

Second Sunday of Easter “A” Cycle April 23, 2017

Happy Easter! Even though retailers have moved on to the next holiday, this greeting is quite appropriate since the Church celebrates Jesus’ Resurrection for fifty days, or a week of weeks. Easter is also celebrated solemnly for an octave or eight days. Today is the Octave Day of Easter, the eighth day. Today is also called the Sunday of Divine Mercy, because the Gospels, especially Saint John’s Gospel proclaimed today, give an account of Jesus’ gift of merciful forgiveness to his fearful disciples and empowers them to share this mercy.

As one of the great fathers of the Church, Saint Augustine proclaimed in the 5th century: “we are an Easter people and alleluia is our song!” We are here together in Church because Jesus Christ rose from the dead and promised that all who would put their faith in him and live according to his teachings would also enjoy an Easter of eternal life.

The Gospel tells the story of Thomas, to whom Jesus showed mercy despite Thomas’ initial refusal to believe the other disciples’ testimony that Jesus had risen from the dead and appeared to them. This incident gives Jesus the opportunity to bless all who have come to accept him as the risen Savior who have not physically seen him. This blessing of Jesus includes us who have come to believe in him not by seeing but by hearing his message from the testimony of a long line of disciples down through the centuries, many of whom gave their lives for their faith in Jesus as our risen Lord and Savior.

Believing in Jesus means that we strive to live as did the first disciples, as described by St. Luke in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles. Luke mentions several components of living as faithful disciples of Jesus:

- 1) listening and accepting the teachings of the apostles about Jesus which we find in the Scriptures and in the tradition of the Church community**
- 2) being nourished by the Eucharistic bread broken and shared**
- 3) heartfelt prayer**
- 4) and charitably sharing material blessings as a community of faith.**

Some find that they are able to better observe one or another of these components, such as regular prayer or coming to Mass more than just on Sundays, engaging daily even for a few minutes in personal prayer, or spiritual reading, or serving in parish ministries or community service groups.

May I suggest sharing material blessing, especially by bringing non-perishable canned food and dropping it in the basket in the Church vestibule. The “Aid For Friends Food and Friendship” program is always in need of home cooked frozen meals for distribution to the needy especially the elderly. They also welcome volunteer visitors and transporters.

As we continue to rejoice in this glorious Easter season, may we continue to be uplifted by the Lord’s offer of mercy and promise of eternal life. Let us continue to sing and live our Alleluia’s for we are indeed an Easter people!