

"Mercy is the most important attribute of God." Cardinal Kasper

Ozanam House is a shelter for homeless persons, some disabled, operated by Saint Vincent de Paul in Phoenix. This week I led a memorial service there for Mari, a 57 year old, penniless and homeless person, a victim also of domestic abuse.

At last she experienced shelter and friendship at Ozanam House.

On Easter Sunday she "knew the Risen Jesus in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread."

On the next night of her birthday, she went to sleep and never woke up. Cause of death unknown. Being homeless and destitute, no autopsy, and burial in Potter's Field. Gone, but not forgotten. her fellow residents remembered her kindly and in prayer at her memorial service. It was very moving.

One resident lay a single rose on the table next to one lit vigil light.

The common thread that ran through their comments about Mari was "that she showed such kindness to everyone."

So here was a lady, destitute, who had nothing material left to give to anyone.

But as she joined the banquet table with Lazarus who was poor, in heaven, on her birthday, So we sang "Happy Birthday!" to her at Ozanam house after the memorial and shared the birthday cake that had been meant for her.

With nothing else left to give, Mari gave the gift of kindness.

And kindness is the expression of MERCY.

In today's Gospel, Jesus appears and does not speak of revenge for the wrongs done to him, but rather of merciful forgiveness:

"Peace be with you!..."

"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them!"

In a striking address to newly created Cardinals in Rome, Pope Francis had this to say about so many people who are like Mari: marginalized:

□ "My brothers, as we look to Jesus, and our Mother, I urge you to serve the Church in such a way that Christians --edified by our witness--will not be tempted to turn to Jesus without turning to the outcast, to become a closed caste with nothing authentically ecclesial about it. I urge you to serve Jesus crucified in every person who is marginalized, for whatever reason; to see the Lord in every excluded person who is hungry, thirsty, naked, to see the Lord present even in those who have lost their faith, or turned away from the practice of their faith, or say that they are atheists; to see the Lord in the imprisoned, sick, unemployed, persecuted, to see the Lord in the leper,--whether in body or soul--who encounters discrimination.

We will not find the Lord unless we truly accept the marginalized."

Pope Francis

And So we pray:

In a world of so much strife,

so much anger, so many festering resentments,

help us to be kinder to our suffering selves,

so that we may reach out a hand of mercy

to the suffering Christ who still

walks among us

in the people all around us.

Amen