

Second Sunday of Easter

Divine Mercy Sunday

On the evening of that first day of the week,
when the doors were locked, where the disciples were,
for fear of the Jews,
Jesus came and stood in their midst
and said to them, "Peace be with you."
When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.
The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.
Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, so I send you."
And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,
"Receive the Holy Spirit.
Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them,
and whose sins you retain are retained."

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve,
was not with them when Jesus came.
So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord."
But he said to them,
"Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands
and put my finger into the nailmarks
and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Now a week later his disciples were again inside
and Thomas was with them.
Jesus came, although the doors were locked,
and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you."
Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands,
and bring your hand and put it into my side,
and do not be unbelieving, but believe."
Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!"
Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me?
Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples
that are not written in this book.
But these are written that you may come to believe
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,
and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

Jn 20:19-31

Did we really learn all we need to know in kindergarten? Maybe. One of the first things I learned in kindergarten was to hide my weakness. I learned to watch what I say and do, because if I did not, I was getting in trouble with my peers and the teacher. From hiding, I very quickly evolved to excuses; everything that went wrong around me had to have an explanation and none of it was my fault. The next step was even deeper. Somewhere in my teenage years, I learned the very useful skill of not looking at my sins. If I kept my attention properly controlled, I never had to confront them. After all, it wasn't my

fault anyway. The last stage was to invent “acceptable” sins. I could pretend that these sins were the only ones I had. Now I had plausible deniability about my own sinfulness. I could camouflage my sins from others, but — most importantly — I could hide them from myself. The deception was complete. Now I could feel like I live in truth without actually having to live in truth.

Life in lies, however, does not liberate. Hidden weakness and sin does not go away, it just eats me inside and twists my perception. Can there be any help when I am becoming my own worst enemy? With every sin and every deception, I increase the distance from God, from others, and from myself.

Every time I do it, Jesus enters my carefully built edifice of lies. Even through the closed doors of my heart, he enters and makes the gesture familiar from today’s Gospel: he shows me his wounds.

His vulnerability is heart-breaking. The all-mighty, all-powerful God chooses as a sign of his identity his biggest weakness: the wounds of the cross. He entered the lowest level of humanity to meet me in my real self. I don’t have to be afraid of my wounds; I can look at them, I can cry over them, and I can surrender them to him. The God of endless love shows me that all the embarrassing moments of my sinfulness, all the humiliating actions of my broken ego, he already saw and received to himself. He is already standing next to me with hope that I would freely recognize my hidden sins and that I would reject them out of love for Him. The holy God enters the lowest, darkest corners of my humanity, not to embarrass me, but to shed light on my sins so that I can see them and reject them. This is the mechanism of mercy and the way my freedom is restored.

“Thomas, touch my wounds, and do not be unbelieving.” “My Lord and my God!”

The risen Christ is victorious over death and over every form of it. He is victorious over my sins and deceptions, over my dishonesty and fear. His victory is not a threat to me; it is a lifeline thrown to me by my best Friend. For the rest of my life, he will patiently wait for me to catch that line and to let him pull me out to his Life. My Lord and my God!