

Today's gospel reading from John recounts three distinct but related events: a) the appearance of the Risen Jesus to his disciples locked behind closed doors '**for fear of the Jews**'; b) Jesus' commissioning of his disciples to continue his mission of forgiveness and peace; and c), eight days later, Jesus' second appearance to his disciples, this time in the company of Thomas, who is brought to believe that Jesus is truly risen by touching the wounds in his risen body. The reading climaxes in Thomas' great acclamation of faith: '**My Lord and my God**'

Second Sunday of Easter is always **Divine Mercy Sunday**. God's infinite love and mercy is manifested through Jesus for mankind. The greatest gift of the Risen Christ is '**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. '**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. Rather, the continuing task that Jesus set before the church was to extend his simple greeting to others: "Peace be with you." Do we really want to pass the peace?

What does it mean to pass the peace? First and foremost, **it is a sign of forgiveness**. The Risen Christ came to a fearful, unbelieving disciples. His message was to set all people free. He said, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain, they are retained". 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. In fact, Peter asked Jesus, "How many times should I pass Peace? Seven times? And Jesus replied, "Not seven times but till the end of time."

His peace is greater than our doubt. When those disciples heard the voice of Jesus, they reacted in a way which may surprise us at first. We would expect them to be filled with faith and confidence in the face of this new reality, the appearance of their risen Lord. Instead, "They were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit." Jesus said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. He showed them the scars in his hands and side. Why did he leave the scars in place? Why did he show his scars to his disciples? Because we still doubt the resurrection as Thomas doubted. The scars are a proof to us God's love for them . . . and for us.

I guess all of us have some doubts sometimes. It does not mean we are being disloyal or unfaithful to God. Notice that Jesus did not scold the disciples. He simply said, "Why do you doubt? We doubt only the things which are important to us, only those things we care about deeply. In times of doubt God reaches out to us as he reached out to Thomas.

His peace is greater than defeat. God is greater than anything we face. This does not mean we will not face suffering and will not be defeated. We will face danger and we will know defeat. That is what the cross means. Jesus was defeated. But don't forget an empty tomb overcomes a cross every time. This is the great good news of Easter and the resurrection. **God is greater than anything that defeats us. God will overcome all those things and lead us beyond them.**

His peace leads to greater purpose. The peace he gave to his disciples, and he promises to us today—leads to greater purpose. And what is our purpose? To proclaim to the world the good news that Christ has come into our world. Easter isn't a one-day celebration. Easter is every day for the follower of Jesus Christ. We don't just celebrate the Resurrection, then go back to our old lives. We have seen Jesus' scars. We've been given the Holy Spirit. And we've been called to share the good news of Jesus Christ to the whole world. There are people outside these doors who need to know the joy, the peace, the courage and the purpose of Jesus Christ. And we've been equipped to share it with them. And if you ever forget that, remember Jesus' scars.

"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 the person who still waits to hear a merciful word from your lips.

Let us pass the Peace of Christ.