

Fr Ryan Homily 4-19-23 – Divine Mercy Sunday

Read: Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47; Psalm 118; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

St. Peter, I love St. Peter. I think he's such a fascinating person. All of us can relate to him. I think we see a lot of St. Peter in ourselves in different ways and Peter is kinda all over the Easter season in the church. The second reading today was written by him. He of course was in the upper room when Jesus appears to the eleven, cause Judas is gone at this point after the resurrection in this gospel. And we'll see him again and again in the Easter season. So Peter is this super important figure in the early church which is amazing because Peter was a sinner. Like I mean he fell hard. It was embarrassing in those hours leading up to Jesus' death. Denying that he knew his friend after saying even if everybody else should abandon you I never will. Like okay Peter. But Peter sinned but he didn't despair he repented. And here in the gospel Jesus places something amazing in his hands and the hands of the other apostles. Jesus gives the power to forgive sins in His name to sinners, to this group of cowardly sinners in the upper room. And we can think or ask why would He do that? Cause if I would've chosen somebody to give the ability to forgive sins I probably would've chosen like Mary the Blessed Mother. Mary was not a sinner. We believe there's no greater human being that God ever created than Mary. Mary is greater than Peter, she's holier, Peter owes veneration to Mary, but Jesus doesn't give Mary the power to forgive sins. He entrusts that responsibility to St. Peter even though he's a sinner and she was the greatest of all saints. Jesus says here's the Holy Spirit guys, whose ever sins you forgive are forgiven; whose ever sins you retain are retained. Jesus entrusted the ability to forgive sins in His name to men who were sinners themselves. Why? Like why would He do that? Speaking as a priest myself it must have something to do with inviting people to seek the Lord's forgiveness from those who have had to be forgiven themselves, from those who have had to confess. After they've fallen hard sometimes and seek forgiveness for their own sins so that there shouldn't be any judgement or condemnation in that sacrament only compassion and mercy from a fellow sinner. I think it's so cool what Jesus does through Peter. There's a passage in the Acts of the Apostles where it says Peter was walking by and people would actually lay cots and mats with the sick and lame lying on them so at least the shadow of Peter would fall on them, and they would be healed. Like the shadow of Peter healed people. Peter was given this incredible power to heal by

the grace of the Holy Spirit not by his merits but because of his position. Not because Peter was good but because he was chosen, chosen by Jesus. We heard that in Matthew's gospel you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. I will give to you Peter the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. So Jesus specifically gives that power to Peter, not just to heal bodily but heal in a more important sense. To heal us from our sins. Cause all those crippled and lame that his shadow passed over would eventually get old and die and they wouldn't walk anymore. But when our sins are forgiven, we can run and dance for joy in the Kingdom of Heaven forever. And so in this gospel today, what's happening here, what Jesus is doing – giving the power to forgive sins to sinners - it's the sacramental foundation for the sacrament of confession. Given not just to Peter but to all these remaining eleven apostles. He confers the power to forgive sins on the apostles. Why? Why can't Jesus just forgive sins directly? He did, He did for three years. And now He's resurrected, He's still on earth for these forty days, but He anticipates His ascension to the right hand of the Father in Heaven. Leaving earth as He had been here for those thirty-three years forgiving people directly. Who is now gonna walk around and forgive sins in God's name after Jesus ascends? The apostles. Jesus chooses to give the authority and power to forgive sins in God's name to the apostles. And it can't get more explicit than here in today's gospel. It says He breathes on them receive the Holy Spirit whose sins you forgive are forgiven them and whose sins you retain are retained. And from that moment on the laying on of hands, that we call the sacrament of Holy Orders, that ministry of forgiving sins in God's name continues in the bishops, the successors of the apostles, and their delegates priests. We have to have our sins forgiven by Jesus to be able to get into Heaven. That begins at baptism but because we sin after that it's necessary afterwards to be forgiven. And it's necessary to do so in the way that Jesus instituted and inaugurated through the sacrament of confession. And I know there's many arguments people make well I can just confess directly to Jesus. I don't need a priest. Well then why would He give the power to forgive sins to the apostles? Why would He do that? Was He wasting His time? Was He confused? Was He mistaken? Jesus was being very deliberate here in conferring the forgiveness of sins to sinners who would forgive sins in God's name so that the ministry could continue even to this very day. Jesus did that because He found it essential and necessary. And so for us who are in the church who live in the shadow of Peter, if you will the healing shadow of

