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Commentary on the Gospel: Divine Mercy Sunday

Gospel for the Second Sunday of Easter (Years A B C), and commentary.

Gospel: (*Jn 20:19-31*)

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they

saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you." Then

he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.”

Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

Commentary

The Gospel for this 2nd Sunday of Easter, also called Divine Mercy Sunday, recounts two apparitions of our Lord to his disciples. On the day of the Resurrection, under the two-fold sign of peace and joy, Jesus breathes on them, thus recalling the divine “breath of life,” and gives them the Holy Spirit whose power will permit them to forgive sins. Only God can forgive sins, and he does so because of his tender mercy. God’s omnipotence is shown in the strength of his love that cleanses us so we may share in his life.

“And I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” The formula of absolution in the sacrament of penance seems so rapid, but it contains the whole power of the merits of the Life, Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus.[1] Each time we go to confession, through the Communion

of Saints we are helping other faithful to ask God for forgiveness. When through our example or words we help others to receive the sacrament of reconciliation, we carry out an act of mercy. Such is the case, for example, of a father or mother of a family who brings their daughters or sons to confession, with the parents going to confession first.

Thomas was not present for that apparition on the day of the Resurrection. The following Sunday Jesus once again became present in his glorious Body in the midst of his disciples. He addressed Thomas, inviting him to touch his wounds. Thomas, incredulous up until then, makes a profession of faith: “My Lord and my God!” It is the clearest statement of Christ’s divine nature in the Gospel. By repeating it, we can show our faith in Christ, true God and true Man, eternal Son of the Father (cf. *Jn* 5:1-6).

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” Thus our Lord blesses us; at the same time, we ask him to increase our faith in the love which, in the Spirit, God the Father has for us, his sons and daughters in Christ. And our gratitude should lead us to want to share our joy with many others, telling them: “His mercy endures forever” (*Ps 118:2*).

Under the protection of our Lady, mother of Mercy, we will learn to help our neighbors in their spiritual and material needs by carrying out the works of mercy – both the spiritual ones (instructing, advising, consoling, comforting, forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently) and the corporal (feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, burying the dead, and giving alms to the poor).^[2] This is the picture we see in the Acts of the Apostles of the life of the first

Christians (cf. *Acts* 4:32-35). Our Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection has bestowed divine Mercy on them, and enabled them to share it with many others.

[1] Cf. Fernando Ocáriz, *A la luz del Evangelio. Textos para la meditación*, p. 103.

[2] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2447.

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