

**GOSPEL***John 20:19-31*

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you.

'As the Father sent me,  
so am I sending you.'

After saying this he breathed on them and said:

'Receive the Holy Spirit.  
For those whose sins you forgive,  
they are forgiven;  
for those whose sins you retain,  
they are retained.'

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, 'We have seen the Lord,' he answered, 'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.' Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.' Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him:

'You believe because you can see me.  
Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'

There were many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.

**A REFLECTION BY POPE BENEDICT XVI***11 April 2010*

This Sunday concludes the Octave of Easter. It is a unique day "made by the Lord", distinguished by the outstanding event of the Resurrection and the joy of the disciples at seeing Jesus. Since antiquity this Sunday has been called in albis from the Latin name, alba, which was given to the white vestments the neophytes put on for their Baptism on Easter night and took off eight days later, that is, today. Venerable John Paul II entitled this same Sunday "Divine Mercy Sunday" on the occasion of the canonization of Sr Mary Faustina Kowalska on 30 April 2000.

The Gospel passage from St John (20: 19-31) is full of mercy and divine goodness. It recounts that after the Resurrection Jesus visited his disciples, passing through the closed doors of the Upper Room. St Augustine explains that "the shutting of doors presented no obstacle to the matter of that body, wherein the Godhead resided. He indeed could enter without their being opened, by whose birth the virginity of his mother remained inviolate" (In ev. Jo. 121, 4: CCL 36/7, 667); and St Gregory the Great added that after his Resurrection the Redeemer appeared with a Body by its nature incorruptible and tangible, but in a state of glory (cf. Hom. in Evang. 21, 1: CCL 141, 219). Jesus showed the signs of his Passion even to the point of allowing Doubting Thomas to touch him; but how can a disciple possibly doubt? Actually God's indulgence enables us to profit even from Thomas' disbelief, as well as from the believing disciples. Indeed, in touching the Lord's wounds, the hesitant disciple not only heals his own diffidence (shyness, lacking self-confidence) but also ours.

The visit of the Risen One is not limited to the space of the Upper Room but goes beyond it, to the point that all can receive the gift of peace and life with the "creative Breath". In fact Jesus said twice to his disciples, "Peace be with you". And he added, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you". Having said this he breathed on them, saying "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven;

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if you retain the sins of any, they are retained". This is the mission of the Church, eternally assisted by the Paraclete: to bear the Good News, the joyful reality of God's merciful love, in order, as St John says, "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20: 31).

In the light of these words I encourage all, Pastors in particular, to follow the example of the holy Curé d'Ars (St John Vianney), who "in his time... was able to transform the hearts and the lives of so many people because he enabled them to experience the Lord's merciful love. Our own time urgently needs a similar proclamation and witness to the truth of Love" (Letter inaugurating the Year for Priests, 16 June 2009). In this way we shall make increasingly familiar and close the One whom our eyes have not seen but of whose infinite Mercy we are absolutely certain. Let us ask the Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, to sustain the Church's mission and invoke her exulting with joy: Regina Caeli....

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



**Head:** Pope Benedict asks us, "how can a disciple possibly doubt?" Do you experience doubt? Has your doubt ever led to deeper faith? If so, in what ways?



**Heart:** What would you see as "obstacles" in your heart to letting Jesus come in?



**Hands:** Consider praying the Divine Mercy together as a special way of honouring Divine Mercy Sunday.

## PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.