

Easter Sunday Homily

Given by Fr. John Koziol, OFM Conv.

March 27, 2016

(Acts 10: 34a, 37-43); (Col 3:1-4) OR (1 Cor 5: 6b-8); (Jn 20:1-9)

The first papal trip of Pope Francis took place on July 8, 2013. The Pope made a brief stop on the Italian Island of Lampedusa, an immigrant portal and a place where many immigrants' hopes have ended in tragedy, disappointment or detention. He said Mass for a huge crowd of people, and in his homily, introduced the concept of the "globalization of indifference".

"Has any one of us wept because of this situation and others like it? Has any one of us grieved for the death of these brothers and sisters? Has any one of us wept for these persons who were on the boat? For the young mothers carrying their babies? For these men who were looking for a means of supporting their families? We are a society which has forgotten how to weep, how to experience compassion — 'suffering with' others: the globalization of indifference has taken from us the ability to weep!"

Pope Francis was referring to the fact that there seemed to be little regard or concern from the international community or even the media for the plight of hundreds of refugees fleeing their homelands out of desperation.

"Today, no one in our world feels responsible; we have lost a sense of responsibility for our brothers and sisters. We have fallen into the hypocrisy of the priest and the Levite whom Jesus described in the parable of the Good Samaritan: we see our brother half dead on the side of the road, and perhaps we say to ourselves: 'poor soul...!', and then go on our way. It's not our responsibility, and with that, we feel reassured, assuaged. The culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people, makes us live in soap bubbles which, however lovely, are insubstantial; they offer a fleeting and empty illusion which results in indifference to others; indeed, it even leads to the globalization of indifference. In this globalized world, we have fallen into globalized indifference. We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn't affect me; it doesn't concern me; it's none of my business!"

More recently, after the terrible murders of four Missionary Sisters of Charity and twelve other people at a retirement home for the elderly, run by the Sisters in Aiden, a city in Yemen, the Pope once again spoke about the globalization of indifference.

Pope Francis expressed his closeness to the Missionaries of Charity (founded by Mother Teresa of Calcutta) at the killing of four of their Sisters and he hailed these Sisters who were caring for the elderly in this war stricken land as "the martyrs of our day" and said, "they were killed by their attackers, but also by the globalization of indifference".

His words about "the globalization of indifference" are understood to refer not only to the general indifference to the attacks on Christians in this region, but also to the great indifference of the international community to the year-long civil war in this impoverished country. Global indifference – it is a new way of stating a reality that has been around a very long time: indifference to those who are suffering – on a global scale.

Indifference is defined as apathy...a lack of concern...disinterest. We are all guilty of indifference...aren't we? We're so busy with our lives. We're so focused on our own problems, our own pain, our own comfort, our own future...that we have little time to focus on

others. We're guilty of burying our heads in the sand. We feel overwhelmed by all the suffering going on in this very large world of ours. We feel helpless. We feel impotent to make a difference. Many of us are guilty of apathy, or at least insensitivity. As Pope Francis stated, the culture of comfort has made us insensitive to other's afflictions.

If you haven't figured it out yet, Pope Francis is a prophet and he comes among us as one who is not afraid to speak the truth and to challenge us. Prophets have a special mission, given to them by God. They comfort the afflicted and they afflict the comfortable. Pope Francis is often seen comforting the afflicted, embracing the children, the sick, the elderly, and the disabled. He pays attention to the ones the world so often seems to forget and neglect. He afflicts the comfortable by his challenging and sometimes biting words. He criticizes and calls to task bishops and cleric, world leaders and the wealthy.

Easter – the resurrection of Jesus from the dead – is above all else a celebration of the very *opposite* of indifference. What is the opposite of indifference? In a word – LOVE.

Love, true love – not the trivial love of Hollywood movies – is “care for the well-being of the other”. There is no room for indifference in love. When we love someone, *truly* love them, we are incapable of indifference – we care...we are concerned for them. We have empathy for them. We reach out to them. We go out of our way and out of ourselves to do what we can to help them. This is called mercy. The opposite of indifference is MERCY. Mercy is love put into action.

Jesus' passion, death and resurrection are proof positive that God is not indifferent to our misery. In Jesus, God shows the depth of His love. God shows us mercy. God reaches out to us to save us...heal us...give us life. He refused to leave us in our misery, the misery of sin and death.

We are called to be merciful like the Father. This is the theme of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. So often we are guilty of indifference. The antidote for indifference is mercy. The Latin word for mercy is “*miser cordia*.” It is a combination of two words, misery and heart. Mercy is turning our hearts to the misery of another person.

The Risen Lord asks us to be merciful, begs us to be merciful, and demands that we be merciful. A true follower of Christ may not be indifferent or apathetic to the suffering of others. An indifferent disciple, an apathetic disciple, a disinterested disciple – these are contradictory terms. We, the disciples of Jesus, must carry on the Mission of Jesus, which is the Mission of Mercy – love put into action.

Pope Francis is right; there is a globalization of indifference in our world. The Pope is correct in challenging all of us. He is fulfilling his prophetic role in afflicting the comfortable and calling all of us to conversion. He is calling us forth from the tomb of indifference into the light of new life – the life of love put into action – MERCY. This is our call; this is our vocation; this is what makes us fully human – to love as God loves...to be merciful as the Father is merciful.