

2nd Sunday of Easter (A)
(Acts 2:42-47 / John 20:19-31)
27.04.2014

Divine Mercy Sunday **Canonisation of SS John XXIII and John Paul II**

We continue to welcome the good news of the Resurrection of Jesus-Christ. In today's gospel we read: "In the evening of **the first day of the week**, – that is Sunday – the disciples were gathered together, and Jesus came and stood among them... **Eight days later**, – that is the following Sunday – the disciples were gathered together once again and Jesus came and stood among them". The message is clear: A major place and time to experience the presence of the Risen Lord is our celebration of Sunday Eucharist. Here week after week, the community of believers gathers together to remember the mystery of the Lord's passion, death and resurrection. Obviously the Risen Lord is with us everywhere and always, just as he promised, but he is with us in a very special way during our Sunday Eucharist.

Usually there is a **communal dimension** to the Risen Lord's manifestations. He manifests himself to the community and through the community to each one of us as members of the community. Most of the time, the experience of the Risen Lord is not 'the Risen Lord and me', but 'the Risen Lord, the community and me as a member of the community'.

The message of the Risen Lord is '**peace**', a peace that the world cannot give, a peace that we cannot give to ourselves, a peace that is a gift of the Risen Lord, from the Risen Lord crucified and raised from the dead. We see in the gospels that the Risen Lord still bears the wounds of his crucifixion. We remember how on Calvary – from pierced Christ's side – flowed blood and water. The blood recalls the sacrifice of the Cross and the gift of the Eucharist; the water, in Johannine symbolism, represents not only baptism but also the gift of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins. So the Risen Lord's gift of peace is the fruit of the forgiveness of our sins, a gift which delivers us from guilt, shame and slavery of every kind. His peace is the fruit of the promise of a share in his resurrection which delivers us from the fear of death, death which is only a passage way to fullness of life, death which is in fact a new birth.

The peace we receive from the Risen Lord is nothing other than the fruit of God's mercy gushing forth from the open side of our crucified Lord on the Cross. This mercy is at the heart of today's gospel. So, it is not surprising that John Paul the Second, who is canonised at this very hour in Rome, asked in the year 2000 that from now this Second Sunday of Easter should be called **Divine Mercy Sunday**".

From the beginning of the Incarnation, the mystery of the Mercy of God was already at work. Each morning, in the Benedictus – the Canticum of Zachary – we sing: "The loving kindness of the heart of our God has come to visit us like the dawn from on high". In the original Greek text, we don't read: 'the loving kindness of the heart of our God', but "**the**

bowels of mercy of our God". God is described here like a mother whose womb is mercy. His love for us is as strong as the love of a mother for her children. Each page of the gospel is about the mercy of God who takes care of all our needs, forgives the repentant sinner and delivers the believer from the fear of death. The incarnation, from beginning to end, is a manifestation of the mercy of God. So today it is fitting to sing with the psalmist: "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his mercy endures for ever". This is what we sing so often at the end of our weekly Eucharist: "Misericordias Domini, in aeternum cantabo": The mercy of the Lord I will sing for ever".

As we welcome God's mercy for us, like the disciples we are **sent** to bear witness to the mercy of God all around us. How could we bear witness to the mercy of God if not by reflecting it by our own merciful love for our brothers and sisters in humanity, by our desire to serve and forgive? God's love for us and our love for God are inseparable from our love for our brothers and sisters in humanity. To quote the new saint, Saint John Paul II, "It is not easy to love with a deep love, which lies in the authentic gift of self. This love can only be learned by penetrating the mystery of God's love. Looking at him, being one with his fatherly heart, we are able to look with new eyes at our brothers and sisters, with an attitude of unselfishness and solidarity, of generosity and forgiveness. All this is mercy!"

The gift of peace offered to us by the Risen Lord in the liturgy of this second Sunday of Easter, to use a word of the other new saint of today, Pope John the XXIII, is nothing other than "the balm" of mercy which we are invited to welcome with its healing power and to share with one another.