



# May 1, 2011

## Second Sunday of Easter

### "Divine Mercy Sunday"

*... Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' John 20:19*

Dear Friends;

Following the crucifixion the disciples are overcome not only with grief but also guilt. They are sad that Jesus was dead, but their sorrow is also compounded by knowing that they had abandoned Jesus when he most needed them.

The stories of the resurrection are stories of forgiveness and peace-making. The experience of the risen Jesus is a gift from God. It is God who makes the initiative. So when Jesus appears to them it is an experience of healing.

Jesus does not condemn or reproach the disciples. He greets them with "Shalom" a gift of blessing and peace. They are transformed by the experience. And they know that they are accepted again into communion with him. It is the same Jesus who had offered peace and healing to sinners and the sick as he walked with them in Galilee.

In today's reading from the Gospel of John, the apostle, Thomas, came to experience the risen Jesus not when he touched Jesus but when he allowed himself to be touched by the healing grace of Jesus' love. The challenge of Jesus is to be opened by God's peace and offer the same reconciling love to others.

Today is called Divine Mercy Sunday. Mercy is the willingness to help someone in need simply because they are in need. Mercy is that quality of God whose faithful loving-kindness reaches out to the least and lowest. It is mercy that raised Jesus. Jesus embodied mercy by willingly identifying with the lowest and expressing God's care for them. It is God's mercy that is extended to the disciples when Jesus offers them his peace.

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that to the merciful belong to the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt 5:7). Mercy springs from love. Love for the other urges both God and God's people to act with kindness, tenderness, to heal and to save. It is a virtue that we so desperately need in our world.

Recently, I heard the story of a St. Anne family, a mother, father and three children being evicted by the court from their home. They wanted to stay long enough for the kids to finish the school year. The judge told them if they were allowed to stay longer in their home it would be a "hardship for the bank." I could not believe this.

We lack mercy for ordinary folk casting them off to the merciless "market forces." Yet the powerful forces that helped turn our economy into what one writer called a "vampire casino" are given billions in bailouts because they are "too big to fail." And they refuse to extend the help they received to others in need.

The only thing that is going to save us is the mercy of God. Mercy is not merited but is gift. We show mercy because mercy has been shown to each of us. Each in their own way has abandoned Jesus and his call to Gospel justice. We have refused to see the crucified one in the faces of those who need a hand. We cast people adrift in a cruel and all consuming system of self-interest. We need to reject this philosophy of economic cruelty and practice the merciful compassion of Jesus.

"Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy." Mt 5:7

Peace,

*Fr Ron*

Today we again celebrate with our Hispanic community "Cinco de Mayo." I am grateful to all who make this opportunity for us to gather as a wider community to celebrate the richness of our diversity in Christ!