**Easter – Cycle C: John 20:1-9**

**Scriptural Reflection**: “For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead,” closes our Easter gospel. Our author says that, “all of us, do not understand and appreciate what Christ’s rising for the dead really means for us and for all of humanity.” Of course our saint gives us a clue, “Everything done out of love is love…even death”. So what Scriptures did the disciples not understand and how are they related to love? The sacrifice of Isaac (death sentence for 3 days) before God’s loving hand stayed Abraham’s faithful “Hineni” (ready to serve) to sacrifice his son, for the sanctity of the life of an innocent [Gen 22: 4, 13] – 3rd Sunday of Lent Gospel, from week 2. The Prophet Hosea depicts the restoration of Israel as a third day resurrection, “After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live…” [Hos 6:2], and thus the resurrection of the Jewish people (Israel is the name given to Jacob) and shortly thereafter “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God [*yadah*, as discussed on week 5], rather than burnt offerings.” Of course, mercy is the central act of Love of God the Father, Christ and our calling and condition that we invoke in every “Our Father” prayer. Even the 3 days Jonah spends in the belly of the “whale” (actually, “big fish” in Hebrew), he is resurrected, for the sake of the Father’s love for the Gentiles in Nineveh (“Fish City” in Hebrew) to be saved through repentance (even though Jonah disbelieves). In each Scriptural case, love is at the heart of the “death and resurrection”, the salvation of the Gentiles (Jonah), the Jews (Hosea), and life of all innocents (Genesis: Isaac/Abraham).

* What thoughts have you had that was not for sake of the well-being of others? Knowing that love is to desire what is in the best interest of another, what changes do we need to make to our thoughts/thinking and monitoring of our thoughts? Do you want to or see a need to change the way you think of others?
* Christ’s actions leading up to and His death upon the Cross were perfect acts of Love. We are called to pick up our cross daily follow Him (in imitation of Him). That implies, when called, we also should suffer and love our God and our neighbor, even when it is not convenient, even when it costs us something for the sake of the Father’s will. How ready are you to do that for a God that you cannot see? Why or Why not?
* Are you ready to suffer for a bully or an enemy when an injustice is being perpetrated upon them? Is it easier or harder to do this for a difficult family member? Why or why not?
* Since each of us are “Created in the image of God”, (remember week 3 discussion) and love and mercy are so tightly coupled (CCC 1429 St. Peter's conversion after he had denied his master three times… Jesus' look of infinite mercy drew tears of repentance from Peter and, after the Lord's resurrection, a threefold affirmation of love for him…) why do you think we are “wired” to “love” those we are related too or our friends more than strangers? Should we love strangers the same as friends and family? Why or why not?

**Chrism Mass; Holy Thursday: Luke 4: 16-21**

**Spiritual Reflection**: Our saint exhorts us to, “Let us be what we are and be that well… Let us be what God want us to be, provided we are his, and let us not be what we would like to be contrary to his intention.” The gospel is for the Chrism Mass, (held on the TUESDAY – at 12:10- of Holy week in the COS Diocese- at the Cathedral). Jesus announces what he is called to be – that he is anointed the Christ—quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6. Shortly after announcing his role and calling in his home town of Nazareth, in verse 29, “they rose up …and led him to the brow of the city…that they might throw him down headlong…” Each Catholic soul is anointed twice with indelible marks (first at our baptism – after the Water of Baptism and again at our confirmation). First you are “claimed by Christ” (baptism) and the “strengthened” at your confirmation.

* Who are you? What are you called to do? Are you being called by the world or by Christ? Why do you think that? What is your vocation? How can your temporal vocation and spiritual vocation cooperate with God’s plan? What changes would you need to make to affect that? What help would you need, if any, and how would you go about getting that help?
* Most of us like to plan out our lives. Most of us are under the delusion that we are in complete control of our lives, or are striving to be more in control of our lives. Yet Saint Francis de Sales, “…let us not be what we want to be contrary to his intention.” Do you desire to be something different than what God intended you to be? Why or why not? How do you know that you are or are not well aligned with God’s intention for you? How would you find out if you didn’t know?
* The Christ is anointed to preach the good news of his arrival, “to liberate” the oppressed, “to heal” the blind, “to free” the captives and “to forgive” the debts. The Jews thought this was all political or socio-economic relief being offered, rather than spiritual relief. Which do you think Jesus meant? If we are marked/anointed not once, but twice, as Christ is anointed and are called to imitate him, Our Master, what are you doing to “preach the good news” in your vocation? If not, why not? If so, what more could you be doing? What can you do to heal/recover the sight of the spiritually blind?
* In the same way as the previous question, what are you doing to liberate the oppressed? What can you do to forgive those who have hurt you? What are you willing to do? What can you do to free those you have hurt and who are enslaved in bitterness and anger toward you? Have you thought of your behavior trapping another in sin? What duty do you have, if any, to assist in their healing?