

The Paper Pulpit

(Reflections from the Pastor)

2nd Sunday of Easter – 1st Eucharist Sunday - Divine Mercy Sunday

Today is Divine Mercy Sunday. May the grace, love and mercy of Jesus be with you.

Congratulations to our First Communicants as they receive our Lord in Holy Eucharist. Welcome to the table of the Lord. We welcome all family and friends who join you on this special day.

Jesus said, *"This is my body, this is my blood;"* Our Lord gives us his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist. The Eucharist is the "source and summit of Christian life." Jesus told us, *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, you will have no life in you"* (John 6). We must take the words of our Savior seriously: "if we eat His Body and drink His Blood we are worthy of heaven." This has serious implications. Some people have stopped coming to Mass or may be going to a non-Catholic Church. I have to believe they don't know what they are missing. People offer a variety of reasons for doing so. They might say the singing might not be that great, the homilies might be long or boring, or say I do not get anything out of the Mass, or there are bad priests, or I do not find Jesus or or or... The truth is every time you come to Mass you receive Jesus' Body and Blood and Jesus promised, "whoever Eats His Body and Drinks His Blood has eternal life." Let me repeat our Lord again, "whoever Eats His Body and Drinks His Blood has eternal life."

Scripture: *"On the evening of the first day of the week, even though the disciples had locked the doors where they were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood before them. Peace be with you, he said. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. At the sight of the Lord the disciples rejoice. "Peace be with you." As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Then he breathed on them and said: receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound."* Jn 20:19-31

So often we hear, "I don't need to go to confession, I can just pray to Jesus." It is true we must go to Jesus daily, but if that is all we need to do, then why did he say to the Apostles receive the Holy Spirit and give them the authority to forgive sins? Our Lord in his wisdom understood the power of the human touch and word. The authority to forgive sins has been given to the Apostles and handed down for the past two centuries through priests and bishops. Notice, our Lord says, *"As the Father has sent me, so I send you."* Sent to do what? Forgive sins. *If you forgive sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound."* Our Lord meant for this ministry to continue in the Church. As uncomfortable as confession is, it is the will of our Lord. If you missed the chance to go to confession in Lent, please know that confessions are heard each Saturday at 9:00 am (until all are heard) and by appointment.

Did you hear about the man who bought the very last seat for the Super bowl? It was a rotten seat, closer to the blimp than to the field, but early in the first quarter, he noticed an empty seat on the 50 yard line. He scrambled down and somewhat furtively sat in the seat. "Excuse me," he asked, "is anyone sitting here?" "No," said the man on his right. "That's incredible. Who in their right mind would pass up a seat like this for the Super bowl?" "Well, actually," said the man, "the seat belongs to me. I was supposed to be here with my dear wife, but she passed away. This is the first Super bowl in twenty years that we haven't been together." "How sad!" said the other fellow. "But couldn't you find someone to come with you, a relative or a close friend?" "No," said the man, "they're all at the funeral!"

That fellow was missing something - in the head and the heart - and he didn't even notice. It happens all the time. It happened to the apostles. For three years, Jesus had tried in hundreds of different ways to prepare them to face his death and not be afraid of what came next. Think of all the miracles: Raising Lazarus from the tomb, silencing the storm at sea, feeding the 5000, healing countless lepers. All that and so much more should have made them confident that Jesus was bigger than death and that death would have no final power over him. But it didn't work that way. On Easter morning, Peter and John had seen the empty tomb and Mary Magdalene had talked with Jesus nearby. But still they didn't get it. Paralyzed with fear and despairing of the future, they hid in a locked and darkened room and did absolutely nothing. And so, on Easter night, Jesus came to them and tried yet again to free them from their fears. "Here," he said, "look at my wounds. Touch them. It is I, Jesus. I'm not a ghost. I'm alive, and whoever believes in me, even though he will die, will live with me forever. So don't ever be afraid again!"

Jesus has spoken those very words to each one of us. But have we heard him in our hearts? The patterns of our lives can give us an answer: Are we serene, hopeful, and of good spirit even when our troubles come in large doses? Sometimes we are, but often we're not. So how deeply do we really believe in the Resurrection and what it promises us? What stories do our faces tell? Stories of crushed spirits or frightened hearts? Hearts untouched by our risen Lord whom we haven't dared to trust or hope in? Sometimes that's what our faces reveal. Jesus is risen, to walk with us till our journey is done and then to carry us home. If we dare to trust him, every day of our journey can be a happy one - no matter how rocky the road. That's the wonderful life God wants for us here and now. So why not tell your face and your heart!

Retreat: I will be leaving today after Mass for the annual priest's retreat. I will be joining many of my brother priests at the St. Anthony's Retreat Center in Marathon City for our annual diocesan priest's retreat. Did you know that retreats are so critical that Church laws mandates every priest make at least one retreat each year? In addition to the retreat next week, I also take two short (3-4 day) retreats each year. One retreat is with my priest support group (July) and the second is a silent retreat in October. Please keep me in your prayers and know you are in mine.

Thank you: To all who were involved in planning and setting up for the sacred liturgies for the Lenten and Easter Season. A special thank you to the choir who sang so beautifully, the liturgical ministers and the Art and Environment Committee Members who decorated the church. In fear of leaving someone out, I wish to thank all those who helped in any way to make our Lent and Easter Masses and liturgies so beautiful.

Sincerely in Christ, Fr. Jim Trempe