

Our Lady of Lourdes

Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)

April 11, 2010

Readings:

Acts 5:12-16

Rev 1:9-11, 12-13, 17-19

John 20:19-31

Deacon Bob

Fear, anxiety, worry! Have any of you ever experienced these emotions? Isn't that a ridiculous question? I would imagine that each of us have had such experiences in our lives. Some may even have come to church today with heavy burdens. We can find ourselves in that upper room with the disciples with the doors locked. Our locked doors may not be physical but may be where we do not let God into our lives or where we do not let others in. We become isolated.

One of the messages of today's gospel on this Second Sunday of Easter is that Christ enters our lives no matter how hard we try to keep him out, that Christ transcends all barriers and boundaries. He told his disciples and he tells us "do not be afraid." He offers a greeting, simple but profound, "Peace be with you."

The disciples will have peace in spite of the fact they will be persecuted. Christ's peace is more than the simple absence of conflict; it is a wholeness that is a special gift of God.

You may have not heard of Harry Patch. He died last July at the age of 111. He was the oldest survivor of World War I. During his funeral procession to Wells Cathedral in England thousands lined the street and when his coffin passed the crowds burst into spontaneous applause.

Harry was drafted into the war when he was eighteen. He was badly wounded in a battle that saw 70,000 men lose their lives. Harry kept the horrors of war to himself for most of his life. Only in his later years did he speak out. His desire was to have his life symbolized not by the horrors of war but by a desire for peace and reconciliation. For that reason he requested that soldiers from the French, Belgian and German armed forces accompany his hearse.

The things that killed an innocent Jesus, ignorance, fear and the need to blame are still very much evident in our world today. Jesus' visit to his disciples could have been one of questioning why did you desert me? Instead he offers them Peace. His response to his suffering and death was peace. The world's response, our own response to hurt is sometimes lashing out and wounding others. This response is not in harmony with Jesus' desire for peace to be with us.

Jesus' response to his hurt was always one of forgiveness, reconciliation and one of mercy. On the Second Sunday of Easter in April of 2000 Pope John Paul II declared this Sunday to be Divine Mercy Sunday. On that day he canonized St. Faustina of Poland who is the well known apostle of Divine Mercy. The Pope said that day, "The cross, even after the Resurrection of the Son of God, speaks and never ceases to speak of God the Father, who is absolutely faithful to His eternal love for man...Believing in this love means believing in mercy."

Who should receive mercy? A mother made a plea to the Emperor Napoleon for pardon for her soldier son. The Emperor responded "that since it was the man's second major offense, justice demanded death." The mother implored, "I do not ask for justice, I plead for mercy." The Emperor said, "He does not deserve mercy." "Sir" cried the mother, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for." The compassion and clarity of the mother's logic

prompted Napoleon to respond, “Well then I will have mercy. On this Second Sunday of Easter we are invited to reflect on God’s infinite love and mercy for each of us. The mercy that was lived and taught by Jesus and the mercy that you and I are called to practice.

Thomas because he was not with the disciples when Jesus appeared to them said “I will not believe unless I see.” Thomas’ absence says something to us about the need for community. When we gather together as the body of Christ we are strengthened in our belief and our resolve to live our faith.

Another aspect of the words of Thomas “I will not believe unless I see” this seeing is what others expect of us. We are to reflect the presence of the Risen Lord in our lives by the witness to others. The mercy of Christ shines whenever we reach out to the poor, whenever we are open to other’s suffering whenever we are open to those who may struggle with faith as Thomas did.

On a night in New York in 1935 Mayor La Guardia showed up at a night court in the poorest ward of the city. He dismissed the judge for the evening and took over the bench. One case involved an elderly woman who was caught stealing bread to feed her grandchildren. The mayor said, “I’ve got to punish you, Ten dollars or ten days in jail.” As he spoke he threw ten dollars in his hat. He then fined everyone in the courtroom for living in a city, “where an old woman had to steal bread so that her grandchildren should not starve.” The hat was passed around and the woman left the courtroom with her fine paid and an additional \$47.50.

Thomas said he would not believe unless he touched Jesus. When we come to this table and we take the Body of Christ in our hand or on our tongue we are touched and we touch the Risen Lord. Thomas’s response was my Lord and my God. May you and I respond with that same faith? Faith is a gift and like any gift it is meant to be shared.