

Spiritually Speaking

Misery – Mercy and Mystery

By Fr. Thankachan Joseph SDB, St. Patrick Church

The church is almost back to its normal practices of devotions and piety, thanks to the reception of the vaccines for COVID-19. Think of last year - we were all locked down in our own homes for the Holy week and Easter. Last Sunday, however, as we celebrated the great feast of Easter, I noticed that many Catholics and members of other churches seem to be back for their religious practices. The second Sunday of Easter usually is known as the "Feast of Divine Mercy." This particular feast reminds us about God's divine love, care and concern for each one of us. God somehow loves us all unconditionally.

In the Gospel of John (20:19), we read: "It was late that Sunday evening, and the disciples were gathered together behind the locked doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities." The Risen Lord sees the misery and fright of the disciples and understands the incarceration of the apostles and enters into their lock-down experience. We, too, nearly suffered a similar experience in our lives last year due to the threat of corona virus; many of us were behind locked doors for many festivities until Christmas 2020.

For nearly a year, the threat of COVID-19 has shut down our economy, our freedom of movement and coming together - everything has been in a stand-still condition. Because of the virus, the lockdown somehow made us look into ourselves; many of us have realized that we are going through emotional misery because of our shame, guilt, brokenness, disappointments, failing to reach ambitious goals - unhealthy feelings of depression, anxiety, hurt, loss of self-worth and hatred. The introspection, in turn, leads us to look into ourselves for ways of overcoming our misery. In these miserable conditions, the Lord makes us to understand His loving and soothing company, He comes with His Mercy.

The present pandemic reminds us that there are no differences or borders among those who suffer. The virus shows no discrimination. The time has come to eliminate inequalities, to heal the injustice that is undermining the health of the entire human family. Acts 2:44-45 brings us an understanding of the early Christian community described in the Acts of the Apostles. It received mercy and lived with mercy: "All who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need." I am watching these days how people are reaching out to the needy in various ways. The Lord needs you and me to express His love and compassion to the world around us as the agents of God's mercy and love.

I hail from India, and I am also watching how my own friends and colleagues there are reaching out to the poor and the marginalized and going out in public risking their lives, empowering, consoling, and strengthening the weak and the lonely. In the present situation, the Lord is inviting each one of us, to stretch our helping hand and reach out to someone who is in need of service.

Saint Faustina, after meeting Jesus, wrote: "In a soul that is suffering we should see Jesus on the cross, not a parasite and a burden... [Lord] you give us the chance to practice deeds of mercy, and we practice making judgements." (Diary, 6 September 1937). Yet she herself complained one day to Jesus that in being merciful, one is thought to be naive. She said, "Lord, they often abuse my goodness." And Jesus replied, "Never mind, don't let it bother you, just be merciful to everyone always." (24 December 1937). To everyone: let us not think only of our interests. Let us welcome this time of trial as an opportunity to prepare for our collective future.

In Genesis 7:16 we read: "A male and female of each kind of living being went into the boat with Noah, as God had commanded. Then the Lord shut the door behind Noah." The period of pandemic is for our transformation and purification. He wants us to be a new creation with Him after this period of closure. God has a clear plan for all His doings. This lockdown we are experiencing I don't think is merely by chance. God plans everything well in advance - which is very clear from the multiplication of the loaves. He was sure of what he was going to do. He tests Philip in these words: "Where can we buy enough food to feed these people?" (John 6:5) He planned it and He had a solution to it. The Lord is not like us; we look for solutions when we face a problem, whereas God is the creator, and He has a solution to a problem.

The Lord invites each one of us to face the misery that we are experiencing right now with hope and courage, for there is a solution. The Lord is always faithful to His promise: "I will be with you always, to the end of the age" (Mathew 28:20). In these miserable situations of ours the Lord always comes in and supports us with His peace, mercy, compassion and tranquility. He does it through various ways. Those of us who experience this mercy of the Lord, by reaching out to others with mercy and compassion, take part in the mystery of Christ.



Fr. Thankachan Joseph

Remembrance Walk wrapped up

The 2021 Friends Helping Friends Remembrance walk/run event is a wrap. "In January, with the St. Patrick's Day celebration being cancelled, again, the committee women knew that they truly needed to step out of the box and find a new twist to bring the event to those near and far from Heppner," said Susan Hisler.

Janelle Ellis created a virtual walk/run experience through Facebook. "You didn't need to be in Heppner to share your Irish experience of the traditional walk/run." The ball started to roll and soon the Irish green rope-lighted shamrocks started popping up around Heppner. CBC (Shaun Hisler and Tate Gentry) for Heritage Museum Park, and Martha Doherty spearheaded the ups and downs of all the lighted shamrocks. Her crew, Tony Doherty, Greg Sweek, Susan Hisler, Sheridan and Ed Tarnasky, helped bring to town some Irish cheer.

A long-awaited St. Patrick's Day Remembrance video via Facebook was brought to life by Millie Yocom West. Millie took on

this new venture of gathering the honored loved one's shams. With this learning process came another video, and in the works is a new one for 2022.

