

Second Sunday of Easter – April 3, 2016

It is Easter, not just a season of 50 days, but a way of life. Jesus lives! Without this truth, faith falls apart, and we, as church, become nothing more than a colossal joke. Jesus lives! He who preached and healed and suffered and died is alive. What can we say about this? What can we do? Let's turn again to today's gospel. In that upper room, behind locked doors the disciples may well have been thinking, "How do we live life now? How do we carry on?" They may well have been feeling guilty for abandoning Jesus. They were very likely shaken by years in many shapes and forms.

In Pope Francis' vision, this upper room was like a field hospital. The wounded disciples were huddled together needing care. The divine physician, Jesus, enters the scene, not scolding, but giving the first dose of healing – a merciful and welcome dose of peace. There is mercy here in the flesh. Easter is the ultimate sign of God's mercy in the flesh.

We cannot fail to notice that Jesus in the flesh shows up with his wounds. Transformed and glorified, he was still the same Lord. Perhaps Jesus feels that if he can show up wounded, the disciples will let him into their wounded lives. Perhaps Jesus shows up so his disciples can open the doors of their hearts and minds to let their fears out and allow his mercy in.

But Jesus' field hospital care is not going to send the restored disciples home to do nothing. Immediately, he reminds them: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." That little two-letter word, "as", sets it up for the disciples and extends all the way down to us. We are sent "as" or "just like" the Father has sent Jesus. No wiggle room here. Get out of the field hospital and do Jesus' work of bringing people in, lavishly giving them the gifts of God's mercy and healing.

To seal all of us, Jesus takes the apostles back to the foundation of the world, when God's Spirit breathed life into nothingness, and creation lived with the life of God. Jesus repeats that scene and breathes new life into the disciples. Then he sends them forth.

We pick it up here today. The Jubilee of Mercy is Jesus alive and well in the Church, bringing care and healing... and sending. The cycle of divine life goes on as it passes through us. We become our true selves by becoming merciful as the heavenly Father is merciful.

So let us not mock God with side stepping, making the Easter event just another parable, some magic leftover of earlier times, faded now. Let us walk through the door of our fear and into the light and mercy of God. It is Easter! Jesus lives!