

## SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER - Divine Mercy Sunday

Acts 4:32-35; 1 Jn. 5:1-6; Jn. 20:19-31

*Excerpts from Pope Francis - Homily – 8 April 2018*

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7 April 2024

In today's Gospel, we hear, over and over, the word "see". The disciples rejoiced when they *saw* the Lord (Jn 20:20). They tell Thomas: "We have *seen* the Lord" (v. 25). But the Gospel does not describe *how* they saw him; it does not describe the risen Jesus. It simply mentions one detail: "He showed them his hands and his side" (v. 20). It is as if the Gospel wants to tell us *that* is how the disciples recognized Jesus: through his wounds. The same thing happened to Thomas. He too wanted to *see* "the mark of the nails in his hands" (v. 25), and after *seeing*, he believed (v. 27). Despite his lack of faith, we should be grateful to Thomas, because he was not content to hear from others that Jesus was alive, or merely to see him in the flesh. He wanted to *see inside*, to touch with his hand the Lord's wounds, the signs of his love.

For us too, it isn't enough to know that God exists. A God who is risen but remains distant does not fill our lives. No, we too need to "see God", to touch him with our hands and to know that he is risen and risen for us. How can we see him? Like the disciples: through his wounds. Gazing upon those wounds, the disciples understood the depth of his love. They understood that he had forgiven them, even though some had denied him and abandoned him. To enter into Jesus' wounds is to contemplate the boundless love flowing from his heart. This is the way. It is to realize that his heart beats for me, for you, for each one of us.

Thomas, after seeing the Lord's wounds, cried out: "My Lord and my God!" (v. 28). Let us reflect on the adjective that Thomas repeats: *my*. It is a possessive adjective. When we think about it, it might seem inappropriate to use it for God. How can God be *mine*? How can I make the Almighty *mine*? The truth is, by saying *my*, we do not profane God, but honour his mercy. Because God wished to "become ours". We can say: "You became man *for me*, you died and rose *for me*; you are *my God*, you are *my life*. God takes no offence at being "ours". Didn't God say: "I am the Lord *your God*" (Ex 20:2), From the depths of Thomas's heart comes the reply: "*My Lord and my God!*"

As today we enter, through Christ's wounds, into the mystery of God, we come to realize that mercy is not simply one of his qualities among others, but the very beating of his heart. How can we touch today with our hand the mercy of Jesus? Again, the Gospel offers a clue, when it stresses that the very evening of Easter (cf. v. 19), soon after rising from the dead, Jesus begins by granting the Holy Spirit *for the forgiveness of sins*.

However, we are tempted to do what the disciples did in the Gospel: to barricade ourselves behind closed doors. They did it out of fear, yet we too can be afraid, ashamed to open our hearts and confess our sins. May the Lord grant us the grace to understand *shame*, to see it not as a closed door, but as the first step towards an encounter. When we feel ashamed, we should be grateful: this means that we do not accept evil, and that is good. Shame is a secret invitation of the soul that needs the Lord to overcome evil. The tragedy is when we are no longer ashamed of anything. Let us not be afraid to experience shame! Let us pass from shame to forgiveness!

But there is still one door that remains closed before the Lord's forgiveness, the door of *resignation*. Resignation is always a closed door. The disciples experienced it at Easter, when they recognized with disappointment how everything appeared to go back to what it had been before. They were still in Jerusalem, disheartened; the "Jesus chapter" of their lives seemed finished, and after having spent so much time with him, nothing had changed, they were resigned.

We too might think: "I've been a Christian for all this time, but nothing has changed in me; I keep committing the same sins". Then, in discouragement, we give up on mercy. But the Lord challenges us: "Don't you believe that my mercy is greater than your misery?"

After the shame and resignation, there is another closed door. Sometimes it is even ironclad: *our sin*, the same sin. When I commit a grave sin, if I, in all honesty, can not forgive myself, why should God forgive me? This door, however, is only closed on one side, our own; but for God, no door is ever closed. As the Gospel tells us, through "lock doors... Jesus came and stood among them". God never abandon us; we are the ones who keep him out. We discover that the very sin that kept us apart from the Lord becomes the place where we encounter him. Yes, God who is wounded, comes to meet our wounds. There is a transformation, because of his mercy.

Let us today, like Thomas, implore the grace to acknowledge our God: to find in his forgiveness our joy, and to find in his mercy our hope.