

Homily by Fr. Anthony Davis

“His mercy endures forever!”

April 11, 2021

2nd Sunday of Easter - Divine Mercy Sunday (Year B)

Acts 4:32-35; I John 5:1-6; John 20:19-31

The readings for this Sunday are about God’s mercy, the necessity for trusting Faith, and our need for the forgiveness of our sins, from the Father as "God of everlasting Mercy." In the Resp. Psalm (Ps 118), we repeat several times, “His mercy endures forever!” This means that God revealed His mercy, first and foremost, in sending His only-begotten Son to become our Savior and Lord through His suffering, death and Resurrection. Furthermore, “Divine Mercy” is given to us also in each celebration of the Sacraments, instituted to sanctify us.

Hence the first reading, from the Acts, stresses the corporal acts of mercy practiced by the early Christian community before the Jews and the Romans started persecuting them. Practicing the sharing love, compassion and the mercy of God as Jesus taught, this witnessing community derived its strength from community prayer, “the Breaking of the Bread” and the apostles’ teaching read at the worship service.

The second reading from first John, deals with practicing both corporal and spiritual works of mercy by obeying God’s Old Testament commandments and focusing on Jesus’ commandment of loving others as He loves us, with selfless, sacrificial, agape love. Moreover, loving others as Jesus loves us also demands that we treat others with God’s mercy and compassion.

Today’s Gospel vividly reminds us of how Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a sacrament of Divine Mercy. Here, the Risen Lord gave his apostles the power to forgive sins with the words, “Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained” (Jn 20:19-23). Furthermore, presenting the doubting Thomas’ famous profession of Faith, “My Lord and my God” (Jn 20:28), the Gospel illustrates how Jesus showed Divine mercy to the doubting apostle and emphasizes the importance of Faith.

We need to accept God's invitation to celebrate and practice mercy in our Christian lives: One way the Church celebrates God’s mercy throughout the year is through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Finding time for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is another good way to receive and give thanks for Divine Mercy. But it is mainly through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy that we practice mercy in our daily lives and become eligible for God’s merciful judgment.

Today's Gospel has a suggestion for both of us, in relation to those who are weak in faith, especially if they are family members, friends, or fellow workers who may be in danger of becoming unchurched.

The message suggests that Thomas became weak in his faith and left the company of the Apostles. In other words, he left his fellow believers, and "sought loneliness, rather than togetherness". He went off on his own with his difficulties, whatever they were, and they became his doubt.

In acting this way, Thomas moved, further and further away, from Christ, and from the critical support blocks of his faith-i.e. the companionship of his brother Apostles. Therefore, beware of becoming a "Christian Lone Ranger!" - trying to live the Christian faith on your own. For, our hold on the faith relies to a greater degree, on the hold that the Christian community has on us, and our involvement in the faith community.

In short, try to dissuade any fellow/sister believer from becoming a Christian Lone Ranger.

Let us, therefore, ask God for the Faith that culminates in self-surrender to God and that leads us to serve those we encounter with love. For, living Faith, together, enables us to see the risen Lord in everyone and gives us the willingness to render to each one our loving service.

St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) presents it this way:

"If we pray, we will believe; if we believe, we will love; if we love, we will serve. Only then we put our love of God into action."