

Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very heart of Christianity. St. Paul tells us that if Christ had not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is our faith. For the disciples the Resurrection of Jesus was a uniquely divine experience. They were not able to comprehend the fact of Resurrection and grasp the deep inner meaning of it. However, it built up their faith particularly because of their experience of the presence of Jesus and made them persons, courageous and ready to face any eventuality for their master.

After his resurrection, Jesus stood among them, talked to them, ate with them and taught them the doctrine. They are now called upon to build the faith of others and we see how marvelous the living faith of the early Church was. The baptized Christians once they knew that Jesus was the Messiah and that He had resurrected from the dead, became totally transformed persons. They were ready to face any suffering and even death as it was Christ that was important.

Today's gospel begins with the first action of Jesus after his resurrection as he appears to his disciples. The setting is very important here. There in an atmosphere of surprise, fear, and wonder, unable to see and visualize the presence of Jesus as he suddenly appears before them.

It was Easter Sunday, two days after the death of Jesus. The disciples were inside the house, with the doors firmly locked, because they were terrified that, as companions of Jesus, they too would be liable to arrest and punishment. The words of assurance that had been given to them earlier were all forgotten. Their fear was suddenly shattered by the unexpected appearance of Jesus in their midst.

The very fact that he could be present in spite of the locked doors indicated that he was not the same person as they had encountered earlier but he was present to them in a new way. He calmed their fear with the immediate gift of peace. "Peace with you!" was his first greeting. It was the normal Jewish greeting of "Shalom". But, coming from Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to this group of frightened people, it had special meaning.

Today is Divine Mercy Sunday, the Second Sunday of the Easter season. It was named by Pope John Paul II at the canonization of St. Maria Faustina on April 30, 2000, and then officially decreed by the Vatican. Divine Mercy Sunday can be seen as the convergence of

all the mysteries and graces of Holy Week and Easter Week. The feast focuses the light of the Risen Christ into a radiant beam of merciful love and grace for the whole world.

In his revelations to St. Faustina Jesus expressed His desire to celebrate this special feast. He says that the Feast of Mercy emerged from his very depths of tenderness and mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of his Mercy. Jesus says that the divine floodgates through which grace flow are opened and let no soul fear to draw near to him.

We go back to the Gospel of today. It was eight days after Easter: it is the octave of the Resurrection. Today is Divine Mercy Sunday. Thomas is the sign of this divine mercy, which is unequalled, immense, overflowing, and unspeakable. Thomas saw the Lord and he needed to see him to believe in his resurrection.

We, today, in the year 2025 have not seen the risen Jesus, and yet we believe in him. In any event, Jesus is in Heaven: we have no choice but to believe without seeing. Yet Thomas is the sign of the mercy of God which makes us similar to him. This is because we can see the Lord Jesus without seeing him. This looks like a paradox. What enables us to see the Lord are our baptism and our Eucharist. We see him as one who out of Mercy has risen for us.

We find *three ideas* in today's gospel: Spirit to Mission, Seeing to Believing and Not Seeing to Believing. First Jesus gives them peace, not like the world gives but his own peace. Then he gives them the gift of the Spirit, which coming from the Father and who will teach them everything and remind them of what Jesus had said. Then he breathes on them and gives them the mission to forgive and love and build the church.

Second, we have Thomas who saw, and he believed. Jesus offers Thomas his very presence to see but what is significant is that Thomas confesses "My Lord and my God" apparently without placing his hands into Jesus' side. His faith is complete and total. Then the final stage it continues to those of us, those hundreds of thousands who have not seen Jesus and yet believed in him. This has been our faith of not seeing and yet believing.