



April 15, 2012

Second Sunday of Easter—Divine Mercy

“...he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”—John 20: 22

Dear Friends;

The words for ‘spirit’ in both Hebrew and Greek in the bible are the same words used for ‘breath.’ At the dawn of creation God’s life breath hovered over the waters of chaos and brings forth the all that is and all that has life and breath.

The same life-giving Spirit hovers over the Virgin Mary when she conceives her child, Jesus. And the Spirit is again present with Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry in his baptism. And the Spirit is at work through his proclamation of the Reign of God.

At his death the Gospels tell us that Jesus ‘gave up his spirit,’ ‘surrendered his breath,’ or ‘breathed his last.’ The focus on breath and Spirit continues in the Resurrection. When the Risen Jesus appears to his disciples and breathes on them he is sharing with them his own life, his divinity (the life he shares with God) so they also may live. The Spirit of God will change them and the world as Jesus has been changed.

The Risen Christ has been transformed and has passed into us the people of God, in the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments. The resurrection continues the work that began with the incarnation (God’s Son taking on our humanity). Now rather than in one historical person—Jesus, the Risen Lord is present in all of us throughout the world! This happens through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of the Risen Lord enlivens us to continue where Jesus left off in proclaiming the Good News to the ends of creation.

Fifty years ago Blessed Pope John XXIII, one of the most beloved popes of the last century, opened up the Church to new life by convoking an ecumenical council. He wanted to open the windows of the Church to the life-giving wind/breath of the Spirit. He said that it was time for the Church to have an *aggiornamento* (updating). For the Church had become fossilized. He said that “we are not here to guard a museum but to cultivate a garden of life.”

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was undoubtedly the greatest religious event of the last one hundred years. Its effect will continue to propel us forward for centuries to come, despite the efforts of those who would minimize its significance. I feel privileged to have been alive during this time. The fact the Spirit was at work in the Council cannot be disputed except by the nutty religious fringe of the Catholic world.

Three thousand of the world’s bishops nearly unanimously re-envisioned the Church by going back to Scripture and the early Fathers of the Church. We again refocused on the central message of the death and resurrection of Christ. All of us lay and ordained are together charged with the mission of proclaiming the Good News. This was expressed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*—the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. (#6)

Just as Christ was sent by the Father so also he sent the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit. This he did so that they might preach the Gospel to every creature (Mk 16:15) and proclaim that the Son of God by his death and resurrection had freed us from the power of Satan (Acts 26:18) and death, and brought us into the Kingdom of the Father...by Baptism men and women are implanted in the paschal mystery of Christ; they die with him, are buried with him and rise with him.

Let us breathe out that new life on others by proclaiming the hope and healing of God’s reconciling love!

Joy and Peace,

Fr Ron