

Homily 2nd Sunday of Easter B – Divine Mercy Sunday 2021

Love comes in many guises, one of the most prominent being Mercy. Maybe this is why we call today Divine Mercy Sunday. It underlines the fact that Jesus came to live among us, died and rose again, because of his all-embracing love for us. It is also why we can only experience the effects of true love through its many, many expressions: kindness, gentleness, compassion, empathy, caring, altruism etc. In recognising mercy as a particular face of love we acknowledge that it is Jesus' love that heals us. Whenever, therefore, we show mercy and forgiveness, the source of the love that enables us to do this comes from Jesus. In being healed we are not only strengthened but our lives are renewed. Just as the light of the sun enables plants to grow and mature, so love nurtures our growth to maturity. Mercy is a gift God gives us. As with all gifts, it is given to be shared. Our faults and failings, our sins, lead us to call out for God's mercy and, in receiving mercy, we become more open to the needs of others especially the marginalised, the isolated, and those who are excluded whatever the reason. Mercy reflects a love that is all embracing; no one is excluded. Mercy makes us kinder, gentler, more sensitive, and more compassionate; reminding us that they are the masks behind which love works. The mercy of God in Jesus was not just in his heart but in the touch with which he healed, in the breath he breathed on the Apostles and filled them with the spirit, and in his words that are creative.

We see mercy at work with Thomas who did not believe his fellow apostles. John Kavanagh SJ notes that they did not shun him or throw him out but continued to welcome him. In doing so they allowed Jesus to appear in his own time and through mercy allow Thomas to change his mind in a way that deepened and strengthened his faith. Note, too, that there was something familiar about the risen Christ - the wounds and scars of his crucifixion - but there was also something very different about him that caused his disciples to hesitate, wonder and question his presence when he appeared. Although the pandemic and the lockdowns have inflicted pain and suffering on us, when it is all over, we will be renewed. We will bear the scars caused by the pandemic and many familiar things will remain, but we must be ready to see in new ways yet to be revealed. In being ready to recognise and greet this new life, our faith will also be deepened and strengthened as radically as that of Thomas.

A woman walks up to a little old man rocking in a chair on his porch and says: *"I couldn't help but notice how happy you look. What's your secret to a long happy life?"*

He replies, *"I smoke three packs of cigarettes a day. Drink a case of whisky every week, eat fatty foods and never exercise!"*

"That's amazing!" Says the woman. *"How old are you?"* **"26"** he says.