

21<sup>st</sup> Sunday per Annum - C  
Isaiah 66:18-21;  
Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13;  
Luke 13:22-30  
Little Flower - 8/21/16

My Brothers and Sisters,

Several months ago, the Eastside Catholic Community, which is the *Connected in the Spirit* cohort of Holy Spirit, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Little Flower, invited Archbishop Tobin to speak on “The Jubilee Year of Mercy.” His talk was last Tuesday evening at Holy Spirit. Today’s first reading shows the connection between evangelization and God’s mercy.

In today’s first reading, God devises a radical plan to bring all people to him. To understand today’s reading, we have to understand that when Isaiah wrote these words, the Israelites had just returned home to Israel after 70 years of exile in Babylon. In this reading, God said that he was going to send the recently returned exiles back out to the nations to proclaim God’s glory, i.e., God’s mercy and goodness to Israel, and to invite all peoples to come to the Lord.

To evangelize is to share good news. For us as Christians, to evangelize is to share the good news of Jesus Christ. According to Pope John Paul II, “evangelization is the Church’s effort to proclaim to everyone that God loves them, that he has given himself for them in Christ Jesus, and that he invites them to an unending life of happiness.”<sup>1</sup>

In effect, through Isaiah, God was providing a plan for evangelization even before Christ. People who had suffered through the exile and returned home would be sent back out to share their gratitude for God’s goodness and mercy with people everywhere. If the people of Israel were called to evangelize on the basis of their experience of God’s goodness and mercy, how much more are we called to evangelize based on our experience of God’s goodness and mercy in Jesus Christ! As Pope Francis wrote when he decreed the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy..... Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth....”<sup>2</sup>

God asked the Israelites who had been exiles to go back to the nations to proclaim God’s goodness and mercy because only those who have experienced God’s goodness and mercy are really capable of proclaiming it and sharing it with others. Archbishop Tobin reminded us that the same is true for us. We are only able to proclaim and be instruments of God’s mercy if we have experienced God’s mercy in our lives.

God wants all people to be saved. God, through Isaiah, referred to the peoples of the world as “*your brothers and sisters from all the nations.*” God’s final words were even more radical: “*Some of these I will take as priests and Levites, says the LORD.*” In other words, even non-Jews will become religious leaders.

Likewise, at the end of today’s Gospel, Jesus also calls attention God’s inclusiveness: “*And people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God.*” Jesus’ final words in today’s Gospel are even more radical: “*For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.*” In other words, God is going to turn everything upside down: outsiders will be insiders, and those at the peripheries will be at the center in God’s kingdom.

My brothers and sisters, all of us are called to be evangelists, called to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. To evangelize is to share our personal experience of God’s goodness and mercy in Jesus Christ. We are called to share this good news with all people, including outsiders and those at the peripheries.

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<sup>1</sup>Address of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II To the Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Baltimore, Washington, Atlanta and Miami on Their "Ad Limina" Visit, 17 March 1998, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1998/march/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19980317\\_ad-limina-usa-iii.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1998/march/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19980317_ad-limina-usa-iii.html), § 2.

<sup>2</sup>Pope Francis, “*Misericordiae Vultus* - Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy,” April 11, 2015, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco\\_bolla\\_20150411\\_misericordiae-vultus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html), § 1.