

Second Sunday of Easter is always **Divine Mercy Sunday**. God's infinite love and mercy is manifested through Jesus for mankind. Through St. Faustina, Jesus revealed his love and forgiveness for us. The greatest gift of the Risen Christ is '**Peace**'. Our society, our world needs most of all peace. 'Peace be with you' is the greeting that Jesus gives to his disciples when he comes and stands among them in today's Gospel. Earlier, in the course of his farewell address to his closest friends before his passion and death, Jesus had told them '**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you**'; but he added 'not as the world gives do I give to you'.

The peace of Christ, as he himself tells us, is not just peace as the world gives or understands it. Certainly, it should bring us serenity, mental calm - but it is something vastly greater than all that. The peace of Christ is something **alive and active**, something liberating and dynamic. **It is life, love, and joy**. It is a gift which both **calms and challenges us** - it does not grant us an immunity to pain, suffering, or even death, rather it enables us to face all these painful realities and triumph over them in union with the victory of Christ himself.

The greatest challenge for the disciples was not embracing the resurrected Lord. Nor did they deny the open commission he gave them to preach the gospel. Rather, the continuing task that Jesus set before the church was to extend his simple greeting to others: "Peace be with you, shalom" **Do we really want to pass the peace?**

There is a tradition in some remote villages of Africa, about sharing peace. Some of the remote villages had Mass only once or twice a year. The day the priest visited their village, it was the Mass day for the people. Early morning, the people would assemble to greet the priest. After a brief introduction, the priest would pluck a handful of grass and give it to the first person and ask to pass the peace during the day as they went to their fields to work. The grass had to pass from one to another during the day and in the evening, they would assemble for the Eucharist. It so happened one day the peace did not pass to everyone. There was a bitter rivalry between two persons in the village. And peace was not shared. That evening, the priest refused to celebrate the Mass because peace was not shared with everyone.

**What does it mean to pass the peace?** First and foremost, **it is a sign of forgiveness**. "if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you.... Mat. 5.26" Jesus Christ charged his people to forgive, not because it is easy -- it isn't -- but because his people are witnesses of a merciful God whose very nature is to forgive.

**Again, passing peace means**, apart from being a sign of forgiveness, **it is also a sign that, in Christ, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of one another**. When we pass the peace, we show our solidarity and support. Our gestures announce, "**In the Risen Christ, God has stood for us, so today we stand with one another.**"

**His peace leads to greater joy.** Right after Jesus said, "Peace be with you!" he did the strangest thing: he showed them the scars in his hands and side. And the disciples responded in the strangest way: they were overjoyed. Why did he leave the scars in place? Why did he show his scars to his disciples? And why were his disciples overjoyed at the sight of his scars? It is because Jesus' scars proved God's love for them . . . and for us.

There is a story by **Leslie Flynn** who tells of a small boy being raised in a small town by his grandmother. One night the house caught fire. The grandmother, trying to rescue the boy who was asleep in the bedroom upstairs, is overcome by the smoke and dies in the fire. A crowd gathers around the house and they hear a small boy crying out for help. The lower floor is a wall of flames and no one seems to know what to do. Suddenly, a man pushes through the crowd and begins climbing an iron drainage pipe which runs to the roof. The pipe is hot from the fire, but he makes it to a second-floor window. The man crawls through the window and locates the boy. With the crowd cheering encouragement, the man climbs back down the hot iron pipe with the boy on his back and his arms around his neck.

A few weeks later, a public meeting was held to determine in whose custody the boy would be placed. Each person wanting the child would be allowed to make a brief statement. The first man said, "I have a farm and would give the boy a good home. He would grow up on the farm and learn a trade." The second person to speak was the local schoolteacher. She said, "I am a school- teacher and I would see to it that he received a good education." Finally, the banker said, "I would be able to give the boy a fine home and a fine education. We would like him to come and live with us." The presiding officer looked around and asked, "Is there anyone else who would like to say anything?" From the back row, a man rose and said, "These other people may be able to offer some things I can't. All I can offer is my love." Then, he slowly removed his hands from his coat pockets. A gasp went up from the crowd because his hands were scarred terribly from climbing up and down the hot pipe. The boy recognized the man as the one who had saved his life and ran into his waiting arms. This is what Jesus did for us.

**His peace leads to greater courage.** Immediately after showing them his scars, Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. There is no way we could live the mission of Jesus with our own skills and charisma. Jesus gives us something so much more: the power of the Holy Spirit living in us. The Holy Spirit comforts us, strengthens us, teaches us the truths of God, and grows our character to be more like Jesus. The Holy Spirit in us assures us that we are never alone in our difficult times. That same Holy Spirit reminds us that God will work all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

**"Peace be with you."** Somebody may be waiting to hear those words from your lips. It might be a person in your home, at work, or among your acquaintances. Maybe it's a neighbor hurt by gossip, or a child wounded by harsh judgment, or a middle-aged executive who is tongue- tied

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about his own emotions, or the person who still waits to hear a merciful word from your lips. **Let us pass the Peace of Christ.** God Bless you All.