

Rev. Derek Fairman

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter

This Sunday we hear the account of the Lord Jesus bringing His mercy to the Apostles, after they abandoned Him. Rather than coming to condemn and tell the Apostles that they had their chance, and now the Risen Lord was going to pick new Apostles, the Lord came to restore what had been lost during the Lord's Passion. He understood their desire to avoid the suffering that was coming, and He was not only there to forgive them, but to strengthen them for the suffering that was coming for them in the future.

The Lord Jesus came to reconcile with the Apostles, and to bring a renewal to their bonds of fellowship. The Lord Jesus had spent so much time with the Apostles, and He did not want that time wasted. The Lord Jesus then extended His Divine Mercy to the Apostles, so that they could then share that mercy with others. They could learn from the Lord Jesus the power of forgiveness and how to make a much better world. They could learn from their own mistakes, see the Lord's forgiveness in their own lives, and then share that with each other.

Perhaps there have been times whenever we had to deal with a situation, and no one else seemed interested in taking ownership of the situation, and we might wonder how things would get done. We might have felt like we were left to figure things out, without any help or guidance. Everyone was happy to leave us to our own devices or take on responsibility ourselves. We can appreciate the Lord's suffering, in which the apostles abandoned the Lord, because they did not want to associate with His Suffering and Death.

Maybe there were times when we had to go through some difficult situation, and we became quite upset, because we had to suffer alone, or it seemed like no one was there who could sympathize. Others told us that we were overreacting, or dismissed our concerns, or did not want to listen for some reason. That can make the difficult situation even worse when others do not sympathize. We can understand the Lord's suffering.

Yet we can also understand the Lord's forgiveness. The Lord forgave the apostles, for those moments in which they turned their backs on Him. When His suffering began, the apostles went their own way, except one. No doubt, they were later ashamed of the way that they had turned their backs on the Lord. After the Lord's Death, they were together again, brought together by their understanding of what they had done, and their need for peace and reconciliation. The Lord Jesus brought His mercy, His forgiveness, His peace.

For those who have wronged us, whether they did something against us, or they were not friends when we needed them, or they left us to manage things alone, we can extend forgiveness. We too are weak human beings, and we have our moments whenever something became difficult and we did not want to endure the difficulty. We can learn from the Lord Jesus to bring forgiveness to those who have done wrong to us.

Since God has been merciful with us, we must be merciful with others. This is part of the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses *as* we forgive those who trespass against us..." The Lord adds after the prayer: "If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their transgressions, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions (Matthew 6:14-15)." Also, "...the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you (Matthew 7:2)." Since God has forgiven us so many times, we should learn from Him, and extend that forgiveness.

Sometimes we need a reconciliation with God. Perhaps it is because of sin, but also, we might need to let go of any anger towards Him. Whenever life is unfair, or something bad happens to us, and we do not understand why, we may need to reconcile with God for a variety of reasons. It is not the same as forgiveness, because God does not sin. Yet there is a way in which we need to come to terms with God's plan for each of us.

God's Divine Mercy is given to us especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession. Perhaps our hearts leap with joy and hope whenever we hear about the Lord's forgiveness to the apostles for abandoning the Lord. It is one thing to recognize that God is merciful, but it is another to enter that process of reconciliation. Knowing that God is merciful is an important step in the process of reconciliation, because it gives us hope that our sins can be forgiven, but it is not the same as reconciliation itself. Imagine knowing that someone is willing to let things go and be friends again: that is an important step to being friends again, but you must speak to the friend to reconcile. The same is true with God: knowing of His Divine Mercy is an important step, but receiving His Mercy is accomplished in its fullest in the Sacrament of Confession.

As we approach the altar, we thank the Lord for His merciful love. We ask the Lord to show us His mercy, especially in the Sacrament of Confession. We ask the Lord to help us forgive those who have wronged us in some way, knowing that we are not perfect. We ask the Lord to help us find consolation in His care for us.