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July 9, 2019

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“Let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you” (Psalm 33).

The Gospel writers found many parallels between the story of Joseph and the life of Jesus. Joseph, the favored son whose father, Jacob, gave him a many-colored cloak, was sold by his jealous brothers to traders going down to Egypt. Despite this betrayal, Joseph later saves his people during a great famine because of his position as Pharaoh’s adviser. Jesus, the beloved Son of God, is betrayed and abandoned by his Apostles, yet he is the source of salvation for them and for the world.

The two stories overlap as Jesus fulfills the role of Joseph, giver of bread and savior of the 12 tribes of Israel, by giving himself on the cross and in the Eucharist to the 12 Apostles representing the church.

Jesus fulfills the first story, in which Joseph severely tests his brothers before showing them mercy, by giving the Apostles his peace at their first encounter after his death and resurrection. The Good News is God’s unconditional mercy for sinners. The mission of the church is to extend God’s forgiveness without conditions. What the Apostles freely receive from Jesus they are to give freely to others.

The climactic scenes in the story of Joseph are told with great skill. Joseph hides his identity from his brothers as they anguish over their betrayal. In the final scene he reveals himself with the words, “I am Joseph, your brother.” Jesus also conceals his identity in his appearances to Mary at the tomb, to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and to the Apostles on the shore of the Sea of Tiberius.

In all of these stories, the overwhelming message is that mercy is given despite profound failure. It takes a while for the truth to sink in, and in the case of the Apostles, only when they surrender in faith are they able to grasp the mystery and meaning of the resurrection.

Our faith is also tested as we try to understand the meaning of Jesus’ Resurrection. He overcame sin and death as our Lord and Savior, but he shares this liberation with us as our brother. He is Jesus, our brother, one of us, and he has experienced fully our human journey. He endured and overcame every weakness and temptation in order to transform our human nature and open the way for us to life with God. By his union with us we are children of God.

The Apostles have names. We should take some comfort in knowing how fallible and weak they were” Boastful, cowardly Peter, Doubting Thomas, Matthew the tax

collector, Simon the Zealot, the battling brothers, James and John, and Judas the betrayer. The sons of Jacob also have names, and stories of personal failure to convince us that when God has a purpose, God chooses people like us to fulfill it.

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