

2nd Sunday of Easter, 11 April 2021 (Divine Mercy Sunday)

Scriptures: Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 5:1-6; John 20:19-31

Homily: Fr. Ken

In today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we hear that the first-century followers of Jesus reorganized their lives under the influence of his Spirit. They offered one another love and support as they faced their challenges together.

They made solidarity and mutual support a reality. We hear that no one in the early Christian communities was poor. Why? Because all those who owned land or houses sold them and presented the money to the apostles, who in turn distributed it equally, to each person according to their need. They also shared their food gladly and generously.

And, they were respected for testifying to the resurrection of Jesus. The apostles tangibly changed people's lives, just as Jesus had done.

The presence of God's resurrection grace was expressed when the community provided for the needy people among them with their own resources. This gathering was not of people with a well-developed doctrine, a complex hierarchical infrastructure, newly printed monthly missalettes, a dynamic well-trained choir, or a magnificent "house of God". They felt summoned to be channels for God's power, pragmatically changing lives. The Lord's resurrection convinced them to act with loving concern for each other.

Today, on Divine Mercy Sunday, we are asked this question: To what extent is an encounter with the risen Lord more than a private experience?

It is, in fact, often an experience in fellowship with the community of believers. Christian communities, with the true spirit of Jesus,

are united heart and soul. They can help build a new society, marked by equality and mercy for those who are vulnerable, and justice and peace. Wherever there is mutual love, support, and solidarity, there we will find our God in the person of Jesus Christ.

Through our outreach as a community to disabled people, and those who are elderly and vulnerable, we meet the risen Christ and feel the power of God's spirit among us. These encounters not only give us new life and hope, they actually change our lives.

Some of us are inspired to take up the social justice teaching of the Church in a more serious way. There are plenty of examples of Christians engaging with the open wounds in society through work with homeless people, in soup kitchens and shelters, with those who are sick and dying in hospitals, among migrants and prisoners, in war zones and refugee camps.

Just as the first Christians broke down social barriers and subverted normal social hierarchies of wealth and power, so Christian churches today support campaigns for economic justice and peace.

We can learn from the first Christians, who can inspire us take up the social justice agenda of our Catholic Church. The very glimpses of genuine community, generosity, and human compassion are radical, powerful, and joyful. They transform our lives. They are the true meaning of mercy.