

St Pius & St Anthony Divine Mercy Sunday Year B2 (John 20:1-19)

So Incredible! Not the resurrection, but the response after the resurrection! Pure Mercy! Notice what the first word of Jesus was after His return to the apostles! After all that pain and suffering leading to His death; all of that unnecessary hurt Jesus accepted, or in fact, we *inflicted* upon him, (humanly caused pain), and keep in mind, it's not like Jesus fell down a hill to save us. No, He climbed one willingly and we were responsible for putting Him through it. So after all of that, what was the first word out of His mouth? See how I am building this up---Following Jesus' terrible crucifixion and then His re-appearance to the apostles (resurrection), that really set up quite the dramatic confrontation- a real potential Day of Reckoning Scene. They got it coming! I liken this scene to some of the best ones from scripture – like Revelation 20:11-15, which is referred to as the “Great White Throne Day of Judgement” (Rev 20:11-12 “Next I saw a large white throne and the one who was sitting on it. The *earth and the sky fled from his presence* and there was no place for them. I saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened....”) Or another one is with Jesus' parable of Matthew 18:23-35 where the King settles accounts with all the servants with them all standing before the King to face reward or punishment. Well, similarly today's gospel of this 'reappearance of Jesus' story tees up quite the showdown. What is Jesus going to say/do to His apostles who denied & deserted Him? Suspense! I suggest it is God's revelation of Pure Gift-Divine Mercy! God's Charity on display!

I had one of those set-up scenes one time when I was in elementary school. It could have become quite the day of Reckoning – Judgement – my End Time!

I was in elementary school (*How is it that when we are that young, things seem like a great idea, but no one else, parents, don't think it so?*) Well, it was the end of the school year and we were cleaning out desks (those old style desks that had compartments underneath the seat, like a trunk. And the teacher said to clean them out – And I pulled out, crumpled up papers, stub of a pencil eraser, pieces of crayons, broken ruler, lots of pieces of snow that were those tears (torn off specks) from a spiral notebook pages, and even a 'squeezed to death' smashed Little Debbie star crunch cake. But we successfully cleaned out our desks. And that gave me the idea to end the year with a bang. I would burn my books (or at least the soft cover books like my vocabulary book and spelling book). Well, since I should be in full disclosure mode, maybe my real motivation was that at the same time I could also burn the letters/notes from my girlfriend who just broke up with me for the summer. So, I set up a little burn pit in our garage. I did plan it out. I used a metal wash tub and just used matches (no accelerants) and closed the garage door (it was afternoon so who else would be around). And I went to

work getting rid of my past (Bygones!). I was half-way into this act of creative destruction, when I heard the gravel kicking around the front of garage. Then the sliding barn style door was suddenly thrown open aside on its hinges. And Here it was! The scene of smoke billowing out the door and up, bright light shining in on me inside, and a big figure standing at the door – it was my dad (come home from work! **Apocalypse Now!** I'm dead. I'm way past the 'don't play with matches' talk at this point)

And what was the first word out of Dad's mouth? He said, "I wondered what was going on in here – What is that?" I sheepishly laid out my great idea of closing out the school year with a flash, or clean burn. Then, he said, "It'd be safer for you to burn that out on the railroad tracks – all the rock." Talk about Judgment Day averted! That was mercy in action! I had it coming! (Maybe he saw the self-punishing dread/ guilty conviction all over my face, but that forgiving response of His was MERCY!

And what does Jesus say and do, when he shows up after suffering all His passion, persecution and pain, keeping in mind too, that the apostles didn't make a good showing at Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion. What is the first word out of His mouth? Is it judgement? Is it fire? Is it condemnation? No! It is Peace, Peace and Peace. Three times (twice on the first visit --John 20:19 & 21-- and to further demonstrate his merciful patience, he repeats it on his return visit a week later-- John 20:26) Jesus will speak and give peace, even while clearly showing His still wounded body, He gives/brings peace..... speaks peace..... That is Divine Mercy!

I love how Jesus adds the step of 'blowing or breathing the Holy Spirit' upon them, with a 'sending' command. Jesus is calling for a victory tour or triumph tour showing true strength (John 20:21, 23 "As the Father has sent me, so I send you.....Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained") Not only is Jesus forgiving them, but calling them to take up a mission of 'forgiving presence' among others. It is all Mercy. Share it with people, show it to the world. He wants them to be missionaries of mercy. Address the Injustice of the Crucifixion by loving offenders back into grace. Jesus doesn't call for a tirade or vendetta to be taken up. No having received mercy themselves, Jesus wants His followers to rise above past grievances, to elevate (not hate) and take up the truly harder work of reconciliation and peace. This is a new way. I like the gesture of Jesus breathing upon them, because it calls to mind the first creation account of Genesis 1:2 "the Spirit of God breathed over the waters" which began creation. So Jesus' act is creating all things new. The past forgiven, and now we start over. Just as at baptism, Easter with Jesus means forgiveness of the past and the opening to new life in Him, again. Mercy reconciles enemies and forgives sins. But perhaps most felt by us, Jesus' mercy brings us peace!