

Homily Easter 2nd Sunday Yr A 200419
R. Acts 2:42-47; Ps 118:2-24; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31
C. Acts 2:14a,22-32; Ps 16; 1 Peter 1:3-9; Jn 20:19-31

After the crucifixion the apostles were huddled together behind closed doors, most likely in the Upper Room where the Last Supper had been held. The doors were tightly bolted.

If we were flies on the wall where they were, we would have seen frightened men. Their Master had been put to death by the Jewish authorities and there was every possibility that they would follow the same fate.

I feel sure very few words would have been spoken. They must have listened fearfully for every step on the stairs and for every knock on the door. Each one knew how the others were feeling. They were rapt in thought. They were worried. They were praying.

They were truly sorry for being such cowards towards Jesus. When their best Friend had needed them most they had gone and let Him down. If only they could see Him now and be assured of His forgiveness. He would understand how they felt. He would forgive them. He had brought peace to so many others. They knew He would bring that same peace to them. Yes, if only He could be there with them.

Their prayers were answered for suddenly from nowhere Jesus just appeared before them. I wish we could have seen the surprise on their faces!

His first words to them were, SHALOM - "Peace be with you." This was the normal everyday eastern greeting, which meant, "May God give you every good thing."

To assure them that it was Jesus their Friend, He showed them His hands and His feet. To say they were glad was to put it mildly. They were overjoyed. Again Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you."

Then Jesus went on to give His apostles the commission which the Church must never forget. His Father had sent Him into the world and now it was His turn to send them. "As the Father has sent me, so am I sending you."

The Church from now on was to be the mouthpiece of Jesus, proclaiming His message to the world. The Church was to run His errands and do His work.

Jesus, then, breathed on His apostles and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." These words, look back to the creation of the world and humanity.

The author of Genesis wrote, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul." Gen 2.7.

Receiving the Holy Spirit is becoming *a new creation*. It is the wakening of life from the dead. These men waiting in the Upper Room were dead and now they were alive.

Jesus continued, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven. Whose sins you shall not forgive they are not forgiven." Jesus at that moment gave them the power to forgive others their sins.

What a wonderful gift Jesus was giving these men who had played their part in bringing about His death. Here He is teaching us how to forgive, from the heart, something we all find very hard.

He didn't criticise them for running away and letting him down.

Such thoughts never even entered Jesus's mind. His only thought was to assure them of His forgiveness and to build them up. The best way He knew He could do this, and for greater purposes, was to give them the power to forgive others their sins. At that moment Jesus made each of them feel ten feet tall.

Now how does all this apply to us? The three gifts that Jesus gave to His apostles are ours today.

First, Jesus wants that peace He gave to His apostles to be ours here and now.

Second, He wants us to be renewed people, the Easter people, by giving us the Holy Spirit.

Third, through the power of forgiving sins, Jesus wants us to know that whenever we need His assurance, whenever we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, His forgiveness is ours.

By God-incidence rather than coincidence, in a large part of the church, today is also declared as Divine Mercy Sunday. This stems from the visions of and revelations to a poor, humble Polish nun commonly known as sister Faustina in the 1930s. Her response and image is: ***Jesus, "I trust in You!"***

More of her words from God to us was, ***"My child, life on earth is a struggle indeed; a great struggle for my kingdom. But fear not, because you are not alone. I am always supporting you, so lean on Me as you struggle, fearing nothing"***. These are beautiful confirmations and revelations of the wideness of God's mercy.

John Paul's Word from God at his inaugural address in 1978 was and still is: ***"Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. Do not be afraid. Christ knows "what is in (us)".*** And that message from God continued throughout his ministry.

Today, then, whilst we struggle with concern about Covid 19, Jesus is with us. Jesus brings us Peace, Renewal and forgiveness in the wideness of His mercy. We only have to ***"Trust in Him!"***

May the peace of the risen Christ be ours now and forever. Amen