

## **Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)**

Acts of the Apostles 4.32-35, 1 John 5.1-6, John 20.19-31

Easter Sunday's Gospel from John 20 ended with "For they did not yet understand the Scripture that He had to rise from the dead." Jesus Christ had foretold His passion and resurrection, "I will rise on the third day (Mt. 20.19). Once John entered the tomb, St. Chrysostom writes, "it was like saying before he saw these things (the cloths) he did not understand the Scripture "that He must rise again from the dead," but when he (John) saw he believed that Jesus had risen from the dead.

What an emotional roller coaster the Apostles must have been on. Now in today's Gospel we read that it is evening, and the doors were locked because the Apostles fear the Jews. Perhaps the Apostles were ashamed of the betrayal of Jesus and were afraid of the crowds. Jesus waits until evening so that everyone is gathered within the house.

The locked doors do not stop Jesus from appearing to the Apostles. As Jesus "stood in their midst," He said, "peace be with you." Jesus appears to the Apostles to strengthen and comfort them. St. Thomas Aquinas writes, "so He chose a time when they would be more afraid and in need of comfort and strength; this was in the evening." Jesus knew the needs of the Apostles just as He knows our needs. Jesus knew how disturbed and full of fear they were, so to calm the Apostles Jesus says, "Peace be with You."

Jesus penetrates the locked doors where the Apostles are gathered to show His power. St. Thomas Aquinas explains, "in the mystical interpretation we can understand that Christ appears to us when our doors, that is, our external senses, are closed in prayer: 'but when you pray, go into your room and shut the door' Mt 6.6, It is also a reminder that at the end of the world those who are prepared will be admitted to the marriage feast, and the door will be shut " Mt. 25.10. Jesus wants us to gather together as well, to gather in prayer and worship. To invite to enter the doors of our Church, of our hearts. We need to grow in both personal prayer and communal prayer.

Jesus demonstrates to the Apostles that it is really Him by showing them His hands and side. This created a joy in the hearts of the Apostles because they saw Jesus just as He promised.

Jesus appeared to the Apostles on the same day He arose (Jn 20.1). If we read the Gospels Jesus actually appeared 5 times that day; twice to Mary Magdalene who was alone and again to her when she was returning to the Apostles (Jn. 20.14 & Mt. 28.9), He appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24.13), He appeared to Simon Peter (Lk. 24.34) and to the Apostles in the locked room (Jn. 20.19). While in the locked room the Apostles are given a mission. Jesus directs the Apostles "As the Father has sent me so I send you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,

‘Receive the Holy Spirit whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained’” (Jn. 20-23). The Sacrament of Reconciliation is established by Jesus. The Apostles have a new found excitement, that is except for St. Thomas.

St. Thomas doubted the Apostles witness of Jesus. I can’t but think at times St. Thomas represents many if not all of us. It has been nearly 2000 years since Jesus walked the earth, yet many people doubt the existence of Christ. St. Thomas wouldn’t believe until he put his hands into the wounds of Jesus. Jesus response to Thomas was “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” We are blessed in that we get to see the real presence of Jesus Christ on the altar. Shortly Father will consecrate the host and the real presence of Jesus shall be before us. Jesus has given the Apostles the authority to forgive sins, to consecrate the host, this authority has been passed on to our priests who work in “Persona Christi” or “In the person of Christ.”

All of us can be like St. Thomas. We excuse ourselves from Jesus’ presence because we are “busy”. We don’t show up. We forget about Jesus, and we miss out. Or perhaps we doubt Jesus’ mercy. Jesus demonstrated great mercy on St. Thomas. Jesus could have been angry about St. Thomas’ lack of faith, but rather He helps St. Thomas. Jesus comes and reveals Himself in a way that will satisfy his doubts. Jesus will do the same for us if we allow Him to.

My friends, on this Divine Mercy Sunday, let us pay attention to Jesus through frequent Confession and Communion which will help us come out from behind our locked doors of shame and guilt. Let us open the door to our hearts, our souls and invite Jesus in. The Divine Mercy Novena allows us to realize God’s endless mercy and love for each of us. Look at the crucifix, Jesus has His arms open to receive you and me. Let us not ignore His invitation.