

2nd Sunday of Easter - C
Acts 5:12-16;
Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19;
John 20:19-31
Little Flower - 4/24/22

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 year 2000, Pope John Paul II designated the Second Sunday of Easter Divine Mercy Sunday. Every year the Gospel on this Sunday tells the story of Jesus' institution of the sacrament of reconciliation. The sacrament of reconciliation is the pre-eminent example of God's mercy.

Pope Francis often reminds us that mercy is the quality most proper to God. God's mercy, however, is not limited to God's forgiveness. In Luke 6:36, Jesus said, "*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*" However, in the 1966 edition of *The Jerusalem Bible*, this verse is translated "*Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate.*" Compassion is sensitivity and responsiveness to the needs of others. God knows all of our true needs and gives us what we need to meet those needs. Mercy encompasses all of God's love for us, God's goodness to us, all of God's gifts to us. However, several years ago on Good Friday, Cardinal 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."

What this means is that when we are good to others, when we give or share gifts with others, when we are sensitive and responsive to the needs of others, or when we forgive others, we are merciful and make God's mercy real and present in their lives.

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: "*Many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles,*" including curing the sick and driving out unclean spirits. As a result, "*believers in the Lord, great numbers of men and women, were added to them.*" We know that in the early church what drew people to the Church was the willingness of Christians to suffer and die for their faith and their love for one another.

If we are going to talk about witnessing our faith, one of the best ways we do this is by our attendance at Sunday Eucharist. Our Masses last weekend were joyful and life giving. Last weekend, Easter weekend, 839 people attended Mass at Little Flower. There were over 400 at the 10:30 a.m. Mass! In other words, if we are going to witness our faith, people need to see that Sunday Eucharist is our priority. In one of my earlier parishes, a non-Catholic family invited one of our high school parishioners to go on vacation with them. As a high school sophomore, he was concerned about missing Mass while he was on vacation. I assured him that because he had no control over it, it would be okay for him to miss. However, the host family gave him the option. Both weeks he chose to attend. According to his mother, this made a deep impression on them.

My brothers and sisters, 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 John's vision 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, i.e. in his Word, in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and in his Spirit living within our faith community, within others, and within us.