

Fr. Rudy's Reflections

The Second Sunday of Easter/Divine Mercy Sunday

April 7, 2024

Peace Be with You

My Sisters and Brothers in the Risen Lord,

Often life does not turn out as planned, and sometimes it may even cause you to suffer a tremendous setback or unforeseen sorrows. Psychologists define this as an emotional/psychological trauma, and as human beings, its aftereffects can be devastating. These feelings can leave one struggling with fears, doubts, anxiety, and a disconnection from the world. Perhaps the perfect representation is the feeling of being locked in a dark room with no clue as to how to move in a forward direction and become part of the world once again.

It is the Second Sunday of Easter, also known as Divine Mercy Sunday. Every year on this occasion, we read a passage from the Gospel of John (20: 19-31) because it is one of the most celebrated accounts of Jesus's appearances to his disciples following his death and resurrection. Our excerpt today describes in poignant, symbolic terms what it means to be a Christian and how faith can move mountains in this sad and lonely world. It is especially fitting to hear these words in the week following Easter as we wind down from celebrations and return to more ordinary activities. Yes, give thanks to the Lord, for God is with us, offering love, peace, and guidance everlasting.

Today we find the apostles cowering behind locked doors in the aftermath of Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus enters the room bringing with him a profound sense of peace and its beautiful expression—*Shalom*. His presence immediately transforms their fear and doubt into joy, and reminds us that through his resurrection, mankind has been recreated from darkness and chaos into light, reminiscent of the creation story in Genesis. The locked door opens, peace and joy enter the room, and Jesus breathes onto them the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus's message is clear and concise—go forth to all people in his name. Yes, Christianity begins in this once locked, fearful room, and through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, our fears, doubts, and the darkness of this wounded world can find refuge. Only Jesus can bring light to the dark places and compassion to our locked hearts.

Another powerful concept in this Gospel concerns the apostle Thomas, who is a symbolic representation of the human tendency to doubt when faced with uncertainty. Through Thomas, John teaches us that we must try to pay attention to the glimmers as well as moments of clarity of his presence in our lives—especially in difficult moments. We must remember Jesus is with us always to help guide the way. Light versus darkness—it's a choice we all must make. And "blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" and proclaim, "My Lord and my God!"

"We do not pretend that life is all beauty. We are aware of darkness and sin, of poverty and pain. But we know Jesus has conquered sin and passed through his own pain to the glory of the Resurrection. . . We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song! We are not looking for a shallow joy but rather a joy that comes from faith, that grows through unselfish love. . ."—Pope John Paul, 1986

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy