FR. GARY'S CORNER

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Today, the Second Sunday of Easter, has been designated Divine Mercy Sunday. Its history is connected with the private revelations made to a Polish nun, St. Faustina Kowalska, in the 1930s and made part of the Church's liturgical calendar by St. Pope John Paul II in 2000.

It seems amazingly fitting that it should be celebrated so soon after Easter, for Easter is all about God's mercy and God's desire to forgive and redeem. Jesus' mission, the whole reason for the Incarnation, was to carry out the saving plan of His Father, so that our sins could be forgiven.

In the Gospel reading for today, we see Jesus appearing to his apostles for the first time after the resurrection. You can imagine what might have been going through the minds of Peter and the other apostles when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst, even though the doors were locked. After all, Peter and the others had abandoned Jesus at His greatest hour of need. Peter denied him three times.

But Jesus' first words are not of condemnation or reproach, but of peace. He says, "shalom," peace. Jesus says to the eleven, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Then, Jesus breathed on them and said, "receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

Why did the Father send Jesus? So that our sins could be forgiven through the merits of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. His mission was to die for our sins. He went on to defeat death and rise to new life, affording us the same destiny if we hold fast to Him.

At the first appearance to His apostles on the day of the Resurrection, Jesus commissions them, His first priests, to continue His work of forgiving sins. He delegates them to carry out the mission for which He was sent – so that sins could be forgiven. Even to this day, by the power of the Holy Spirit, bishops and priests continue the ministry of Jesus by reconciling sinners to God in His name.

Yes indeed, how fitting that Divine Mercy Sunday follow Easter Sunday, for God has given us this time of mercy. It is time to embrace the mercy God offers and to share that mercy with all whom we encounter. Happy Easter!

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life,

Fr. Gary