

April 15, 2012

Second Sunday of Easter—Divine Mercy

“Peace be with you!...” is the Easter greeting of Jesus, in fact his first words after rising from the tomb.

Several movies have come out recently going back to the trench warfare of World War One. One was *War Horse*, the saga of a horse who survived the war.

In one of the scenes, the English cavalry is shown gallantly charging across a field, routing the Germans who are surprised in their tents. All is well and glorious until the cavalry charge approaches a wooded area along a fence line.

Hidden in the shrubs are long lines of German machine gunners. The horses charge pell-mell and then there is the rat-tat-tat of a dozen machine guns mowing the horses and their riders down like fallen grain.

The next scene shows the field littered with dead horses and their slaughtered riders.

I saw this movie after reading the book, *To End All Wars* by Adam Hoschild which chronicles the utter stupidity of most of the English officer corps who thought that the war would be finally ended by some glorious cavalry charge, not taking into account that a horse makes a very good target for a machine gun.

Another World War I movie is about a Christmas truce, where the allies and Germans took time out at Christmas to celebrate together before going back into their rat hole trenches to begin shelling each other again.

The Easter message of Jesus is *“Peace be with you!”* meant not just for Easter, nor for Christmas but for every day of our lives. It is a message yet to be heard.

Don't most of us consider war as a given? Can it be possible to even imagine a world without war? In my one lifetime there has been World War II, the Korean War, the Viet Nam War, the Iraq War, and the Afghanistan War, with hardly a breathing time for peace in between.

And when the guns go silent, the effects of war with post-traumatic stress linger on for years. In my *Contemporary Way of the Cross* book, I focused on war veterans in Station XIII. Here is what that station contains:

“Today, we see the sagging body of Jesus on the streets. Stooped men lean over grocery carts containing all their earthly belongings. Many of these homeless are Viet Nam vets. Other wounded vets have been taken down from their crosses in Iraq and Afghanistan. They suffer post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, or traumatic brain injury. Suicides too often kill what battle could not.

Let us pray: Some of the first who turned toward you Jesus were soldiers and you healed them. Reach out to our suffering vets. Like the Pieta, bereaved families grieve for so many veterans. May their beloved departed ones rest in peace. And for us who remain, deliver us from rash wars. Give us the energy, the persistence, the patience to be peacemakers.

Make us instruments of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let us sow love,
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is despair, hope.

"Peace is with you. As the Father has sent me, so I have sent you!"
John Chapter 20.