

Second Sunday of Easter 4-28-19
Divine Mercy Sunday
Acts 4:32-35, 1John 5:1-6, John 20:19-31

Jesus came and stood in the midst of his disciples even when the doors were tightly shut and said 'Peace be with you'...he breathed on them saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit", 'whose sin you forgive they are forgiven and whose sin you retain they are retained'.

The episode of Christ breathing on the Apostles recalls the story of the creation of man in the book of Genesis (2:7) where the Lord God breathed the breath of life into man enabling him, as it were, to become a living soul. Having been molded from the dust of the earth and lying lifeless, Adam was so incapable of any living activity. What made the difference was God's breath that gave him life and committed him to the destiny of goodness. When later such destiny was destroyed through disobedience, God would send his only begotten Son, our Savior Jesus Christ to the world on a mission of redemption; to return man to his original destiny of salvation and to restore his capacity to be good.

Jesus had declared that he would pull down the temple and raise it up on the third day referring to his passion (John 2:19). That temple was his own body, which he gave up on the cross. That body represented the whole of humanity that comes to faith in him. Jesus by his death and resurrection pulled down sinful humanity, dead in sin with no capacity to reach salvation, transforming it into a new life that could exude the attributes of God. This was to commission to become what they have received, namely, agents of God's mercy. With that breath, Jesus gives life to his Church and all its members.

As agents of mercy, the Church must announce the mercy of God, the only source of hope for humanity. Mercy is the tool for constructing true communities of love and peace as we read about in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles. It is that quality to 'suffer with' and to empathize, to feel for the other person and to be involved in a certain manner for someone's wellbeing and redemption. So who is the other person? and who stands in need of my compassion? Matt 25: 31-46 identifies the least of Jesus' brothers and sisters. It does not exclude your very immediate family too.

Let's imagine for a moment, families where mercy does not exist. How would the members feel and behave? And yet society today has countless examples of people who unfortunately grew up in homes where there was no mercy at all. Imagine for yet another moment, a Church deprived of mercy, how could it be a community of faith? Mercy is the mission of the resurrection; it is a commission of the risen Lord. Pope Francis says we all need just a little bit of mercy to make the world a wonderful place. What can we do today to live this mission of mercy in our families, society and Church?

Fr. Francis