taken to worshiping pagan gods. These lesser gods turned them into lesser people.

Then Baruch introduces the city of Jerusalem, mother of the nation. She speaks to her scattered children, encouraging them to repent so God may bring them home in joy. You can only imagine how discouraged they were in exile, cut off from their homeland.

On 9/11 I had a friend who was stranded at the Los Angeles International Airport once the FAA shut down the air traffic control system nation-wide. He joined with two other strangers at the airport and rented a car. It took them three days stopping only to refuel and eat to drive the 2490 miles back to the east coast. They wanted to get back home to their families.

We know from the readings this week that God did restore his beloved people to Palestine through the kindness of a Persian king. But before their return in exile, they had to purify themselves of their pride and stubbornness. They had to delete the voice of the false gods who tricked them into becoming unfaithful to the covenant. They had to get free interiorly and allow the faithful God of the covenant to re-program them to surrender.

“Fear not my children, call out to God” is the new mantra they had to chant to rid themselves of fear and shame so they could turn their hearts ten times and seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors who desires to bring them back enduring joy.

In the gospel only Luke tells the story of the disciples’ joyful return with good news. They have talked to demons, they have tread upon serpents and scorpions, watched Satan fall from the sky, claimed power over the full force of the enemy.

They return elated. They sense the immensity of the Lord’s power in them over demons and other evil forces. Jesus does not deny the power they have experienced. His final words, however, reveal the main purpose of their mission. It is not power, but preaching the news about salvation. This is the striking reversal of the human desire for power. The gospel is about compassion, healing, helping others grow out of fear and into hope.

That mission was revealed to Mary Faustina Kowalska as her life mission. Born into a large family in 1905 in rural Poland, she entered a convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Warsaw, dying in Vilnius on this day in 1938. Although outwardly a conventional nun, privately she enjoyed an extraordinary series of conversations with Jesus, recorded in a diary known only to her confessor.

In one vision, she saw Jesus pointing to two bright rays that emanated from his heart – one white and one red. He told her: *“These beams signify water and blood. The water which purifies souls; the blood which is the life of the soul. They spring from My heart which was opened on the Cross.”*

Proclaiming this message was her call to be the Apostle of Divine Mercy. Devotion to God's mercy became the central theme of her spirituality; to remind Christians of this mercy. Her superiors, however, doubted her visions, believing she was delusional. They had given their hearts to a spirit, a voice that fed doubt in them. It was only after her death from tuberculosis that they discovered her diary and submitted it for examination in Rome. It was viewed with suspicion and placed on the Index of Forbidden Books. This was the fruit of pride ruling hearts that were infected with power and not with humbleness. For nearly sixty years these hearts of pride got in God's way.

Her reputation was restored when Karol Wojtyla became Archbishop of Warsaw. He reopened an investigation into the authenticity of her holiness, and later, as Pope John Paul II, presided over her canonization on 30 April 2000. At the same time, he proclaimed that the Second Sunday of Easter would henceforth be celebrated as "Divine Mercy Sunday."

Just like Jesus reversed the hearts of the joy-filled disciples away from an obsession with their power to use his name over demons and serpents, to proclaiming the good news of salvation to all, St. Faustina's life and legacy was reversed by one who risked trusting in the Holy Spirit to guide the course of her path to sainthood.

Jesus told the disciples that their pride was in the way of the mission. Cardinal Wojtyla told the commission their doubt was in the way of authentically discerning God's will for the sainthood of Faustina. Only when their hearts got free of the bad fruits of those false spirits did the disciples reverse course and make the mission their message as the smothering of Divine Mercy was released to become a river of joy for all those who find hope in the spirituality of St. Faustina.

God gives us three spiritual directors on this feast day.

First, Baruch, who directed the chosen people away from the voice of fear to embrace God bringing back enduring joy in their return home after the exile.

Second, Jesus, who directed the disciples away from pride and boasting by telling them not to grow up, but to grow down, to become childlike by the miracles they witness. Their names were written in heaven. He directed them how to embrace that call, that vocation, not by a false notion of power, but by the innocent and humble way they proclaim the good news of salvation.

Finally, St. Faustina, whose spiritual director was none other than Jesus.

In her visions he revealed her true vocation, not just to become a Sister of Our Lady of Mercy, but to become the vessel through which Divine Mercy would be revealed to you and me, to sinners who don't yet know they are destined for sainthood, for exiles waiting for us to welcome them back home with mercy, for people addicted to fear desiring to get free by the way we share the stories of how Divine Mercy helps us get free.

The new mission I leave with you is to enter into a period of prayer and discernment about calling forth parishioners to serve the parish through the ministry of spiritual direction. Ask the Holy Spirit, the divine spiritual director, to free you of the voices of doubt and resistance so that following in the tradition of Nehemiah and Ezra, the tradition of Baruch and Jesus, the holiness of St. Faustina, the story of Divine Mercy will continue to unfold in the conversion, interior freedom and faith renewal as the stories of Amazing Grace, witnessed and celebrated here in Singapore.

I believe in you to accept this mission for the building up of this wonderful family of faith, for the rays of mercy that shine through you and for the glory of God.

Amen.