

Divine Mercy Sunday Homily (based upon John 20:19-31)

- If you look up the definition of the word Mercy, this is one of the definitions you will find: The willingness to enter into the chaos of someone's life. Divine mercy then could be defined as "the Divine" (Jesus) willingly entering into the chaos of our lives. Into the worries, fear, anxieties, stress, illness, and guilt – whatever Chaos is there.
- We see Divine Mercy in action in today's Gospel reading. The lives of those first disciples are in chaos. We find them locked in a room mourning the loss of Jesus; fearing for their own lives, feeling guilty for letting Jesus down when He needed them most.
- So into that room, through locked doors (because nothing can keep God from us) and into those lives filled with chaos comes the risen Christ to tell them "Peace be with you". It's ok. Don't be afraid. Don't worry. I am here with you. I forgive you and I love you.
- Jesus knew those disciples (and all of us) needed an enduring gift, a permanent change in order to leave that room and that chaos and to live as his followers in the world. So He gave them that change. He breathe on them and gave them the Holy Spirit, an enduring spirit that would always be there to guide them.
- So what lessons can we take with us from our Gospel on this Divine Mercy Sunday? I'd offer two.
- First, we have a merciful, forgiving God. Most people in that locked room denied knowing Jesus, ran away in fear after Jesus' arrest. There was a lot of guilt in that

room when Jesus entered. But Jesus offered forgiveness: “Peace be with you.” Don’t worry, don’t be stuck in guilt, I love you and I forgive you.

- Lets look at what they did with Jesus’ offer of forgiveness. First consider Judas was not in the room. Judas, the betrayer of Jesus, was so filled with guilt he couldn’t forgive himself and couldn’t believe God was so loving that God could forgive him. So he took his own life.
- On the other hand, Peter, who denied Jesus three times, accepted Jesus’ offer of forgiveness. Peter trusted in God’s love and mercy. Trusted God could and would forgive him, so Peter took the offer. So did the others in that room. Our first reading tells us great things happened after they accepted Jesus’ forgiveness. They became church. They taught about Jesus, lived together in community, took care of each other, received Eucharist together – grew strong. It all started by accepting Forgiveness.
- And let’s not forget Thomas, who wasn’t in the room when Jesus first appeared. Thomas accepted Jesus’ forgiveness; it just took a little longer. I think to teach us doubt is a part of being human (especially when we hurt). To teach us it is ok to question, it is ok to want to understand. But it is not ok to be closed minded, not ok to lack faith.
- As Jesus tells Thomas: Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed. In other words, happy are we who have not seen Jesus with our eyes. But have seen Him in our hearts and follow His teachings, especially about forgiveness. Divine Mercy Sunday reminds us - God is patient, forgiving and there to help us be better people. And to also remind us once we receive God’s mercy we are obliged to *be* merciful.

- The second lesson to take with us today is God doesn't want us to live fearful, frustrated, stressed out lives. God wants us to trust.
- Many of us, at one time or another in our lives, have huddled in a locked room, like those apostles did, full of fear and worry about what will happen next. In fact isn't that sort of what we are experiencing in our world today. Isn't that how we spent much of the past pandemic year?
- Fear and worry can really stop us from realizing our true purpose in life; can paralyze us if we let it. Sometimes we forget just how close God really is. Sometimes we forget we too have received the Holy Spirit. The spirit was breathed into us when we were in our mother's womb. We are strengthened in this spirit at baptism and confirmation and that spirit is nourished in the Holy Eucharist.
- God asks us to trust in that spirit – listen and be guided by that spirit. Then to venture out in confidence and courage to bring the love of Christ to others. Even if it involves putting on a protective mask.
- Notice an important sentence in the Gospel today: As the Father has sent me so I send you". A call to enter into the Chaos of others lives and be His healing.