

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, MUMBLES

Reflection for

Second Sunday of Eastertide (Divine Mercy Sunday), 19 April 2020

(May be used for Home Prayer Service)

Dominican Friars, Swansea

This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.

FAITH DRIVES AWAY FEAR

Our celebration of the resurrection of our Lord continues with the record of his appearances to his disciples. On the Sunday of the resurrection, we listened to the account of the empty tomb as witnessed by Christ's disciples. However, the event of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is strengthened by both the record of the empty tomb and the series of appearances he made to his disciples.

However, our belief in the resurrection of Jesus is not based on the logic of arguments (which are not extraneous) but on the gift of faith which God has given us (cf. 2 Cor 5:7). Similarly, as St Paul writes, our faith is not a matter of human wisdom but of the power of God (cf. 1 Cor 2:5) who brought Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24). According to Evangelist John, the purpose of the Gospel is that we may believe in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God. Hence, we are then assured of eternal life through this belief (cf. Jn 20:30-31).

The Gift of Faith Dispels the Grip of Fear:

Before the Pentecost, the disciples were still gripped with the fear of the Jews who were out to persecute them. This fear was dispelled when Jesus came into their midst and breathed the Holy Spirit on them. The Holy Spirit of God is the giver of inner peace. "Peace be with you". This inner peace comes when we no longer suppose that our human intelligence can lead us to the knowledge of God. On the contrary, like Thomas, we go on bended knees and declare Jesus as Lord and God (cf. Jn 20:28). When we accept the gift of faith from God, we are no longer held bound by fear.

At the moment, most of us are still gripped with the fear of the unknown. Even during this Easter season, the world is gripped with the fear of Covid-19. Shall we continue to live in fear? No! Why? Jesus is risen and he has conquered the fear that imprisons us. At our baptism in which we were reborn in Christ's resurrection, God did not give us the spirit of

fear or timidity but of power, love and sound mind (cf. 2 Tim 1:7). In faith, we can take all our concerns to the risen Lord in prayer and his saving presence will comfort us as he comforted his disciples.

Faith and the Mercy of God: In 2000, Pope St John Paul II proclaimed the Second Sunday of Easter as the Divine Mercy Sunday. It is only through faith that we realize that the death and resurrection of Christ has won us the abundant mercy of God. It is then appropriate to celebrate the mercy of God through which we have been reconciled to God. Likewise, the mercy of God is celebrated in the seven sacraments of the New Law. In these sacraments, our sins are washed away through the ministry of the Church.

Moreover, today's gospel reading relates how the power to forgive sins was given to the Church by Christ. He did this when he instructed his Church to reconcile believers to God in his name through the power of the Holy Spirit. Once again, it is by faith that we believe that we are truly reconciled to God through the ministry of the Church.

Faith, evangelization and eternal life: After Jesus gave the gift of faith to the disciples, he instructed them to evangelise the world. On the one hand, they were to make Christ's saving message and the unfathomable mercy of God known to the ends of the earth. On the other hand, believers are to come to faith through the preaching of the Church. This faith in God subsequently leads to eternal life. Indeed, this was the purpose of Christ's mission in the world: he came to share in our humanity so that we to might share in his divinity. This is eternal life: to know the one true God and accept Jesus Christ whom he has sent (cf. John 17:3) as "Lord and God" (cf. Jn 20:28).