

Dear Friends in Christ,

As you know, this year, the joy of Easter Octave and the celebration of the Feast of Divine Mercy coincides with the passing of our Holy Father, Pope Francis. Let me share with you A few quotes taken from the Pope's reflection on the mystery of the Divine Mercy.

Peace be with you! These are the words of the risen Jesus as he encounters every human weakness and error. In them, we will discover different aspects of God's mercy towards us. Those words first give joy, then grant forgiveness and finally offer comfort in every difficulty.

God's mercy gives joy, a special joy, the joy of knowing that we have been freely forgiven. When, on the evening of Easter, the disciples see Jesus and hear him say for the first time, "Peace be with you", they rejoice (v. 20). They were locked behind closed doors out of fear; but they were also closed in on themselves, burdened by a sense of failure. Fear prevailed and they committed the great sin: they left Jesus alone at his most tragic hour. In this climate, they hear for the first time, "Peace be with you!" The disciples ought to have felt shame, yet they rejoice. Why? Because seeing his face and hearing his greeting turned their attention away from themselves and towards Jesus. That is the joy Jesus brings. It is the joy that we too feel whenever we experience his forgiveness. We ourselves know what those disciples were feeling on Easter, because of our own lapses, sins and failures. At such times, we may think that nothing can be done. Yet that is precisely when the Lord does everything.

Peace be with you! and He adds, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (v. 22). He then gives the disciples the Holy Spirit to make them agents of reconciliation: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them" (v. 23). Not only do the disciples receive mercy; they become dispensers of the mercy that they themselves received. You must be channels of that forgiveness through your own experience of being forgiven. "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them". These words stand at the origin of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but not only. Jesus has made the entire Church a community that dispenses mercy, a sign and instrument of reconciliation for all humanity. Brothers and sisters, each of us, in baptism, received the gift of the Holy Spirit to be a man or woman of reconciliation. Whenever we experience the joy of being set free from the burden of our sins and failings; whenever we know at firsthand what it means to be reborn after a situation that appeared hopeless, we feel the need to share with those around us the bread of mercy.

Brothers and Sisters,

As we mourn the death of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, let us pray that he, called to the heavenly kingdom by the Lord, may rejoice forever at the banquet table of heaven.

Eternal rest grant unto him o Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him. Amen.

May he rest in eternal peace. Amen.



In Christ,
Fr. Waldemar Podlsaz SDS