Peter, to avail ourselves of the sacrament of confession at the bare minimum once a year. Now if you want a relationship to grow, you do more than the bare minimum. Right, if you want to grow in your relationship you go more often. Imagine if you only waited for once a year to say you're sorry to your spouse. The person that you live with day in and day out. Like how would that work out in the relationship? Honey I'm sorry, it's not Easter yet. I know I really hurt you and offended you but it's the middle of summer, I have to wait six more months to apologize. Like how would that relationship work? When I hurt you I say I'm sorry, I apologize, and I amend my life as often as I have to. So it is in the sacrament of confession. So Jesus invites us to live in the shadow of Peter where we experience Jesus' forgiveness through His delegates in the sacrament of confession. And to walk in the shadow of Peter is to be faithful as well in receiving God's healing power through the Eucharist. Every resurrection Sunday. Every Sunday we come to mass we too are invited to touch the Lord. Where Jesus makes Himself available so that we may not be unbelieving but believe, be strengthened so that our fear and doubt can be dispelled just like Thomas' was after he touched Jesus. My Lord and my God. In a word to live in the shadow of Peter means to be Catholic. Like the Roman Catholic church -all historians, religious, and secular agree- was founded by St. Peter. No other, only Peter. And it's not just because we have his bones found miraculously under the dome of St. Peter's Basilica centuries after the basilica was built, because it was to Peter Jesus gave the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. It was to Peter Jesus said upon YOU I will build my church. And so when we leave the church, we leave the shadow of Peter. We leave that shadow of Peter that heals and forgives in God's name. So on this Divine Mercy Sunday if you've not been to confession in over a year, as the bare minimum beginning step – come back. Come back to the shadow of Peter. It's only when we receive His mercy and healing through confession can we receive His body and blood worthily at mass. Paul speaks about that in his first letter to the Corinthians Chapter 11. Condemning those who eat the body of Christ unworthily. But in confession the Lord makes us worthy because of what Christ had done through Peter and the other apostles and their delegates. So that when we receive the body of Jesus it's deepening our relationship with Him. It's not just something we do because we're going through the motions because we check that box off. No this Divine Mercy Sunday Jesus is calling us to an intimate, personal, loving relationship no matter how broken we are, no matter what we've done. Jesus tells

us through St. Faustina the more in me the soul of the sinner is the deeper they're lost in sin. The greater of a right that a soul has to My mercy. If only they asked, I would pour open the flood gates of my mercy and transform them into a new creation. Jesus says in the last book of the Bible, the last words He speaks, He says behold I make all things new. Because nothing describes Jesus better or more accurately than that little word mercy. So this Sunday let's walk in the shadow of Peter because we're Catholic. Because we need confession, and we go regularly. Because we need to touch our Lord's body as Thomas did in the gospel to have our faith grow. Let's walk in Peter's shadow not only to receive mercy ourselves but in order to become merciful. Right, Peter's presence was not just a presence that brought healing to others by himself, it wasn't exclusive to him. You can be a source of healing to others once you've been healed. You may not physically be able to heal them by somebody walking in your shadow – that's an amazing gift that God gave to Peter – but your patience, your kindness, your generosity, your forgiveness especially to those who don't deserve it is how we imitate the way Jesus treats us who also don't deserve it and who cannot earn it. So together let's stand always and never leave the shadow of Peter where we are forgiven and healed by God and where we can bring that healing and forgiveness to others.

Amen