

2nd Sunday of Easter - B
Acts 4:32-35;
I John 5:1-6;
John 20:19-31
Little Flower - 4/7/24

My Brothers and Sisters,

Traditionally the Second Sunday of Easter was called *Dominica in Albis* or Low Sunday. *Dominica in Albis* means Sunday in White. When the Elect are baptized on Holy Saturday, they are clothed in a white garment. In the early Church, they wore the white garment for a week. On the Sunday after Easter, they went back to wearing regular clothes. The Second Sunday of Easter was also the Octave Day of Easter. Easter Sunday was High Sunday, and its Octave Day was Low Sunday.

In the year 2000, Pope John Paul II decreed that throughout the world the Second Sunday of Easter would receive the title *Divine Mercy Sunday*. Pope Francis consistently reminds us that mercy is the quality most proper to God. Every year on this Sunday, the Gospel recounts Jesus' institution of the sacrament of reconciliation. However, its larger message is to remind us that Jesus is God's mercy incarnate. As Jesus said, "*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*" [Jn. 3:16]. St. Paul wrote, "*God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us*" [Rom. 5:8].

At the same time, we do not want to be too restrictive when we say that mercy is the quality most proper to God. Mercy means so much more than forgiveness. God is the giver of all gifts, both human and divine. God's gifts come to us directly from God or indirectly through others. We can rightly say that all of God's gifts to us, both human and divine and both those that come directly from God and those that come to us indirectly through others, are expressions of God's mercy.

Today's reading from Acts of the Apostles is one of three passages that draw a picture of the ideal Christian community. According to Acts, in the ideal Christian community, believers are united in mind and heart, share everything, and witness to the resurrection of Jesus. However, we need to realize that this ideal community never existed in practice. For example, although the next verses of Acts 4 tell us about Barnabas selling property and bringing the proceeds to the apostles, the next chapter tells the story of Ananias and Sapphira who kept some of the proceeds from the sale of their property and lied to the apostles about it. Even in the earliest days of the Church, sin was still very real.

As you know, the Eucharistic Revival is ongoing, leading up to the Eucharistic Congress in July. We need a revival of the Sacrament of Reconciliation as much or more than we need the Eucharistic Revival. Of course, there are multiple reasons why most Catholics never celebrate the sacrament. I outlined several in a homily several years ago. First, acknowledging sin and accepting responsibility are always difficult whether to God, to a priest, or to ourselves. Second, there is a confusion about what is sin and also a loss of a sense of sin. Third, there has been a tendency in the last few years to privatize religion. Faith is seen to be just an individual and spiritual relationship between God and me.

My brothers and sisters, today I want to suggest another reason. Over this Lent, I have come to believe that one of our problems with the Sacrament of Reconciliation is that we connect the sacrament too much with bigger sins and not enough with everyday sins. In fact, I would suggest that the everyday sins are the ones which often wreak the most havoc on our lives and relationships. What I am suggesting is that we ask Jesus for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the little things, both attitudes and actions, that wound our relationships with others and create chaos in our lives and in the lives of others.