

Second Sunday of Easter – April 12, 2015

This Sunday carries a boatload of names and nicknames. It is first the second Sunday of Easter. It is also the Octave Day of Easter, concluding 8 days of high celebration. In the past it has been called Whit Sunday, recalling the time when the newly baptized wore their white garments for the final time. More recently it was given the title of Divine Mercy Sunday by St. Pope John Paul II. Pope Francis, as we know, speaks often about mercy, he sees it as the core of the Gospel message. He welcomes all and invites all into dialogue and into acceptance of the love and mercy of God.

With so many themes to choose from we can take our lead from the readings and concentrate on the mercy of God. Perhaps we can see our own need for God's mercy and learn better how to accept it and extend it to others just as God does, who makes his sun shine on the just and the unjust.

Let's go to our own lives for a moment. Whether we like to admit it or not, there are times when we feel afraid, so afraid that we want to withdraw and hide, when we want to lock out the world and even block out the tender compassion of friends. Maybe we draw close our drapes against the dawn, making our room a tomb. Perhaps it wasn't the dying we feared as much as the living.

So it isn't hard to imagine the disciples of Jesus locking themselves in and keeping the world out. They knew they had abandoned Jesus, betrayed him, let him down. He had been crucified. Was the same fate waiting for them too? These are death-like experience, hope seems gone. But wonder of wonders, Jesus comes. Mercy shows up; there are no barriers wide or strong enough to keep out Divine Mercy.

To the doubtful, the fearful, the shamed and the grieving, the lost and forsaken Jesus says simply, "Peace be with you."

Notice how Jesus comes to them – with his wounds. The body of Christ, though risen, is always and forever more wounded. And what is true of Jesus will also be true about those who bear his name. Jesus comes as he always comes with a word of mercy and forgiveness. He comes to unbind the knotted heart, to unbar the doors we shut and swing them wide open.

The disciples could not stay in that locked room; they would suffocate. So Jesus sends them out into the very world they feared. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

Just so, Jesus sends us. We may be fearful, but we are more. We may be weighed down by grief and pain, but we are more. We may be wounded in so many ways, but we are more. The risen Jesus sends us out filled with His Spirit. Mercy and forgiveness are let loose in the world. Jesus, our Lord and our God, lives – through us, with us, and in us.