

*On [Easter] evening, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear . . . ,
Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

Today, when so much of the world is "locked down" from fear of this terrible corona virus, Jesus – the Risen Lord who has conquered all the forces of sin and death on the cross – wishes to come into our midst and breathe upon us the gift of His peace, "a peace the world cannot give." When our hearts are troubled, when our minds are full of doubts, he comes to show us the marks of the wounds he suffered. He invites us to see and touch, as he did doubting Thomas, the scars of the battles he fought to bring us God's mercy; that mercy which today's responsorial psalm reminds us *endures forever*.

Yes, today the Lord wants to come to us as he did to those first disciples locked away in fear, to bring us his peace: a deep sense of security and well-being. A peace which assures us that, in Christ, life and goodness has triumphed over evil and death. A peace that swept away their anxieties and distress because the Lord *whose love is everlasting*, was with them forever. Now they and we never need be afraid again for Jesus is with us to help us win out over our suffering and loss as he did on the cross.

Today, on this "Divine Mercy Sunday," we *give thanks to the Lord for his mercy* which *endures* even to our day. Yes, even in the midst of the disruption of our lives by COVID-19 we praise and bless God, *who in his great mercy, gave us a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*. In baptism He gave us *a new birth* as His beloved children *who are safeguarded by the power of God through faith*. Our faith, St. Peter reminds us today is *more precious than gold*. For it is our faith and the hope it brings of salvation, that is the key to experiencing the peace Christ gives to sustain us in these troubled times.

By making us God's children, the *new birth* of baptism gives us the hope of receiving a share in all that belongs to God. This heavenly inheritance, St. Peter tells us, can't perish; it can't fade or be defiled like earthly wealth or property can. Our *inheritance is kept in heaven* and the salvation God has prepared for us, the life of glory and blessings that awaits us there will only be fully revealed *in the final time* when Christ returns. In the meantime, if we continue to live out our faith and baptismal commitment, God's power guards us, and his peace sustains us, as we face distress or trials in this life.

But how can we live out our Christian faith and commitment in these days when we are kept from *meeting together for the Eucharistic breaking of bread and the prayers*? The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles highlights the concern the believers had for every person in need. *They devoted themselves to the communal life*. Unlike the independence and individualism that's so strong in our culture, the focus on me and mine, the early Christians gave up their old ways of sin and selfishness and began to imitate Jesus' way of goodness and love, sharing with others and caring for them. And because they did, Christ's life in them deepened and grew and his peace dispelled their fears.

Jesus is inviting us today to do the same: *As the Father has sent me*, he tells us, *so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit*. In addressing this pandemic crisis Pope Francis reminds us:

"It is the life in the Spirit that can redeem, value and demonstrate how our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people – often forgotten people – who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines nor on the grand catwalks of the latest show, but who without any doubt are in these very days writing the decisive events of our time: doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, cleaners, caregivers, providers of transport, law and order forces, volunteers, priests, religious men and women and so very many others who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves.

"In the face of so much suffering, we experience the priestly prayer of Jesus: "That they may all be one. How many people every day are exercising patience and offering hope, taking care to sow not panic but a shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer. How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all. Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons."

Let's pray that each of us may realize just how precious a gift our faith is, doing all we can, especially in these days, to live and spread the peace and love of Jesus through daily acts of unselfish caring for those in need around us. And in this way, together, we will triumph with Christ over the corona virus, and all the *various trials* we *may have to suffer through* in this life.