

2nd Sunday of Easter - A
Acts 2:42-47;
I Peter 1:3-9;
John 20:19-31
Little Flower - 4/27/14

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today Pope Francis will canonize Blessed Pope John XXIII and Blessed Pope John Paul II.

Pope John XXIII was born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli on November 25, 1881. Following the death of Pope Pius XII, he was elected Pope on October 28, 1958. He convened the Second Vatican Council. People referred to him as the “good Pope” because of his Gospel kindness and pastoral care. He died on June 3, 1963.

Pope John Paul II was born Karol Józef Wojtyła on May 18, 1920 in Wadowice, Poland. Following the sudden death of Pope John Paul I, he was elected Pope on October 16, 1978. He was the second longest-serving pope in history and the first non-Italian since the death of Pope Adrian VI in 1523. As part of his ministry as pastor of the universal Church, he made 104 international apostolic journeys. He proclaimed 1338 blessed and canonized 482 saints. He died on April 2, 2005, on the Vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday, which he had instituted.

Today, the Second Sunday of Easter, we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. The Gospel for this Sunday is always the same. As Catholics, we believe that this Gospel marks Jesus’ institution of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Therefore, homilies on this Sunday often focus on the Sacrament of Reconciliation as the sacrament of God’s mercy.

However, we also believe that Jesus himself is the primary sacrament of God, and the Church is the sacrament of Jesus. Therefore, Jesus himself is the primary sacrament, the primary sign and realization, of God’s mercy, and the Church is called to be the sacrament, the sign and realization, of Christ’s mercy.

In today’s second reading, St. Peter wrote, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead....*” We have Jesus’ own words in John’s Gospel: “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life*” [3:16]. St. Paul added, “*But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us*” [Rom. 5:8].

Although Christ is the perfect sacrament of God’s mercy, the Church does not always live up to its call to be the sacrament of Christ’s mercy. As a community, we are called to welcome all people. As Jesus himself said, “*I did not come to call the righteous but sinners*” [Mk. 2:17]. To us Jesus also said, “*Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven*” [Lk. 6:37]. As individuals, we have to be willing to forgive others if we are to be sacraments of God’s mercy.

The first reading from Acts of the Apostles describes the ideal Christian community. However, change is always part of the Church. For example, the Second Vatican Council, convened by Pope John XXIII in 1962, brought dramatic changes to the Church. Today Pope Francis is calling us to become a more missionary Church. In our own Archdiocese, *Connected in the Spirit*, whatever the decision is, will bring change to our parish and to our Archdiocese. However, even as we adapt institutionally and individually to the requirements of our own times, we will continue to remain faithful to our origins in Jesus Christ and to the purpose for which we exist as a parish and as a Church.

My brothers and sisters, the other key theme in today’s readings is faith. Today we celebrate First Communion with our 28 second graders and two third graders at the 10:30 a.m. Mass. If we want to understand the meaning of faith, we can look to our First Communicants as the model of trusting faith in Jesus.