

Easter (A) 04/05/2015

Pope Francis, in December of 2014, recalled the confession many years ago, of a woman who was tormented by the question of whether a Mass attended on a Saturday evening for a wedding was valid [for her Sunday obligation] as the Mass had readings different to that on the Sunday. He responded, *'Madam, the Lord loves you so much. You went to Church and there you received Communion, you were with Jesus. Do not worry, the Lord is not a merchant. The Lord loves us. He is close [to us].'*

This might sound like a somewhat **strange** opening for an **Easter** homily. Aren't we supposed to be declaring: *'Alleluia!'* or shouting: *'He is risen!'*? The **message** of **Easter**, however, can also be received in **words** that help us **traverse** the **obstacles** that we or others establish with our or their **expectations**. The **message**, then, can be simply, *'Do not worry, the Lord is not a merchant.'* What a **relief** and what a **burden**!

It is a **burden** because many of us have **practiced** seeing **God as a merchant** for most of our lives. We might not like this **perspective**, but it is **familiar** and somehow **comforting**. We like the **clarity** that this perspective offers because this is the world in which we live most of our lives. **God viewed as a merchant** allows us to **purchase** what we want. There is nothing **unexpected**... unless, of course, we also **suspect** that **God is a dishonest merchant**.

It is a **relief** (sometimes tinged with fear) because we **want to know** that **God does love us**. Yet, this way of life **isn't as clear** as viewing **God as a merchant**. We are not **as well practiced** in the **freedom** of knowing that **we are loved**. The ways in which we **measure our progress** (such as, for example, keeping the **Ten Commandments**) no longer have the same **value**.

It seems that our world is **turned up-side-down**. We, instead of following a **moral** way of life to **gain God's love**, discover that a **moral** way of life **flows** from knowing that **we are loved**. **Practicing** that we are **loved** is **synonymous** with **practicing** living in the **freedom** of who **God** creates us to be.

We tend to understand **freedom** to mean that **we can make choices**. That is, we **inject** into the word **freedom** a new **interpretation**: our **ability** as humans to make **choices**. We even readily accept that this **ability** to make **choices** is what **distinguishes** us from animals. Yet, the **freedom** that **God** presents to us in the **Scriptures** isn't about making **choices**. Rather, it is a **willingness** to **practice** living as **God** creates us: our lives are caught up in the **relational Trinity**. We also call this **love**. So, each time we **receive love** and each time we **don't completely prevent love** from **flowing** through us to others, we are **practicing** the **freedom of God**.

As we **practice**, each time that we **practice**, **receiving loving** and **not preventing love** from **flowing** through us, we know **resurrection**. **Jesus** is our model and guide.