

## 2nd Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday, Cycle A) Homily

St. William, Champion | April 16, 2023

Acts 2:42-47 | 1 Pt 1:3-9 | Jn 20:19-31

Deacon Robert Mintus

As I was reading and reflecting on today's Gospel, I thought of how it could have happened, and it might have been something like this:

On the evening of that first day of the week,  
when the doors were locked, where the disciples were,  
for fear of the Jews,  
Jesus came and stood in their midst  
and said to them, "I'm back. But why did you leave me in my hour  
of need? Peter, wasn't I right about your denial?"

But instead, we hear a very different tone in the first words of the risen Jesus to the disciples, and it's one that is very consistent with his dying words on the cross, where he asks his Father to forgive the very people who put him to death: "Peace be with you." And I wonder Jesus might have used the word *Shalom* – a word that goes far beyond our expression of peace – Shalom is a peace that is all

encompassing and wishes wholeness and all to be right with the person it is directed to.

This second Sunday of Easter is often referred to as Divine Mercy Sunday – and if we paid attention to the words of our readings, we hear the word “mercy” used a lot. In the first verse of our responsorial psalm, we hear it repeated three times. And what does mercy mean? The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as “compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power.” But I came upon another definition, and it was summed up in two words: “price paid.”

Isn't that what the life and death of Jesus was all about? To reconcile us to God the Father, he became one of us, able to understand our suffering and pain, and paid the ultimate price for our sins...

Those first words to his disciples were so important. What could you say to people who saw you brutally tortured and killed, who were likely dealing with a heavy case of guilt knowing that they deserted

their friend in his hour of greatest need. Peace! The price has been paid for your redemption.

And then Jesus breathes on his friends as he sends them his Holy Spirit with a command: “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” Jesus calls them to be agents of mercy as well – with an assignment to go out to the world and forgive sins in his name. As a result, we see the birth of the early Christian communities – where people are respected for who they are and work for the common good of others, sharing everything they have.

That’s a far cry from the world in which we live... one where we have Tim “Make them pay” Misny, and people can’t even drive civilly... “Get out of my way or I’ll run you off the road.” “Don’t get mad, get even.” “My parents came to this country first, stay in your country where you belong.” The idea of mercy seems the farthest thing from this way of thinking. But that is exactly what God calls each one of us to today. He planted the seeds of this when he taught us the Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Or in

the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”

I think that one of the ways that we are tempted is to hold on to past hurts, to continually remember those things that people did to us, or the times in which they let us down, and even sometimes we hold on to our own past failures, reminding ourselves that we are not good enough or that we cannot be forgiven. We have relationships that are broken because of something happened years ago, and maybe the people involved can't even remember exactly what happened. These past hurts are like acid that will eat us alive.

Jesus speaks to us today with the word Peace... He reminds us that the price has been paid. Release the sins that are holding you prisoner. Because I have paid their debt and your debt... and you are free to love and live. Let it be well with your soul.

There are verses that were reportedly written on the wall of Mother Teresa's home in Calcutta, India. I think they reflect God's mercy that we are called to share.

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.