



April 16, 2023

Second Sunday of Easter/Divine Mercy Sunday

*Blessed be the God and Father...in his great mercy gave us a new
birth to a living hope through the resurrection
of our Lord Jesus Christ... 1 Peter 1:3*



Dear Friends,

It is easy to see mercy for the powerless, if they have not done anything wrong, or do not do anything that annoys our senses, or grates on our nerves. We celebrate the mercies that look, to us, like justice. But if we start to talk of “deserved mercy” and “undeserved mercy,” we are no longer talking about mercy. We then are talking about transactional relations.

What do we speak about when we ask for the mercy of God? We use the word in the penitential rite in the Liturgy. We often think of it as a plea for forgiveness. But that is not what the scriptures tell us. The word for mercy in the Greek of the New Testament is *eleos*; we see it in the Liturgy as *Kyrie eleison, Lord have mercy*. This is the word used in Greek to translate the Hebrew word *hesed* in the First (Old) Testament.

Hesed means loving-kindness. It is a quality of God who is faithful loving-kindness. Mercy is an action, not a feeling. In the Gospel of Luke mercy is what the Samaritan does when he risks taking care of the stranger, left for dead on the side of the road. Or mercy is how the father embraces his son who had run away. Mercy is an unearned and generous response to the need of another.

Our passage from John’s Gospel takes place on the evening of the resurrection. The community of disciples have sealed themselves up behind locked doors. After seeing the empty tomb, they make a tomb of their meeting place. They became like the living dead, ashamed of their cowardice. They were too afraid to believe Mary Magdalene who proclaimed, “*I have seen the Lord.*”

Jesus’ appearances were not merely revelations of the resurrection, to prove he is Son of God. They are meant to transform his followers from being overwhelmed with fear and shame. Jesus breathes into them the Holy Spirit, the very animating force of his own life. Jesus gives them his own mission to embody the mercy of God, and the healing and forgiveness of the Kingdom. They are empowered to proclaim the faithful loving-kindness of God.

Jesus never really focuses on sin. He strongly criticizes those who belittle or exclude others. Sin was not the focus. Jesus performs acts of mercy that restore dignity to people. He empowers people to live the fullness of their potential, which asks more of people than merely being sorry for their sins. It is too egoistic to focus our being sorry for our sins and failings. When we focus on our sinfulness it is “me” not God is the focus.

Psalm 118 gives us the proper focus.

Let those who fear the Lord say,

“His mercy endures forever.”

I was hard pressed and was falling

But the Lord helped me.

My strength and my courage

Is the Lord

Christ is risen!

Fr Ron

Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: www.anne.church