Three hundred fifty shamrocks were displayed on the remembrance walk route this year. Two Old Hags Pizza once again allowed 122 shams to be placed on their building. Responsible for all the sham placement, putting up and taking down, were Patty Matheny, Kirsten, Travis, Charlie Harrison, Mary Haguewood, Susan Hisler, Kathi Dickenson and Jacque and Caden Hedman.

"A new way was found for a successful event this year," said Hisler. "To top that off, the Pot of Gold was blessed to receive many donations from here at home and through many family and friends from out of town. It definitely enables the group to host another future event. The committee is already planning heavily on being able to meet and greet, in person, on March 19, 2022. It's not too soon to mark your calendars."

Heppner Day Care to reopen soon

Heppner Day Care and Preschool is welcoming a new director and preschool teacher. Jessica Britt, from Lexington will be the new director. Jessica earned a bachelor's degree in early childhood development and education from Oregon State University before teaching preschool for seven years. She also served in a number of management roles in early education with Head Start and Blue Mountain Healthy Families. She is excited for this new opportunity and to serve the community.

Another new team member is Meg Atkins. She will be fulfilling the roll of preschool teacher. She and her husband recently

moved to the area to be closer to extended family. Previously, Meg taught preschool in Laramie, WY. She is a Boise State University graduate in psychology and American sign language. "Meg is passionate about child development, serving children and families with positivity and care," said a spokesperson.

With the hiring of Jessica and Meg, the Heppner Day Care board is announcing the reopening of the center in May. Heppner Day Care first plans to offer a Kinder Camp program for eight weeks for children bound for kindergarten in the fall. Regular preschool and childcare are planned to resume in August.

DA's Report

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson has released the following report:

-Jorge Antonio Montes was convicted of Assault in the Third Degree and sentenced to 36 months formal probation, a fine of \$2,500, ordered to complete a substance abuse (drug and alcohol) evaluation and comply with all recommended treatment, anger management assessment and treatment, mental health evaluation and com-

ply with all recommended treatment, no purchase or possession of firearms, 200 hours of community service work and no contact with victims in case.

~ Letters to the Editor ~

The Heppner Gazette Times will print all letters to the Editor with the following criteria met: letters submitted to the newspaper will need to have the name of the sender along with a legible signature. We are also requesting that you provide your address and a phone number where you can be reached. The address and phone number will only be used for verification and will not be printed in the newspaper. Letters may not be libelous. The GT reserves the right to edit. The GT is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$10. Email to editor@rapidsolve.net or upload to Heppner.net.

Does HR1 bring election integrity?

To the editor: Easter is the day that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and forever changed the world. Jesus proclaimed the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church he birthed. (Matt. 16:17-19). The gates of hell attacking the Christian church can be presently defined as the "Woke cancel culture" movement. The present attack against the Georgia election laws by corporate America's frantic blacklist response (Major League Baseball, Delta, Coca Cola, etc.) has led to the U.S. Senate "For the People Act" or "Election Integrity Act of 2021." (HR1) The WOKE movement is attempting to boycott Georgia, claiming minorities vote has been restricted and all voting rights have been suppressed. The Georgia Governor Kemp responded, "Cancel culture and partisan activists are coming for your business... and they are coming to cancel everything from sports to how you make a living, and they will stop at nothing to silence all of us."

Does HR1 bring election integrity and is it "For the People?" Here is what the bill will do and why every American should care. 1) Ban state voter ID laws. 2) Mandate no-fault absentee ballots. 3) Force states to accept absentee ballots up to ten days after election day. 4) Automatically register all individuals (as opposed to "citizens"), and thus require the person to opt out if they choose not to vote. 5) Register convicted felons. 6) Allow people to vote outside their precinct. 7) Punish anyone who questions the validity of the voter. 8) Prevent poll watchers from cooperating with election officials to identify and challenge voter registration concerning fraud. 9) With same-day registration, no ID and no ability to verify a voter, a person can go precinct-to-precinct voting multiple times under different names. 10) Seize

authority from states and place federal government in complete control. The Democrat/Marxists intends to cancel our way of life, end the American Republic and control our government through their definition of the gates of hell "election integrity."

What the WOKE cancel culture movement really wants to cancel is Christianity. Presently there is a bill in the Democrat/Marxist controlled senate called the "Equality Act" (S.788). This is the definition of WOKE cancel culture equality. 1) Churches would be forced to host same-sex ceremonies. 2) Churches will lose tax-exempt status for noncompliance. 3) Noncompliant colleges will be ineligible to receive student loans, causing most religious schools to compromise their core values or close. 4) If churches or religious organizations take overnight trips, including sports or mission trips, they cannot segregate rooms by biological gender. 5) Biological men will have access to bathrooms, showers and nursing mother rooms at any time, and stay as long as they please. 6) Churches will be forced to hire staff involved in LGBTQ conduct, even positions of authority in affiliated daycare classes and give them complete access to all children in the restrooms. 7) Cross-dressers could demand that they be greeters, ushers, Sunday school teachers and more. 8) Even the smallest slight would give someone the legal right to sue the church.

If the church of Jesus Christ does not stand up against these gates of hell proposed laws Christianity will be cancelled (compromised) as we know it. Jesus proclaimed the gates of hell cannot stand against his true church. Jesus rose from the dead: Time for the church to rise with their master.

Stuart Dick, Irrigon

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