

## St Pius & St Anthony Homily Divine Mercy Sunday Year C

Like a biblical version of book series “Where’s Waldo?” where the world traveler Waldo is disguised in the busy picture of all kinds of peoples and action, he is in there somewhere, you just have to find him. Well, we have a scene today that begs the question ‘Where’s Thomas?’ After the resurrection, Jesus appears to the gathered disciples (ten), and **Thomas is not with them**. Something is wrong. Yes, the apostles are afraid. The reading says the door is locked (out of fear). Yet, are they also turning against one another? I recall Jesus clearly telling them in Mark 6:7, when he sent them on mission to go in pairs, two by two. And at the Last Supper in John 17:22, Jesus prayed to the Father out loud, that “they may be one, as we are one.” We do hear about them ‘being all gathered together’ in the first reading today from the Acts of the Apostles (ch 5), but that is after Pentecost with them having received the fullness of the Holy Spirit. But they are not there, yet. So, what is going on that Thomas has left the peace and security of fellowship to venture out alone? They are coming apart. Another sign of their division and scattering, is that Thomas doesn’t believe their word (the word of ten fellow apostles-whose mission job is to give credible testimony!) Jesus warned them about the risk of breaking-up when he told Peter in Luke 22:31-32 “Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat...”and in Matthew 26:31, when Jesus told them to keep closely together reminding them of prophecy from Zechariah, “As it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be dispersed’(Zech 13:7).” So Jesus prepared them for this one possible effect of the trauma they went through witnessing his terrible abuse and crucifixion. He advised them, “Keep together, and look out for one another”. Yet, we come to this scene today and Thomas is floating out in the wind alone? What gives? I suggest that it is a case in point: they need Jesus! And Jesus shows up to provide for them! And He does so twice! Isn’t that a patient shepherd? Jesus shows up at an appointed time, but not everything & everyone in place, so He waits, resets and comes back again to take care of matters. So, patient-so accepting- so accommodating, so merciful. And Jesus brings needed gifts to them of 1)Peace, 2) the Holy Spirit & 3) forgiveness. He forgives them (for their abandonment of Him) and gives them authority to forgive others in His name! They needed it, as I pointed out already their obvious breakdown and breaking apart following Jesus’ crucifixion. Jesus, who is always about the work of healing and reconciliation, shows up to rescue & reconcile the apostles’ unity (not the first time they pulled

hard at the loose threads in the fabric of their unity-recall their fight over who is the greatest and the indignation over James & John fighting for the power seats beside Him –Mark 10:35-45). But with Jesus, today's reading is why we call this Divine Mercy Sunday. Think about this scene from Jesus' side (literally, His lance-wounded side) and what he had experienced three days previously. All the torture and abuse leading to his excruciating death (& throw in the emotional pain of His betrayal, denial & abandonment) and when He shows back up in their presence for the first time after all of that, what is the first word out of His mouth? "Peace". It is mercy that rolls today, not heads, when this moment of reckoning happens. Jesus is so concerned to maintain reconciliation among his followers that he repeats the word, "Peace" a second time (in case they didn't hear it), and Jesus will declare it a third time when he reappears a week later when Thomas is back with them! Jesus desire for peace for and among them is all the more brought home when Jesus directs them to examine His wounds adding His gift of peace. It's as if He's saying, "If anyone should not have peace it would be this body-look at how broken bruised, battered it is, but I am here, with peace, giving you peace!" Remember Isaiah's prophecy from Good Friday (53:5) "By his wounds, we are healed!" Yes we are. In addition to His wounds proving His love of us ('look what I endured for you-I love you this much!'), His wounds also show definitive proof of His identity. Yes, there were deniers and detractors back then who rejected Jesus' resurrection by claiming that His appearances were only ghostly visions or hallucinations. So, Jesus overcomes that claim, by saying, 'Look at this real body, touch these still fresh wounds, look at my veins pulsing and my discolored bruised flesh-I am a real physical body risen from dead'. But there were even other anti-Christian detractors who claimed that that some 'stand in-look-alike' body double showed up after Jesus' death as an imposter. But again, examination of the actual wounds disproves them-Because how much would you have to pay a 'body-double-actor' to replicate inflicting a lance stuck in their side, countless penetrating whip wounds, and nail holes all the way through hands and feet? Could you even find such a person? So, no, this is the real Jesus, risen from the dead with still obvious signs of crucifixion to prove it. Absolutely, 'By His wounds, we are healed'. We know Jesus by His wounds. And don't we all have wounds and our wounds identify us (as they identify Jesus!) Often, when having to ID a body after death, it is distinctive marks, scars and tattoos that definitively ID us). But also don't our wounds tell stories about us? Don't get me started on this, because we all have war wound stories that can go on and on? I have to

confess that since back in February, I've been embarrassed as people noticed and asked about my right pointing finger and what caused the deep purple nail! Learning the hard way again! But it was causing a big dilemma for me, because I took to deflecting and joking that I was just keeping to the liturgical color on it to matching the vestment color purple I wear in Lent, so I stressed over what I would do when Easter came and the sanctuary & vestment color changed to white (find a 'flesh color' paint, or wear a tan fabric band-aid), but as Holy Week came, the nail had grown far enough along to push the purple line up and off the tip! But yes, that wound ID'd me, and yes there is a story behind it! The long version shortened is that back in the snow, sleet, ice days of winter, I was loading stacks of concrete blocks in truck for weight traction, and a stack fell over, that I thought I would catch! Fortunately at the time, my hand was already frozen so I didn't feel any pain, until my hand thawed and it caused a sleepless night of alternating fire and throbbing that taught me again, 'Don't we pay now or we pay later but we still always pay for our mistakes!' But, that is not Divine Mercy when it comes with Jesus-Mercy is release from future pain-punishment hanging over our heads. He spares us, forgives us and sets us free, telling us not to look back, for you are forgiven! Jesus announces after His Easter resurrection: Be Healed by my wounds. My wounds reveal how much I love you, He says. And despite anything that we may have done against Him, Jesus' forgiveness is stronger than our sins. After all He suffered for us, He loves us & brings peace and reconciliation. That is Mercy!