

2nd Sunday of Easter - C
Acts 5:12-16;
Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19;
John 20:19-31
Little Flower - 4/28/19

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Second Sunday of Easter, also called Divine Mercy Sunday. Today's readings offer us hope and challenge us.

In today's first reading, we were told that *"Yet more than ever, believers in the Lord, great numbers of men and women, were added to them."* As we all know, this past year has been a very challenging year for the Catholic Church internationally, nationally, and here in our own Archdiocese. We constantly read articles or hear statistics about all the Catholics who have left the Church or no longer practice their faith. However, during Holy Week, I read an article that suggested that the Church in the United States might welcome approximately 70,000 new Catholics at the Easter Vigil. What was true at the beginning of the Church continues to be true today! This should give us great hope.

In last Sunday's first reading, we heard one of Peter's early proclamations of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Today's first reading reminds us that the Apostles preached the Gospel not only in words but also in deeds. Most of us are familiar with the saying attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words." This reading, then, challenges us to preach the Gospel by living our faith in love, especially with love for those in need.

In last Sunday's Gospel, when the women entered the tomb, the angels said to them, *"Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised"* [Lk. 12:5b-6a]. In today's reading from the Book of Revelation, Jesus confirms what the angels said: *"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. I hold the keys to death and the netherworld."* Jesus affirms that he is alive forever and has overcome death for us as well. At the same time, the words of the angels in last Sunday's Gospel challenge us to look for Jesus among the living. In other words, they challenge us to put our faith in Jesus and to develop a personal relationship with the Christ alive and present among us.

Today's Gospel also should fill us with hope for the present and the future. In today's Gospel, Jesus bestowed the gift of his peace upon the apostles. The apostles' whole world had been shaken first by Jesus' death on the cross and then by his resurrection. Also, they were frightened for themselves. The peace that Jesus bestowed on them and now bestows on us is an inner peace rooted in faith in him. Instituting the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Jesus revealed his superabundant love for us, his divine mercy, but challenged us to be peacemakers, bridge builders, forgivers, and reconcilers.

Thomas was not with the other apostles on Easter Sunday evening. When they told him that Jesus had appeared, he insisted he would not believe without physical evidence. The following Sunday, Jesus gave him his evidence. When Thomas answered, *"My Lord and my God,"* Jesus responded, *"Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."* Today's Gospel challenges us who live in a world of science and technology to believe in a God incarnate in Christ whom we cannot see.

My brothers and sisters, when Jesus rose from the dead, he triumphed over sin, suffering, sickness, and death. This victory, the gift of Christ's peace and mercy, and the number of new Catholics this Easter give us reason to hope. They likewise challenge us to believe in Christ alive and present among us even though we cannot see him, to deepen our relationship with him, to be peacemakers and reconcilers, and to proclaim the Gospel not only in words but also in deeds.