

**SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (SUNDAY OF DIVINE MERCY)    APRIL 7<sup>TH</sup>, 2024**

**THEME: "PEACE."**

Today's scripture passage, we know the story well. The disciples, after Jesus' execution, find themselves sort of "hiding out" in a room **with the doors locked**. They were a little worried that their association with Jesus might put them in danger. Their friend had been executed as a criminal, and I'm sure they worried that the same fate might befall them. Jesus comes to them, despite the locked doors and despite their fears, and says to them not once but **three** times, "**Peace be with you.**"

And the disciples, instead of saying we don't want any part of this anymore, rejoice at his presence and begin to **experience a Peace they hadn't felt in a long time.**

They were overjoyed that Jesus was alive and in their midst. Jesus offered them forgiveness from which flowed unbelievable **Peace.**

The disciples came to understand that his **Mercy** was infinite. That is why Pope John II called today, "**Divine Mercy Sunday.**"

**No sooner does He bestow Peace** upon them, but He says, "**As the Father has sent me, so I send you.**" In other words, go forth and bring my **Peace** to the world.

One of the greatest destroyers of **Peace** is an unforgiving heart. There is no **Peace** in the heart until we are reconciled to God and one another. That is why the first step to having **Peace** in our hearts is to seek God's **Mercy** for ourselves and to have a forgiving heart toward all others.

In a particular way, during this Easter season we celebrate Jesus' victory, over death. But that also means that we are celebrating **Peace triumphing over fear.** A Peace that only God can give. A fearful person is a person who is allowing himself or herself to be held back, to be "**locked**" **within the walls of his or her own concerns and wants.**

Maybe you feel that you are in that fearful place, feeling that **life has just been too difficult**, too challenging, too disappointing, or too uncertain. The disciples felt a similar way. I know that at times, I feel exactly the same.

And yet, if we sincerely desire to encounter the Lord, to know of his presence, and to follow his will for us, **no barrier we put up will be strong enough to stop him** from standing in our midst and showering upon us a **Peace** greater than anything we can imagine.

St. John, in today's Second Reading, tells us, "**...the victory that conquers the world is our faith.**"

So, let us learn something from the disciples, and allow our faith in Jesus dispel our fears and set us on a path to a rich, full, meaningful, **God - center life.**