

2nd Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)
April 18, 2020
Easter 2B: Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 5:1-6; John 20:19-31

“Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes.” While this description focuses upon the very early days of the Church, it seems quite appropriate for us today. In several respects, we have become a domestic Church in the past month. Indeed, in the Church today, the bulk of the good work is taking place right in people’s homes. The domestic Church has made a comeback and it is beautiful to see.

People sitting and watching Mass together as a family, Rosary walks outside together. Eating meals around the family dinner table, digging the board games out of the attic and yes, occasionally getting on each other’s nerves. But that too is part of the story of the early Church and the Scriptures do not shy from sharing the disagreements, even among the apostles. These are some of the reports I am receiving. I also acknowledge the pain of separation that is also quite real and hard to accept.

An empty tomb does not prove the resurrection, because you could posit some other explanation for it. But as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI pointed out in his wonderful book on Holy Week, “the proclamation of the Resurrection would have been completely impossible if anyone had been able to point to a body lying in the tomb.”¹

During this holy season of Easter, our Christian faith is most visibly manifest in our proclamation of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Still, some who should know better interpret fundamental truths in a manner that denies the necessity of the physical resurrection of Jesus. Yes, even people of faith have questions to which there seem to be only difficult answers. However, to be a person of faith does not mean that all questions are put aside as irrelevant or bordering on blasphemy.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, “Jesus of Nazareth (Part Two): Holy Week, From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection” page 254

Perhaps the shock of the Passion of Christ was so strong that some of the disciples did not at once believe that He was truly risen. They were demoralized, and we see this evidenced in the person of Thomas. His act of doubt should not be held against him forever, for his doubt did not persist indefinitely. He spent his life spreading the Good News of the resurrection, and while his example should remind us all of the problem of doubt and disbelief, his entire life should be viewed from the perspective of heroic faith and apostolic zeal.

Questions persist with people today, as evidenced by my opening remarks. However, our questions are situated within the larger context of a lived faith that is beyond us, our generation, or even our century. The Christian faith and the Catholic Tradition encompass centuries of guidance by the Holy Spirit. We are part, albeit small parts, of the self-revelation of God's Love that includes the gift of His Church, His instrument on earth for our sanctification.

Our faith teaches in the Catechism: "Given all these testimonies, Christ's Resurrection cannot be interpreted as something outside the physical order, and it is impossible not to acknowledge it as an historical fact."² The mystery of Christ's resurrection is "the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; (and) handed on as fundamental by Tradition."³

For example, when faced with an heretical sect that taught a negative view of the body, the 4th Lateran Council in 1215 A.D. answered by teaching dogmatically of our bodies that "All of them will rise with their own bodies, which they now wear."⁴ Today, we must be the witnesses, following in the apostolic faith handed onto us. The resurrection above all constitutes the confirmation of all Christ's works and teachings.

² Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph # 643

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph # 638

⁴ "Qui omnes cum suis propriis corporibus resurgent, quae nunc gestant." Decrees of the Ecumenical councils 1: Nicea to Lateran V, ed. Norman Tanner, page 230.

As witnesses, we experience the power of His resurrection by our lives of faith, by showing mercy to one another, by gratefully accepting this divine mercy in our own hearts. We also fearlessly proclaim the reality of His resurrection and defend with vigor the truth against all attacks.

The Divine Mercy of our Savior makes the fullness of life possible for all who believe. Let us not be troubled by those who minimize the resurrection, but rather re-commit ourselves to be its strongest witnesses by means of our manifest joy. Let us too cry out, “My Lord and My God,” marveling that He indeed is risen and in our midst.