

## **Second Sunday of Easter C2025**

The scene of Good Friday and the reaction of the disciples are still fresh in our memories. As our Lord was arrested and crucified, the disciples were nowhere to be seen. While Judas betrayed him, Peter denied him and all the rest ran away.

As it can happen with anyone of us when we have done something we deeply regret, they were full of remorse. In their collective shame for having failed such a good friend, they were gathered together in a room for fear of the Jews. Suddenly, out of nowhere, while the doors were locked, our Lord appeared in their midst with all the marks of his crucifixion and, two times, he wished them peace.

Without any reproach or reprimand, he reassured them. It was as though he was telling them: "I know you very well; I know you are individually a wonderful person, but because of the circumstances surrounding my Passion, you could not make it; I forgive you. I still trust you and I fortify you with the Holy Spirit and peace."

"Trust" and "Forgiveness", these are the main points of today's Gospel. What would be life without trust? The problem of trust is at the heart of our life as individuals and society. Without a minimum of trust, life becomes impossible, because we will be suspicious toward one another: the wife goes shopping, you lose your tranquility of heart; the husband travels for reason of work, you lose the sleep.

Faith is, above all, trust in God. When we say that we believe in God, we say nothing more than we trust in God. Such trust is not based on some empirical proof we have about God, but rather on the testimony of those who have been with our Lord from his beginning until his last day. It is that testimony the apostles have transmitted to us so that by believing it, we may have eternal life. That is the reason why Jesus says that "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed".

Then, we understand why our Lord reproaches Thomas his doubt: "Do not be unbelieving, but believe". In other words, what our Lord wants to tell him is that he should have trusted the testimony of his friends who told him that he was alive. After all, faith cannot be based on what one sees. The French writer Anthony of St Exupery reminds us that "What is essential is invisible to the eyes; one sees well only with the heart." One of the problems we face today as a society and individual is that of giving eyes to our hearts so that we may see beyond our human senses.

Why cannot we demand proof before believing? Because proof does not generate faith in someone; on the contrary trust does. For instance, at the time of our Lord, many people had seen his miracles, but only a few people believed in him. For those who did not trust him, they said that it was through the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that he was performing the miracles. What is important is not to "see" or "touch", as Thomas was suggesting, but rather the interior attitude of openness of heart that allows God to touch us and dwell in us.

The sacrament of confession we practice in the Church operates on that register of trust. The more we trust our Lord and his word, the easier the confession will appear to us. The more we doubt about the relevance of our Lord's words, the more difficult the confession will be.

For sure, I am not minimizing the psychological difficulties some people have with this sacrament. I am also not playing down the fear some have to open up to a priest, because they think that it will destroy the image he has about them. In the same way, I am not down playing the grievance some still have following the priests' scandal.

What I want to say is that the sacrament of confession is above all a work of the Holy Spirit who operates within it to bring peace to the brokenhearted and purification to the souls. That there had been failure in the Church, that is true. But, it does not destroy the value of the sacrament as left to us by our Lord himself.

Our Lord would not have left us this sacrament, if it were not necessary. We have to make a distinction between our emotion and the need of accountability before God. If we take our Lord's words seriously, we have to take the sacrament of confession seriously. That is why it is more important to care about what God thinks of us than just about what people think of us, even if it is a priest.

"Receive the Holy spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained", says our Lord. This is a ministry and a sacrament left to the Church, exercised in the name of our Lord by the priests. When the sacrament of confession is practiced with sincerity of heart and confidence in the Holy Spirit, it brings us the interior healing we really need. This Sunday of the Divine Mercy reminds us that Jesus loves us and wants to forgive us our sins. Let us not miss such an opportunity to make peace with him.

Remember that Christ is present, in an invisible way, in any sacrament as he is now in our midst. Anytime we gather in his name, he is present. Today the invisible presence of Jesus is manifested anytime we, as Christians, prolong the gestures of Jesus by taking care of the poor and the needy. This is what the disciples did, as we heard in the first reading. Our testimony to the resurrection of Jesus has to be done not only in words and speech, but also in deeds of solidarity and sharing with the needy.

Let us pray that on this Sunday of divine mercy, our Lord may help us to be aware of his presence in the sacrament. May he heal us in body and soul! Amen!

**Acts 5: 12-16; Revelations 1: 9-11a, 12-13, 17-19; John 20: 19-31**



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