

## **Second Sunday of Easter of Divine Merci A2026**

“Peace be with You”! These are the words the Risen Christ addressed to his disciples when he appeared to them for the first time. These words have been pronounced over the centuries by consecrated and lay people, sovereigns and politicians, men and women fond of peace and concord between people and nations. Pope Leo XIV pronounced them very recently as he introduced himself to the Catholic people for the first time.

Our Lord spoke these words to his disciples while they were hiding for fear of the Jews who were persecuting them after his crucifixion. In this context, it was a message of reconciliation and forgiveness, reassuring them that he was not upset with them for deserting him, that now their past was less important than the future he wanted to build with them.

The peace our Lord is talking about is not only social peace, the absence of conflict and the nonappearance of battle, but above the peace of heart which is impossible if people are not reconciled with themselves, with their fellows and with God. I will never forget this sentence I read somewhere: “Each one of us is a battlefield. If you do not win the battle within yourself, you will never bring peace to others”, because without an inward peace it is impossible to have an outward peace.

Then, we understand why the first gift the risen Lord gives to his disciple is the Holy Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit reigns, there reigns peace. It is our Lord’s deepest desire that we live in peace and reconcile with one another through the power of his Spirit. Peace is the sign of the presence of God because God is peace. Peace contributes to the unity of mind and heart; it defines us as disciples of Jesus.

Many factors in the world and even within us contribute to the absence of peace. Violence threatens understanding among people and concord between one another. Envy and jalousie feed on violence. Our effort to live together as disciples of Jesus is often dominated by unspoken discriminatory feelings and racial sentiments. Hatred and the spirit of vengeance prevent forgiveness toward one another, etc.

All these things are an expression of the sin that is in the world, in our hearts and in our lives. Unless we get rid of this spiritual cancer and convert to the Spirit of Jesus, we will never have peace.

Thus, it becomes understandable why our Lord in today’s Gospel gives authority to his apostles to forgive sins. By doing so, our Lord institutes the sacrament of reconciliation, so vital for the purification of the Church and our inner peace. By doing so, our Lord gives to the apostles a ministry of reconciliation to be exercised on his behalf for the good of the whole Church. As St Paul says, “We are the ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5: 20).

To better understand how this sacrament, as well as all other sacraments of the Church, functions we need faith. Faith is understood here not as not knowledge of the things of God, but rather as trust in our Lord and his word. That is what St Peter would like to stimulate in us when he says, “Although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him ...” (1 Peter 1: 9). In other words, St

Peter wants us to understand that faith is belief without proof and trusting without reservation.

For sure, faith is not opposed to arguments or proof. The problem is that, in its nature, faith reposes above all on the confidence we have to give to Jesus and his word. After all, proof deals with material things; while trust belongs to the order of confidence. Trust is justified only on the basis of the conviction that I am not wrong by trusting the word of the testimony given to me.

That type of faith is exactly what Thomas was lacking. In fact, Thomas wanted to see with his own eyes and have the proof of our Lord's resurrection before believing it. He did not trust the testimony of his friends who told him that they have seen the risen Christ. In other words, for Thomas, faith should be proven by facts in order to be credible and acceptable. That is the reason why he did not believe the testimony the other apostles gave him.

And yet, the resurrection of Jesus, which is the foundation of our faith, does not belong to the domain of proof, as people would do with scientific facts. It has to be approached from within, in faith, and trust that God, who is faithful to himself, could not leave Jesus in the tomb forever. That is why the reproach of Jesus to Thomas, "do not be unbelieving, but believe", is an indication that faith is, first of all, a matter of trust in our Lord's word and in the witness of those who have been his followers from the beginning.

We need that type of faith today more than ever. In this Sunday of Divine Mercy, let us come before the Lord, who is merciful and compassionate, with the assurance of faith that when we confess our sins, he forgives us. Let us ask him to give us the courage to recognize our sins and to reconcile with him and with our brothers and sisters. May God bless you all in this Easter season with the gifts of his Holy Spirit for your growth and the growth of our Church! Amen.

**Acts 2: 42-47; 1 Peter 1: 3-9; John 20: 19-31**



Homily Date: April 12, 2026  
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Document Name: 20260412homily