

Divine Mercy Sunday Homily (based upon John 20:19-31)

- I'm going to need your help with the start of this reflection, so do your part ok?
- May the peace of the Lord be with you all (respond)
- Let us offer each other the sign of peace (go ahead)
- Ever wonder why we do this at Mass? Why it is even in the Mass?
- [Optional: I remember when this started in the 1960's and it was called the "kiss of peace". I still remember being a kid sitting in church the first time father explained this new part of the Mass and worrying that I had to actually kiss these people around me. You could tell by people looking around I wasn't the only uncomfortable one. Soon after it was changed to the "sign" of peace.]
- Today, when we do the "Sign of Peace" at Mass we are not just giving a casual wave, not giving a courtesy "hello, how are you". We are not just telling each other "have a nice day". We are doing much more.
- This part of the Mass is a ritual prayer. We are actually praying for each other. We are using the very words our Lord spoke to His disciples- the ones we just heard: Peace be with you.
- One definition of the word "peace" is this: Being in harmony in our relationships. Being in "right relationship" - No conflict, no anxiety.
- But we are not just wishing each other any old peace at this part of the Mass, we are wishing each other the **Lord's** peace.
- We are saying to each other: May your relationship with God be in harmony. In other words: May you be in right relationship with God. May your life be pleasing to God.

May you always be found doing His will. May you trust God and know God loves you and is close by.

- What a beautiful prayer we pray for each other in those few simple words.
- In today's Gospel our Lord shows us what that prayer looks like in action. We see the resurrected Jesus coming to **bring** His peace, coming to **restore** His disciples to that harmony, that right relationship with Him. Because they were certainly not feeling at peace before He gets there.
- And Jesus shows us one of the first steps in returning a relationship to harmony, to peace - is to show **mercy**.
- If you look up the definition of the word Mercy, this is one of the definitions you will find: The willingness to enter into the chaos of someone's life and bring peace.
- Divine mercy then could be defined as "the Divine" (Jesus) willingly entering into the chaos of our lives. Into the worries, fear, anxieties, stress, illness, and guilt – whatever chaos is there – and bring His peace.
- [This definition of Mercy almost sounds at odds with the definition of peace, doesn't it? How can chaos and harmony exist together? But the Lord's peace (one we wish to each other at Mass) and Mercy go hand in hand. You can't have one without the other.]
- The Lord's peace doesn't mean life will always be problem free. But it does mean God will be there with you – to strengthen, guide and comfort you and you can trust in that promise.
- We see Divine Mercy in action in today's Gospel reading. The lives of those first disciples are in chaos. We find them locked in a room mourning the loss of Jesus; fearing for their own lives, feeling guilty for letting Jesus down when He needed them most.

- So into that room, through locked doors (because nothing can keep God from us) and into those lives filled with chaos, comes the risen Christ to tell them “Peace be with you”. It’s ok. Don’t be afraid. Don’t worry. I am here with you. I forgive you and I love you.
- Jesus knew those disciples (and all of us) needed an enduring gift, a permanent change in order to leave that room and that chaos and to live at peace, as His followers in the world. So He gave them that change. He breathed on them and gave them the Holy Spirit, an enduring spirit that would always be there to guide them.
- So what lessons can we take with us from our Gospel on this Divine Mercy Sunday? I’d offer two.
- First, we have a merciful, forgiving God. Most people in that locked room denied knowing Jesus, ran away- in fear - after Jesus’ arrest. There was a lot of guilt in that room when Jesus entered. But Jesus offered forgiveness: “Peace be with you.” Don’t worry, don’t be stuck in guilt, I love you and I forgive you.
- Let’s look at what they did with Jesus’ offer of forgiveness and peace. First consider Judas was not in the room. Judas, the betrayer of Jesus, was so filled with guilt he couldn’t forgive himself and couldn’t believe God was so loving that God could forgive him. He thought he would never be at peace - so he took his own life.
- On the other hand, Peter who denied Jesus three times, accepted Jesus’ offer of forgiveness and peace. Peter trusted in God’s love and mercy. Trusted God could and would forgive him, so Peter took the offer. So did the others in that room. Our first reading tells us great

things happened after they accepted Jesus' forgiveness. They became church. They taught about Jesus, lived together in community, took care of each other, received Eucharist together – grew strong. They had peace. It all started by accepting God's Mercy and Forgiveness.

- And let's not forget Thomas, who wasn't in the room when Jesus first appeared. Thomas accepted Jesus' forgiveness; it just took a little longer. I think to teach us doubt is a part of being human (especially when we hurt). To teach us it is ok to question, it is ok to want to understand. But it is not ok to be closed minded, not ok to lack faith.
- As Jesus tells Thomas: Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed. In other words, happy are we who have not seen Jesus with our eyes but have seen Him in our hearts and follow His teachings, especially about mercy and forgiveness. Divine Mercy Sunday reminds us - God is patient, forgiving, and there to help us be better people. And to also remind us once we receive God's mercy - we are obliged to *be* merciful to others- in order to truly be at peace.
- The second lesson to take with us today is God doesn't want us to live fearful, frustrated, stressed out lives. God wants us to trust Him and be at peace.
- Many of us, at one time or another in our lives, have huddled in a locked room, like those apostles did, full of fear and worry about what will happen next. In fact, isn't that sort of what we are experiencing in our world today. Isn't that how we spent much of the past pandemic year?
- Fear and worry can really stop us from realizing our true purpose in life; can paralyze us if we let it. Sometimes we forget just how close God really is.

Sometimes we forget that we too have received the Holy Spirit. The spirit was breathed into us when we were in our mother's womb. We are strengthened in this spirit at baptism and confirmation and that spirit is nourished in the Holy Eucharist.

- God asks us to trust in that spirit – listen and be guided by that spirit. Then to venture out in confidence and courage to bring the love and peace of Christ to others.
- Notice an important sentence in the Gospel today: “As the Father has sent me so I send you”. A call for each of us to enter into the chaos of others lives and be His healing. Bring His peace. So that we too can experience the Lord's peace.
- May the peace of the Lord be with you.