

Dear Friends,

Jesus was resurrected into a world of sin and death. We often hear the phrase that he paid the ultimate price for the salvation of all of sinful humanity. But his Passion, death and resurrection did not stop humans from sinning. Sin has such a grip on us that even God's own death cannot stop us from turning away from evil. I have often wondered why God didn't find some wondrous method to take away all sin from this life, and the only conclusion I can draw is that God's love for us is so great that our free will cannot be altered. God wants us to be able to choose not to sin. God wants us to be able to know and understand that sin is always evil, and that we have the freedom to make other choices. God created us with this freedom, and wants us to use it.

Of course, God wants us to use our free will for good. God wants us to be aware of the fact that sin has consequences that cause great harm in the world. No one is exempt from this fact; members of the ordained clergy, lay people, parents, children of all ages, know with certainty that evil actions have evil consequences. However, not even Jesus' Passion, death and resurrection has altered the free will of human beings. In God's love for us we always have the freedom to choose evil over good, or good over evil. What a mystery!

That's what makes faith such a precious gift. Our faith enables us to believe in what we do not fully understand. Our beliefs inform our actions by giving us guidelines; Sacred Scriptures, dogma and doctrine, Canon Law, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the teachings of the saints and scholars over 2000 years of history. And still we sin. And still Jesus Christ rises up, exits the tomb to walk into the world created by his Word: "Let there be light."

I find great comfort in this divine love that lets us choose our actions. It is this love that enflames our hearts with joy when we do good. It is this love that, in divine justice, offers us mercy when we sin. The challenge for us is that God has given us the power to choose one way or the other: evil, or good. What God desires for us will never supersede our free will. When our choices go against God's desires for us there will always be divine justice. It is profoundly comforting to know, however, that God's justice always includes mercy.

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel