

Second Sunday of Easter (Sunday of Divine Mercy)

April 15, 2012

(Acts 4:32-35, Psalm 118, 1 John 5:1-6, John 20:19-31)

We are a resurrection people – a people of hope!!

We are a people who celebrate God's mercy!!

On this second Sunday of Easter, the Sunday of Divine Mercy, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The hope of eternal life through the resurrection that awaits each of us.

The disciples have stayed in Jerusalem during Passover. After Jesus crucifixion, they remained in their room behind locked doors. Why? If you were in their sandals, you would be in as same a place as possible!! They were still figuring out what had happened in the previous few days with the arrest, the trial, the scourging and crucifixion of Jesus. They also had to deal with their fears of being arrested and possibility of being put to death because they had been with Jesus.

As the gospel reveals to us today, Jesus appears to them. Jesus first words are "Peace be with you." (John 20:19) and revealed his hands and side to show them that he has risen as he promised (John 20:20). They were overjoyed! He says once again, "Peace be with you." (John 20:21). Jesus breathed on them (John 20:22) and said "Receive the Holy Spirit (CC730). As God breathed life into Adam's nostrils and became a living being (Genesis 2:7), Jesus breathed new life into his disciples. From that hour onward, the mission of the Christ and the Spirit becomes the mission of the Church: As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." (CC730) Jesus had promised the Holy Spirit would come and give the disciples the inner strength, the power to live life without him. We receive this awesome, life giving power at our baptism and is stirred up within us again at confirmation for the good of the community.

Jesus speaks and empowers his disciples to forgive sins not on their own authority but on the authority given by God through his Son Jesus Christ (CC981). We receive God's love, peace and mercy through the Sacrament to Reconciliation.

The gospel continues with Thomas doubting what the other disciples had already witnessed themselves, that Jesus was alive. After touching Jesus' wounds, Thomas confesses "My Lord and My God" (John 20:27-28).

In reality, isn't there a little Thomas in each of us at times? Questioning what is happening in our lives. Did Jesus truly rise from the dead? And if Jesus did rise from the dead, what difference does this make in my life?

We do know that Jesus rose from history, from the scriptures, from the writings of the early church fathers. If the followers of Jesus had not believed in Jesus teachings, why did they gather themselves in a community? Sharing all they had with each other (Acts 4:32). The apostle accepted the responsibility to provide for each person so that no one was in need. Wouldn't that be awesome if we lived like the believers of the early Church!! Imagine if we would fully embrace the model of the early Church by living out the teachings of Jesus. Loving one another, caring for one another especially those in need, in the hope of one day joining Jesus in the home made for each of us, heaven.

Jesus' call for unity. "Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforcement and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her. This is why Jesus himself prayed at the hour of his Passion and does not cease praying to his Father, for the unity of his disciples: That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, . . . so that the world may know that you have sent me." CC820

Three weeks ago, five hundred men gathered at Xavier High School in Cedar Rapids for the annual diocesan men's conference. Fr. Larry Richards was the keynote speaker. He strongly challenged all attending about walking closer with the Lord. He asked us, is God first in your life? Do you spend as much time praying and reading scripture as you do for your hobbies or watching your favorite show or sports event? If not, why not? How can we know God if we don't spend time with him? How can we lead others to heaven if we don't have a close relationship with God?

A simple challenge Fr. Richards offered – no bible, no breakfast; no bible, no bed!

We need to begin and end each day with God as our focus.

We are called to a relationship with Jesus so we can know God the Father.

We are called to prayer especially for those who do not know the Lord.

We are called to reach out to those in need and provide for them.

We are a resurrection people – a people of hope!

We are a people who know and celebrate God's mercy!!

Holy Mary Mother of God – pray for us!

St. Faustina – pray for us.

Deacon Ron Smith
4-15-12