

Divine Mercy Sunday
April 11, 2021
“Mercy: Gifts and Forgiveness”

Acts 4:32-35
1 Jn 5:1-6
Jn 20:19-31

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

One of the greatest of sorrows of most people’s lives is the never-ending regret and remorse we experience over something we did or failed to do – that can never be reversed or recovered. Our hearts are heavy – and, often, they are in pain or turmoil over something that can never be done or undone, as the case may be. Our action or inaction resulted in severe harm to others or to ourselves that, in no way, can ever be changed. Consequently, we carry a burden of guilt that, often, impedes us from our full potential as a human being.

Just such an experience must have been that of our primal parents when they sinned and lost most of everything they had. And this, certainly, was the case of the disciples of Jesus during and after his suffering, crucifixion, and death. Judas had betrayed Jesus; Peter had denied him three times; and the rest, all ran away in fear!

It was the solidarity of their fear and their failure to do anything to help Jesus, that led them to hide together. They were probably even in that same upper room where, four days days previously, they had eaten with Jesus and received the Eucharist!

Suddenly and without any announcement, Jesus became present in their midst – And the first thing he said was “Shalom!” “Peace be with you!” – “with each of you!”

Jesus brought them a peace of heart and soul that said “All is forgiven.”
“The burden of what you did or failed to do is lifted! The Father used my crucifixion and death for a wonderful purpose. Because, now, salvation is possible for everyone in the world! Moreover, as I have loved you and forgiven you – so you must do for others. You must go out into the world and bring the Father’s love and forgiveness to everyone. Although you could not have done this before, now it is possible – because I give you the Holy Spirit to guide you and direct all that you undertake!”

To forgive someone is truly to show our love for them. In the First Letter of St. John, we are told that if we believe in Jesus, we are truly begotten by God. Moreover, if we love God, then we also love everyone else who is created by God. Thus, our on-going love for God leads us to keep His Commandments. And the sum of the Commandments, and the entire Gospel, comes down to love – love for God’s children and love for God, Himself!

People, today, also have heavy hearts because the whole world is in a state of growing unrest. World and national problems seem to get worse, rather than better. Nevertheless, if we have faith – if we believe in God and in Jesus – if we have a relationship with them in faith – then we can conquer the world. God will, ultimately, triumph – And in the meantime, the world will have no power over our souls and spirits!

St. John also mentions that God's Commandments are not burdensome. The reason for this is that when we do anything good out of love – it is never a burden – Whatever we give up – whatever we sacrifice – whatever energy we expend – is painless to our soul and spirit – if we love!

This is how the members of the early Christian Community were able to sell everything and donate the money – if the needs of the Community required it, as narrated today in the Acts of the Apostles. While it is true that they expected the Second Coming of Jesus to be imminent – And while they didn't expect to be on this Earth much longer – they were able to be unattached to everything material in this present world.

Today, we understand that we can never know when the Final Coming of Jesus will happen. But we still can be – must be – detached in soul and spirit from everything we possess. We must be ready to part with anything and everything should it be what God is asking of us.

Furthermore, we can do this with great freedom of soul and spirit – as well as with peace of heart and inner joy – All because we have experienced the great mercy of God! For in His mercy, God has blessed us with so much! We have been blessed with life, with love, and with forgiveness for the most shameful of things! We can be forgiven for all those things which weigh heavy on our hearts, souls, and spirits!

And so, Brothers and Sisters, let us become merciful ourselves. Let us bless and forgive others with our mercy – our good deeds – our generosity – and our love. And let us pray that we always love and serve our merciful God and His Son, our Lord Jesus, the Christ!

Amen.

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