

An Easter Reflection

Excerpts from Br. Dodo's Shared Reflection given during the Easter Vigil mass at the retreat in Penang, Malaysia

He is Risen, Alleluia! Happy Easter Brothers and Friends!



This year, being the Jubilee Year of Mercy we are reminded that mercy, compassion and forgiveness are at the heart of our faith. It is as *Misericordiea Vultus* says, “the very foundation of the Church’s life”. These are so important to us that they are built in into our most important rites and prayers. We recite the Confiteor at the beginning of each mass. We ask for forgiveness every time we recite the Lord’s Prayer: “give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those sin against us”. Jesus ministry was a ministry of healing and forgiveness and to the question of Peter of how must we forgive, Jesus replies: “70 times 7 times”. The message of Jesus is clear: forgiveness is boundless, unlimited. As one theologian says, forgiveness is a “state of the heart”, not a matter to be counted. Pope Francis’ first homily after being elected Pope spoke of forgiveness: “Let us never forget this: God never tires of forgiving us but we sometimes tire of asking Him to forgive us. Let us never tire of asking for God’s forgiveness.”

Mercy is captured in the Hebrew word HESED which means “loving kindness” and “faithful presence” and in Jewish teaching these are among the highest of virtues, as its opposite, cruelty is among the worst of vices. I like the way the Jesuit theologian Jim Keenan describes Mercy, he says it is our “willingness to enter into the chaos of others”.

This Easter, and indeed, this whole year we are called to understand the centrality of Mercy, Compassion and Forgiveness in our lives as Brothers. We are called to enter into the “chaos of others” not just of our students and those entrusted to us but also to our own Brothers as well. We are called to be a “faithful presence” to each other, a “door of Mercy through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope”. Mercy and compassion doesn’t always come hand in hand with administration of a school or a District. Despite the challenge this presents, I always remember what one theologian wrote, God’s love is mercy upon mercy upon mercy.



Since the second term of LEAD, five Brothers have passed on in the District and four of them are from Malaysia — Herbertus, Charles O' Leary, Columba Gleeson and Vincent Corkery. Perhaps Vincent's passing away in Holy Week is Vincent's way of telling us that Death does not have the final say and that there will always be life in death. While the reality of diminishment is something we should acknowledge, we should at the same time consciously choose to speak about life, to Choose Life.



And so Brothers and Friends, as we celebrate Christ's Resurrection, we remember that Easter is the ultimate act of forgiveness. Christ returning to heal a wounded humanity, bringing a Love so great it washed and continues to wash away our sins. Brothers tonight, as we roll away the stone and find the tomb empty let us pray for the grace to be able to forgive - to forgive others, to allow others to forgive us and forgive our own wounded selves.

Group Photos of the 3 locations of the LEAD Retreat from: Br. Mark Sixtus FSC (taken in Thailand), Br. Dennis Magbanua FSC (Taken in the Philippines). and Fr. Nonie Dolor (Taken in Malaysia),

Fraternally,

Edmundo Fernandez FSC
Provincialate