

St Pius & St Anthony Homily Divine Mercy Sunday Year A1

The Back and Forth, Hide and Seek of Easter continues today. Last week, Mary Magdalene, Peter and John were racing to hunt and seek out Jesus, or at least discover the empty tomb. And this week Jesus turns IT, and becomes the seeker as He searches out both the apostles collectively as group but more than that Jesus returns a second time, also coming back to single out Thomas for finding. Jesus returns to find them all together (as they should be – that is how important Christian unity is to Jesus - at the Last Supper Jesus specifically prayed- “Father. may they be one as you and I are one” John 17:21, that the unity of God should be reflected in the unity of His People). We see this a lot with the Risen Jesus, first he sought out Mary in the garden when she lingered after Peter/John left (Jn 20:16-17), then today He seeks the whole group of apostles - complete with a follow-up visit, making the second trip- to include Thomas also. And next week, we will hear about Jesus bringing back into the fold the two disciples who leave the enterprise, walking away on the road off to Emmaus (Luke 24:15-16). No surprise then that we will hear in the next week’s gospel, (the fourth week of Easter, also called ‘Good shepherd Sunday’), we hear about Jesus being the Good Shepherd, who seeks out the lost-searches for the stray. Exactly, Jesus seeks us out, finds us, to bring us to Himself and keep us with each other. This finding and seeking is a common Easter theme.

When I was a kid, we loved to go to the Daviess County Public Library (the old location- corner of Griffith & McCreary Ave) to the children’s section to seek out good books to read, or look at their pictures. Interestingly, the children’s book section was its own room upstairs (and funny enough, that it was a separate glass enclosed wing, with its own doors. Hmm, I wonder were they concerned about kids making too much noise? But I understand the soundproofing and separation because the whole space was customized for kids, unique chairs, a toy section and interaction areas, like a special (Story-Time) reading stage with risers for kids to sit on through public readings. But we kids, loved to go there ***to find*** neat books to check out (*Part of the excitement too was we kids having our own library cards – we felt important, like when we received mail in our name for the first time*) My favorite kid’s book author was Richard Scarry – he had the best, elaborate illustrations to go along with his stories. His pictures were very busy, but that was the joy of discovering all kinds of side-scene action going on. My favorite character of his

was called “Mr Lowly Worm”- a jolly worm dressed with a bow tie, sweater and one shoe (of course) and an Austrian fedora. Mr Worm was on every page, but you had to search him out (like Highlights magazine ‘Find Hidden Object’ Puzzle) So a side enjoyment of reading any of Scarry’s books was trying to find Lowly worm on every page.

(It always struck me odd how the children’s room at the Daviess County Library was on the second floor, because you had to ascend these very intimidating stairs to get there. It was a wide, huge staircase with a level landing midway up, but the stairs were the open marble slabs set on a steel frame with steel hand rails too – I think they are called floating stairs, but for a kid it was challenging not to look down through the slats and be frightened, imagining yourself slipping & falling through them to your death. But my parents were so good to walk beside us holding hands and teaching us to cling to rails. Maybe like the apostles who feared and locked themselves in, but when Jesus kept walking with them, he gave them confidence and drew them out, so also we kids were helped by parents, given the courage to ascend those stairs to get to the children’s book room.)

Well, we have a similar situation in today’s, last week’s and the weeks to come gospel readings of Jesus’ appearances. Today, Jesus shows up, but someone is missing. Thomas.....where is He? It is a big puzzle. Much like finding Mr ‘Lowly Worm’ on every page of the ‘Great Big Schoolhouse’ book of Richard Scarry, we have to look for Thomas ourselves, asking, “Where is he?” What is going on that would lead Thomas to be away, in a very vulnerable position not with the others? It violates Jesus’ rule of ‘sending the apostles out in pairs’ (Matthew 10:1; Luke 6:12–13; Mark 6:7). For example, we just heard in Holy Week about Jesus sending **Peter & John (2 apostles)** to make Passover preparations in a designated room (Luke 22:8), and on Palm Sunday “Jesus sent **two** (unnamed) disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an donkey tethered...”(Matt 21:1-2)

So, why do we find Thomas on a solo mission here? Something is not right. And to add to that, when we hear Jesus’ words (Peace!) as He shows up makes me suspect that there was some unrest among the apostles that Jesus needed to settle. Notice when He appears, His first word is peace (Jn 20:19). Peace. I love emphasizing, that even after that cruelest and torturing of deaths He suffered, He is still Peace itself and the source of it for others. Obviously, the apostles need peace (He said it – peace - they need peace within their own group – such a need wouldn’t be the first time that feelings of guilt in them, or if not guilt, then their grief would have been operative too, as we can all testify that grieving sometimes

can turn us against, even those we love most—maybe that is what has caused this division among the apostles?). But to this separation, Jesus breathes the soothing, comforting Holy Spirit upon them, and notice that He gives them authority to ‘forgive’ sins. Were they in need of forgiving each other already? Yes. But whatever has kept Thomas out, his own doing or the other apostles allied against him, Jesus brings about reconciliation by appearing once and letting it be known that they are not all together, and then he shows up again, a second time to reconcile and bring peace to the whole flock of apostles again. That is Divine Mercy – Jesus, wishing to bring healing, peace and forgiveness (His own Spirit) to everyone.

Doesn't the discrepancy between the first reading from Acts and the gospel highlight this need of Jesus to unite and heal tension among the apostles? Acts 2:44, 46 said, “All who believed were together.... Every day they devoted themselves to **meeting together** in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes” but the gospel proceeds to show Thomas swinging out in the winds alone. *(Some people have suggested that something is wrong, that the other ten cannot convince him that Jesus indeed had appeared to them risen from dead-that if they cannot convince one of their own, how will they convince the world of Jesus' resurrection?)*

But Mercy comes to the rescue. Jesus settles whatever unrest or tension has come up among the apostles, and as He continues to meet with them the additional forty days until His ascension, they will draw even closer until the Holy Spirit descends upon them at Pentecost. Then we see an entirely new and united band of believers that share and pass on Resurrection faith, spreading the Risen Christ's presence upon the earth.

Christ is risen and alive among u. We may have to look, or be on watch for Jesus, but we, or He will be found. Mercy does that: Mercy finds mercy. As Jesus had taught a long time before His resurrection, back in Matthew 5:7, He had taught, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” Understand that as “Mercy will appear to them”. So, looking for mercy, we will find mercy. Seeking Jesus, we find Him. In all of His resurrection appearances, those who are open and looking for Him, they find Him. Jesus loves us so much to come out after us, to seek us out, because He wants us to be with Him, and He wants us to be together.