

Dec. 12-13, 2015

Thoughts from the pastor,

The Jubilee Year of Mercy has started. I mentioned in my homily on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception that the reason Pope Francis started the Year of Mercy on that feast rather than the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent was because of what they both mean. Advent is a reminder of the time that the human race was confused about how God's mercy worked. After Adam and Eve sinned God promised that He would rectify the fact that the human race would no longer be allowed in Paradise. He said He would put enmity between the woman and the serpent and between her offspring and his. Fulfilling that promise would be the true beginning of God's mercy shining through the darkness of sin. The beginning of that light was Mary being conceived without sin. This way light could shine because of her, actually the Light of the World, her Son. That was how we could come to know how God's mercy would work. It is fulfilled when all things are subjected to Christ the King. That is why the Feast of Christ the King will be the end of the Year of Mercy.

So Jesus came to proclaim the Gospel, the good news that forgiveness was possible from Him and those to whom he gave that authority, the apostles and their successors. Forgiveness was possible in confession. How much clearer can it be? At least that was half of it. There is more because the justice of God also calls for just consequences for the hurt that sin causes. Forgiveness forgives the hurt. The consequences are still there. We suffer constantly from some of those consequences in this world. But the spiritual consequences are more intangible to us. For God they are not intangible. Jesus' passion and death opens the doors for those spiritual consequences to be erased. The Church continues to help us by setting up ways in which we can have those spiritual consequences resolved before we have to deal with them in Purgatory. That is what indulgences are all about.

One of them that is happening this weekend is the Archbishop's opening of the Holy Doors at St. Cecilia's Cathedral this Sunday, 12/13, at 7:30pm. The Holy Father has requested that this happen in every diocese so we wouldn't all have to come to Rome and go through the Holy Doors at St. Peter's Basilica. The doors represent Christ in that we go through them to enter a new life in connection with God. We are invited to participate in this event. I have heard that there is supposed to be exciting weather coming through Omaha at this time but I hope that some of you can participate in this event. It won't be as cool as doing it in Rome but will have the same spiritual results. The conditions on this indulgence are that we prepare ourselves by going to confession within a week or two before or after, go to Mass and Communion, and pray for the intentions of the Holy Father.

There will be more opportunities for indulgences throughout this year, but the most important thing is to make the first step and get to confession. Hopefully you kept the page listing all the opportunities for confession in the next couple weeks along with the Mass schedule for the Christmas season. If not I will have some copies in the narthex by the HOPE table. Not much happens spiritually without confession opening the door for God's grace to touch us.

Next Saturday there will be Christmas caroling across from Planned Parenthood, just a block north of 93th and Maple, from 11am to noon. The event is called "Carols around an Empty Manger." You will also be invited to come in for hot chocolate and cookies following the singing at Hope Evangelical Free Church right on 93<sup>rd</sup> and Maple. That is also a good place to park that day. On Monday, 12/21, I will be leading the rosary from 11am to noon at the same spot. Abortion is horrible anytime but this time of year seems worse.

God bless you,  
Fr. Frank