

“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice in it and be glad.” Today, as we gather together for this Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, is truly a day worth celebrating, a day in which we should, as St. Peter tells us in our second reading, “rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy”. For today, we celebrate the Second Sunday of Easter, the last day of the Easter Octave. Today is also called Divine Mercy Sunday, a day on which we focus on the great outpouring of mercy that God offers to each and every one of us. So, we have the Second Sunday of Easter and Divine Mercy Sunday. Now, these aren’t 2 different feasts or 2 different celebrations, but rather they are one and the same. For the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which we especially commemorated last weekend, is intrinsically linked to God’s mercy.

In fact, our entire salvation history, beginning from the original sin of Adam and Eve, consists with God bestowing His mercy on His children. Our salvation history is God continually coming to us when we don’t deserve it. We know that after God created humans out of His great love, we turned away from Him through our sins. At that point, God could have easily said, “Okay, I gave them a chance and they failed,” and given up on us. But He didn’t do that. Rather, when we, His children, deserved nothing from Him, He chose to give us everything we need. And that is always a cause for celebration.

We can see this in today’s Gospel reading from St. John. The Apostles, following Christ’s Resurrection, were gathered together behind locked doors. They were scared and worried that what had happened to Jesus might also happen to them. And remember, these are the same men who had abandoned our Lord during His Passion. So, this fear they felt was nothing new for them. Yet, despite the fact they had not been faithful to Jesus, and were still having difficulty believing what He had told them, He comes to them. He appears in their midst and offers them what they need; namely, His peace and a strengthening of their faith. Jesus appears to them and grants them His mercy.

Just as Jesus came to the Apostles, we know that He still comes to us. He comes to us even though we don’t deserve it. He still comes to give us everything we need, especially His mercy. And He does this in numerous ways; through prayer, through the kindness of others, and especially through the Sacraments. We can clearly see how Jesus comes to us, to give us the gift of Himself, most especially in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. This again is cause for great rejoicing on our part.

And this weekend, it is especially a great joy for our young people who will be receiving this gift for the first time. Our second graders have been preparing for this weekend for a while now, and I’m sure they, with their families, are very excited, very joyful, and perhaps, a little nervous as well, which is okay. But this truly is a special day to “rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy”.

For today, God Himself comes to these little ones in a very special, very important way. On this special day, dear little ones, know that your joy is not just yours alone. Your family and friends are gathered here to share this joy. In fact, we all are happy for you and with you. We celebrate with you, for we know this is a very important moment in your life. As you continue the celebration later, as you receive other gifts and cards, just remember that the best part of today is what God will give to you. That is why we celebrate today, and everyday, because of the good things God gives us and does for us.

And when God gives us these good things, He doesn’t want us to just keep them to ourselves. Rather, He wants us to share this with others. Again, we see this in the Gospel reading. Jesus appears to the Apostles and offers them His mercy and peace. Then, He sends them forth to go share the mercy of God with others.

And Jesus wants us to do the same. He wants us to take the joy we feel and share it with others. Maybe by smiling at someone or offering a helping hand to one in need. Perhaps we can take time to visit someone who is lonely, to brighten their day a little. For this is what God does for us; He comes to us with mercy and love, even when we might feel like we don’t deserve it. He comes anyway.

Even if we don’t deserve it, God gives us what we need. He gives us His mercy, His peace, and a strengthening of our faith. He gives us the great gift of Himself. And so, we joyfully thank Him, we celebrate with Him, and we say “This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice in it and be glad.”