

Second Sunday of Easter or Sunday of Divine Mercy
(Acts 5:12-16, Psalm 118, Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19, John 20:19-31)

As we gather on this Divine Mercy Sunday, the 2nd Sunday of Easter, what are we thinking about?

Are we recalling the family gathering of last weekend?

Are we grateful that all the sweets have been eaten?

What if we were in the room with the Apostles?

What would be going through our mind?

Through the gospel, we do join with the Apostles. They were locked in the room for fear of the Jews. Were they concerned about being out among the people, would they too be arrested or possibly crucified? Even though the women had reported that Jesus was not in the tomb, did they really believe that Jesus had risen?

Jesus appears to them and because of his great love for them and for us, he says "Peace be with you". (John 20:19, 21) This was not just a warm how are you. This is actually translated from the Hebrew word Shalom – that all may be well with you with God's blessing. This would reestablish the intimacy between Jesus and the Apostles and dispel the fear and shame the Apostles must have been feeling after behaving so disloyal to Jesus during the passion. Peter had denied knowing Jesus three times. The others simply fled.

Jesus breathes on them – giving them renewed life. (John 20:22) Just as God breathed life into Adam, Jesus breathes life back into the Apostles.

"Receive the Holy Spirit" – we received the Holy Spirit at our baptism. (John 20:22) Jesus is renewing the Holy Spirit to empower them and us to spread the "Gospel". The good news is that Jesus has overcome death and is alive that we too may have life – eternal life.

As Thomas had his doubts if Jesus was alive, so each of us will encounter times when we wonder where God is in our life. Today's readings are great reminders that God is not far. In fact, God desires to be very, very close to us – very intimate with us. Jesus is not a something, a fictitious character. Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man, who is the greatest example of human compassion and love. The second person of the Trinity, who spent 33 years among us learning and teaching others. The last three years, teaching us how to know and love God and our neighbor as ourselves.

Jesus told the Apostles before he ascended to heaven that they would do greater works than he had. (Luke 16:18) In the first reading, we hear evidence of that. The people brought the sick to them that even the shadow of Peter passing by might heal them. (Acts 5:15)

This truly brings us to our mission on this Divine Mercy Sunday. We are to use the gifts given to us by God to help heal a broken world. A world some would say is without hope.

But Jesus is our hope. He is our salvation. Jesus shows us how to be loving and filled with joy. And through the sacraments of the church can be renewed and filled with hope.

Pope Francis – General Audience – April 4

Pope Francis said that in our faith journey, "it is important to know and feel that God loves us.

"Don't be afraid to love Him: faith is professed with the mouth and the heart, with words and with love," he said.

"For us too there are many signs in which the Risen One makes himself recognized: Sacred Scripture, the Eucharist, the other sacraments, charity, those gestures of love that bring a ray of the Risen Lord," Pope Francis added. "Let us allow ourselves to be enlightened by the resurrection of Christ, let us allow ourselves to be transformed by his strength, so that also through us in the world, the signs of death may give way to signs of life."

It is not enough for us to simply receive the mercy of God. No, Jesus calls us today to become channels of that mercy in a world that so sorely needs it. We show God's mercy to others, as Jesus suggests, when we forgive others as we have been forgiven, but we also do it through countless daily acts of kindness directed to those around us.

The effort to show God's mercy to others invites us to embrace the deeper meaning of mercy.

M - Mercy requires us to be **meek** and humble.

E - Mercy challenges us to show God's love and forgiveness **equally** without fear or favor.

R - Mercy demands that we strive to be **reconciled** with God and one another.

C - Mercy is a **choice** we make, not feeling alone.

Y - our efforts to sow the seeds of mercy constitute our **"yes"** to God's call to be his disciples in our world today.

God's mercy will endure forever and we are invited to receive and share the gift of that mercy with others. May our response to this gift echo the words of Thomas: My Lord and my God!

Deacon Ron Smith

April 6, 2013