

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Apr 3rd 2016

When, after His resurrection, Christ entered the Upper Room, He might have said to His disciples: "Where were you? Why did you abandon me when I was laying down my life for you?" But He did not. Rather, He said, "Peace I leave with you, My Peace I give to you." With these words He forgave their infidelity, dispelled their fears, healed their broken hearts, and shared with them His own joy. In short, the Lord blessed them with Divine Mercy. Pope Francis has this to say about Divine Mercy:

It restores hope to those who feel overwhelmed by the burden of sin. The mercy of God is present in our love for those we forgive and those we care for when they suffer: It is a love which is greater than any evil and greater than death itself. "Father, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." "You take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us." And give us the grace to ourselves have mercy on others, especially on those we find it hardest to forgive and most needing to be healed.

The two means Pope Francis underlines for becoming instruments of Divine Mercy are to forgive and to heal. And, he says, to be disposed to do so is to be a channel of Christ's Peace.

Today is Mercy Sunday of our 2016 Year of Mercy, promulgated by Pope Francis. The mission the Church entrusts to us during this year is to be a sign and instrument of the Father's Mercy and Christ's Peace. For this reason, our Holy Year is meant to keep alive the desire to recognize and welcome the numerous signs of the tenderness which God offers to the whole world and, above all, to those who suffer greatly, who are alone and abandoned, and who are without hope of being pardoned or feeling the Father's love.

Faced with the tragic events of terrorism in our world today, along with the immense strain on our poor, frustration of our marginalized, and suffering in our victims of injustice, we can feel helpless and crushed. Understandably we may ask ourselves, "Why?" The perpetration of all this evil and the pain of its victims appear insurmountable. And so we may also ask: "How can we adequately deal with this evil and the pain it causes?" For us on our own it is impossible. Only God can bring us what we need: Divine Mercy and Peace. It is Jesus who died on the Cross, rose on the third day, and visited the upper room to be with His beloved disciples who delivers to them the fullness of Mercy and Peace to enjoy and to share with others. He delivers these gifts to us today, throughout the year, and for the rest of our lives.

The great St. Francis (after whom our Pope is named) wrote perhaps the truest and most beautiful

expression of the link between Mercy and Peace in his famous prayer:

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life."

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