

Sunday, May 5, 2019.

Morning. Bishops would convene in councils (Nicea in the year 325) and (Chalcedon in the year 451) to affirm Jesus' humanity and divinity. As did the early church have to fight for centuries to affirm the call to embrace Jesus as both human and divine, so will we find it a challenge to embrace what we at first consider to be opposites.

Afternoon. If we can do the more difficult, then we can do that which is easier. If we can simultaneously embrace one of the most challenging mysteries of our faith, that Jesus is both human and divine, then we can work on embracing the much simpler, namely embracing Justice and Mercy simultaneously.

Evening. With a couple days of challenging meditation behind us, considering on how our faith encourages us to hold seeming opposites, let us renew our commitment of this past Friday. Journeying from the either-or of Justice or Mercy to the both-and of Justice and Mercy. Simultaneously embracing Justice and Mercy.

Monday, May 6, 2019.

Morning. Our faith certainly does include a list of beliefs but it does not end there. Every Sunday we recite the Creed (from the Latin word "credo" translated as "I believe"), the majority of which is our belief in Jesus. So, rather than having a philosophical consideration of how Justice and Mercy could possibly coexist, let us rather look to Jesus himself for the answer. And let us start with a running start that takes us back to the beginning, to our first parents, Adam and Eve.

Afternoon. Justice: Adam and Eve sinned and deserved to die. Yes, Justice calls for them to die. But if they died, there would be no continuation of the human race, as they did not yet have any children. There must be Mercy. Genesis 3:21 tells us that, after Adam and Eve sin, they are clothed with animal skins. And how would this happen? Animals would have to be killed.

Evening. These animals were killed in place of Adam and Eve. Justice calls for Adam and Eve to die. But instead of Adam and Eve being killed, animals are killed in their place and they clothe themselves in the very skin of the animals who died in their place (Mercy). Justice and Mercy co-exist in the very act of Adam and Eve clothing themselves in the animal skins.

Tuesday, May 7, 2019.

Morning. We came out of Divine Mercy Sunday, with its message of mercy, and into a knee-jerk reaction of "What about Justice?" How can we hold in our minds and hearts the seemingly contradictory "Mercy and Justice?" And we found Mercy and Justice co-existing in a story that leads Adam and Eve to cloth themselves in animal skins.

Afternoon. God could have chosen to present us with a Bible that would be full of philosophical treatises. But instead we are given a Bible that is chock-full of dramatic stories with people acting in very real human ways. A Bible that finds its meaning and fulfillment in the dramatic

presentation of Jesus himself in the Gospels, where we find Jesus doing much of his teaching by telling stories in the form of parables.

Evening. Yes, deep philosophical thought does have its place. But let us take our cue from God, the author of the Bible. We are led to a greater understanding of our faith by considering characters in the Bible acting in very real human ways.

Wednesday, May 8, 2019.

Morning. A brief few weeks ago was Good Friday, when we remembered how Jesus died on the Cross. Adam and Eve sinned. Generations of people sinned from the time of Adam and Eve up until the time of Jesus. Generations of people sinned over the past 2,000 years. We sin today. Generations of people will sin into the future. Each and everyone of those who sinned, those of us who do sin, those who will sin in the future out of Justice are called to die because of these sins.

Afternoon. God offers us forgiveness of sin. Mercy. As Jesus was nailed to and raised up onto the Cross, it was a punishment for sin. But obviously not his own sin, as he was incapable of sinning. Jesus suffered the punishment for our sins, each and every sin that each and everyone of us would commit throughout our lives. In the person of Jesus, and in particular in his crucifixion, we find Mercy and Justice meet.

Evening. Animals had to die because of Adam and Eve's single sin. Throughout the subsequent books of the Bible, we see how animals had to be slaughtered each and every time somebody sinned. That is a lot of animals that had to die! Jesus, being both human and divine (think back to our meditations of this past weekend), in his one death took on the punishment that was the result of each and every sin committed by each and every person who ever lived, lives today, and will live into the future. (Hebrews chapter 10)

Thursday, May 9, 2019.

Morning. Hang on for the ride. Growing in our faith will sometimes feel like jumping out of an airplane and knitting a parachute on the way down. We come out of the wonderful experience of having considered God's Mercy on Divine Mercy Sunday and into a knee-jerk reaction of "What about Justice?" The answer is not found easily. And the answer is found in Jesus himself hanging on the cross. We do not memorize and recite a one-thousand word explanation of how Mercy and Justice can co-exist. Instead we are called to kneel before the cross and see Mercy and Justice co-exist in the very act of Jesus dying on the Cross.

Afternoon. Yes, Mercy and Justice can co-exist as was promised centuries before Jesus walked this earth, not in philosophical explanations but in poems (psalms) that would be set to music and sung. Mercy and truth have met each other: justice and peace have kissed (Psalm 85:11). Justice and judgment are the foundation of your throne; mercy and faithfulness march before you (Psalm 89:14).

Evening. Our faith is one of mystery. When we find our limited human minds stuck, rather than straining our intellect, let us look to poems and music (the psalms were made to be sung, as we do at mass on Sundays), and to story (Adam and Eve clothing themselves in animal skins), and to Jesus himself (both Human and Divine) dying on the cross for the forgiveness of sin.

Friday, May 10, 2019.

Morning. Easter may be as early as March 22 or as late as April 25. Simply look up into the night sky, at the moon, in mid-to-late March, (for those of us in the northern hemisphere, on the spring equinox, or the first day of spring). Easter is the first Sunday following the full moon that occurs on or just after the equinox of about mid-to-late March.

Afternoon. Yes, we of the 21st century are people of iCal's and GPS's. When is Easter? Let me check my iCal. How do I get to that place? Let me punch the address in the GPS. But we as a human family have a long history of marking time by counting the phases of the moon... of navigating over the oceans by looking up at the stars.

Evening. From time to time, we can raise our eyes from the calendar of our smartphone and the GPS on the dashboard of our car, to consider the transcendent characteristics of the moon and stars and heavenly bodies. God said to Abram (Abraham) "Look up into the sky and count the stars..." (Genesis 15:5). God created the moon and stars which fill the night sky. With the help of what we have seen and learned from the images produced by the Hubble telescope, we can come to realize something of the omnipotence of God, who created it all.

Saturday, May 11, 2019.

Morning. Once we have the date for Easter, we go back 6 and 1/2 weeks to find Ash Wednesday. Those who are of the mindset that Lent needs to be exactly 40 days long, or more precisely needs to consist of 40 days of penance, they have sought to omit the Sundays in Lent, or the days preceding the first Sunday of Lent, or not count certain days of Holy Week.

Afternoon. For those who wonder whether it really rained for literally 40 days and nights on Noah's ark, or whether Moses literally spent exactly 40 days on the Mountain, they might subscribe to our rich faith tradition that calls for 40 days to mean a long time, and not just any long period of time, but a long period of time in which God is in charge.

Evening. Regardless of whether you literally need Lent to consist of exactly 40 days of penance or if you see the number more figuratively as the biblical 40 days, the important thing is that we have recently come out of our Lenten observance of several weeks in which we acknowledged God to be in charge.