

2nd Sunday of Easter - C
Acts 5:12-16;
Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19;
John 20:19-31
Little Flower - 4/3/16

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Second Sunday of Easter, the Octave Day of Easter. In the Church, octaves continue the celebration of major feasts for eight days straight. In the pre-Vatican II Liturgy, the Sunday after Easter was called Low Sunday to distinguish the end from the beginning of the eight-day celebration. Today the Second Sunday of Easter is called the Sunday of Divine Mercy or Divine Mercy Sunday. Every year the Gospel on this Sunday tells the story of Jesus' institution of the sacrament of reconciliation.

Jesus came into the world, lived among, and died on the cross to reconcile all people to God and to one another. We were first reconciled to God and to one another when we were baptized. When we say that baptism washes away original sin, we are saying that when we are baptized, we receive God's Spirit, God's life, and become God's sons and daughters and brothers and sisters of one another and, therefore, are reconciled to God and to others.

However, although we become God's sons and daughters and brothers and sisters of one another through baptism, because of the selfishness that is part of all of our lives, twice in his letter to the Romans, St. Paul reminds us that we have all sinned [3:23 & 5:12]. In his First Letter, St. John wrote, "*If we say, 'We are without sin,' we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*" [1:8]. Consequently, Jesus wanted us to have a way to be reconciled to God and to others when we sin. Therefore, he gave us the sacrament of reconciliation. If we think about Jesus' life and ministry, besides preaching and teaching, Jesus healed the sick and forgave sinners. The sacrament of reconciliation, then, is an extension of Jesus' own healing ministry.

During this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, however, it is important to remember that God's mercy is much broader than forgiveness of sins or the sacrament of reconciliation. Pope Francis continually reminds us that because God is love, God is mercy since all that we are and have are God's gifts to us. In his Good Friday homily, Father Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher of the Pontifical Household, made the point that "the sin of human beings does not change the nature of this love but causes it to make a qualitative leap: mercy as a gift now becomes mercy as forgiveness."¹

After Pentecost, the apostles became ministers of God's mercy. In the first reading last Sunday, Peter proclaimed the fact and the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. In today's first reading, we heard that "*many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles.*" As a consequence, "*more than ever, believers in the Lord, great numbers of men and women, were added to them.*" If we are going to be ministers of God's mercy, we have to share the Good News of God's mercy to us in Jesus Christ both in word and deed. People will need to see the effects of God's mercy and forgiveness in our own lives and our mercy and forgiveness toward others.

My brothers and sisters, in today's reading from Revelation, St. John had a vision of the glorified Christ. As we look at the chaos in our world, if we are ever tempted to doubt Jesus' resurrection or the power of his resurrection, the words of the glorified Christ give us hope: "*Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, the one who lives. Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever.*"

¹Cantalamessa: Homily for Good Friday, 2016-03-25 Vatican Radio, <http://www.news.va/en/news/cantalamessa-homily-for-good-friday>.