

Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy) C2022

The readings of this second Sunday of Easter talk about the impact of Jesus' resurrection on the early church and his apparitions in their midst. They invite us to trust the Lord Jesus who is alive in the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The first reading shows how many signs were accomplished by the apostles, how they stayed and prayed together. It also shows how they drew many people to them and healed the sick and the possessed.

What is behind this text is the idea that the resurrection of Jesus contributed to the unity and the community of the early Church. Another idea is that, thanks to the living Jesus in their midst, the apostles were able to perform signs and wonders in favor of the sick.

This text allows us to understand the point of today's Gospel as Jesus appears to his apostles and gives them the power to forgive sins. The Gospel starts by indicating how the doors where the disciples hid were locked. Then, it reports the apparitions of Jesus in their midst and his wishing them peace. It also accounts of Jesus giving them the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins in his name, as well as his commissioning of them.

After that, the Gospel talks about an incident that happened when Thomas, who was absent at the moment of the apparition, resolved to believe only when he could see by himself and put his fingers in Jesus' scars.

Then, the Gospel describes another apparition during which Thomas was present and how he could not keep his promise of touching the scars of Jesus. After that, the Gospel reports the reproach of Jesus to Thomas for not having believed without seeing. The Gospel ends up by signaling how Jesus performed many signs not written down in the bible, while those written are given so that we believe that he is Christ and son of God.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today's Gospel starts with Jesus' apparitions, his wishing of peace and the giving of authority to forgive sins in his name. This authority is based on the certitude that God is fundamentally merciful and forgiving. It is also based on the assumption that humans are by nature sinners and cannot make it without God's help.

For human beings, it is very difficult to understand God's mercy because our justice is often based on the Law of retribution. "I'll get him for that", "I hope they'll get what they deserve", "I'll make him pay for it". That's what we often say. Such logic leaves little room for mercy.

When we say that God is merciful, it means he is compassionate, forgiving and not judging according to merits. For that reason, even the worst offenders and criminals have a place in God's heart. That's what mercy means in the authority to forgive sin. The sacrament of confession operates on that register. It is not about minimizing people's guilt or gravity of faults, but of making God's bounty and grace prevail over human weaknesses and sins.

The sacrament of confession presupposes a firm trust in God and in the power of the Holy Spirit. On a social level already, it is obvious that without a minimum of trust, life becomes impossible; otherwise we become suspicious toward one another. It is that trust that Thomas lacked. That is the reason why Jesus told him “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed”. Jesus wants to tell him that he should have trusted the testimony of his friends who told him that he was alive.

But, why is not the proof sufficient? Because it doesn't generate faith in someone. For instance, in Jesus' time many people saw his miracles, but only a few believed in him. Those who didn't trust him said that it was through the power of Beelzebub that he performed miracles. That is why what counts is not to “see” or “touch”, but rather the interior attitude of heart that allows God to touch us and dwell in us.

The more we trust Jesus, the easier the confession will be. The more, we distrust Jesus' words, the more difficult the confession will be. Regardless of the psychological difficulties some have with this sacrament, or the fear some have to open up to a priest and even of the grievance some still have about the priests' scandal, it's all about trust.

Jesus would not have left us this sacrament, if it were not necessary. Confession is the sacrament of ownership and accountability of our acts before God. It's good to care more about what God thinks of us than what people think of us, even if it is a priest.

What to do, then? Here are a couple of things to do in order to dwell in Divine mercy. First, accept God's invitation to practice mercy in the sacrament of confession and learn to unconditionally forgive others. Second, put aside your skepticism: trust firmly in the words of Jesus and the testimony come to us through the Bible. Third, don't look at Thomas only for his doubt, but also for his faith. For that reason, grow in faith; don't let your faith be static. Share your faith with others, families, friends, relatives, etc.

On this Sunday of divine mercy Jesus, let us pray the Risen Lord Jesus to help us be aware of his presence in the sacraments of the Church. May he heal us body and soul! May God bless you all!

Acts 5: 12-16; Revelation 1: 9-11a, 12-13, 17-19; John 20: 19-31



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