

*Second Sunday of Easter 2018 Divine Mercy Sunday*

It's certainly fitting on this eighth day of the octave of Easter that our Gospel is Our Lord's appearance to Thomas which occurred a week after Our Lord's glorious Resurrection.

On the evening when Our Lord rose in glory, Thomas wasn't among the other disciples when the Risen Lord came to them.

And when the others said that they'd seen the Lord, Thomas obstinately refused to believe.

Recall what he said:

"Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Thomas wanted to see Our Risen Lord for himself- he wanted tangible evidence, and he wasn't going to make a leap of faith based on the testimony of the other disciples.

And so, eight days later, the Risen Lord appeared to Thomas, and then, he believed.

Thomas was transformed into a witness of Jesus' Resurrection through this encounter with Our Lord, and we too would benefit from this encounter.

Thomas wasn't there in that first evening of the Lord's Resurrection, we weren't there either.

As St. Gregory the Great said in his Homilies on the Gospels:

"Surely you do not think that it was a pure accident that that chosen disciple was missing; who on his return was told about the appearance and on hearing about it doubted; doubting, so that he might touch and believe by touching? It was not an accident, God arranged that it should happen. God's mercy worked wonderfully, for when that doubting disciple touched his Master's wounded flesh he cured the wound of our disbelief."

It would've been better if Thomas believed the testimony of the other disciples since Our Lord said:

*Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.*

Only by the grace of God and the gift of faith, we believe in the Resurrection of Our Lord, and we're able to say from the depths of our beings that Christ is Risen!

"We walk by faith and not by sight" (St. Paul).

Aside from Our Lord's appearance to Thomas which we witnessed in today's Gospel, we also witnessed a very profound event that happened on the first evening that Our Lord appeared his disciples.

Mindful that "his mercy endures forever", we witnessed Our Lord breathe the Holy Spirit into his disciples and bestow upon them the power to forgive sins.

*Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven and whose sins you retain are retained.*

The Universal Church has always held that at this point in time Our Lord instituted the Sacrament of Penance- the great sacrament of his Divine Mercy.

Through the Sacrament of Penance, the power to forgive sins is exercised; a power which was conferred upon the Apostles and handed on to their successors.

In this great sacrament, we encounter the mercy of the Lord, the Lord who's willing to forgive us of our sins provided that we're truly sorry for our sins, sincere in our confession of sins, and willing to do anything and everything to amend our lives.

There are no other words more freeing and liberating than the words of absolution as given through the sacrament.

Through those words said by the Church's ordained priest, our sins are destroyed along with the burden that weighs upon our souls, while at the same time sanctifying grace is generously poured into our souls.

By his grace, we're nourished and given the strength to reject future temptations to sin, and all we have to do is do our part and cooperate with his grace as its freely given to us so that we may not fall into sin- so that we may always keep and obey his commandments.

But it goes even further, the Sacrament of Confession prepares us for a worthy reception of Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Very soon we'll encounter the Risen Lord of Life in the sacrament of His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity veiled under the appearance of bread and wine.

By his grace and the gift of faith, we'll see and taste the goodness of the Lord who's the source of all grace, and like Thomas after he encountered the Risen Lord, we'll exclaim within our hearts:

"My Lord and my God."