

EASTER- II SUNDAY- (DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY) APRIL 11, 2010

The readings for this Sunday are about mercy, trust and the forgiveness of sins. The first reading explains how the Risen Lord continued to show his divine mercy to the sick through the healing and preaching ministry of his apostles in the early Church. The Apostles' faith enabled them to minister the Lord's healing love through "*signs and wonders.*" The Book of Revelation was written to comfort and bolster the faith of the persecuted Christians by reassuring them of the presence of the merciful Lord in their lives. The second reading, taken from this book encourages Christians to fight fear with faith, and trepidation about the future with trust and hope. In today's gospel, as we recall Jesus' appearance to the disciples on that first Easter evening, we are vividly reminded of the Sacrament of Reconciliation – the power to forgive sins which Our Lord gave to his apostles. "*Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained*" (Jn. 20-23).

Let me get into the second part of the gospel (verses 24-29) which presents the fearless apostle St. Thomas, in his uncompromising honesty, demanding a personal vision of, and physical contact with, the risen Jesus as a condition for his belief. Thomas had not been with the disciples when Jesus made his first appearance to them. As a result, he refused to believe. This should serve as a warning to us. It is difficult for us to believe when we do not strengthen ourselves with the fellowship of other believers. When the Lord appeared to Thomas later, He said: "Blessed are those who have not seen but have believed." Thomas was able to overcome his doubts by seeing the risen Jesus. Modern Christians, who are no longer able to "see" Jesus with their eyes, must believe what they hear. That is why Paul reminds us that "faith comes from hearing" (Rom 10:17).

Thomas, the "doubting apostle" makes the unique profession of faith, "*My Lord and my God.*" Here the most outrageous doubter of the resurrection of Jesus utters the greatest confession of belief in the Lord who rose from the dead. This declaration by the "doubting apostle" in today's gospel is very significant for two reasons. 1) It is the foundation of our Christian faith. Our faith is based on the divinity of Jesus as proved by his miracles, especially by the supreme miracle of his resurrection from the dead. Thomas' profession of faith is the strongest evidence we have of the resurrection of Jesus. 2) Thomas' faith culminated in his self-surrender to Jesus, his heroic missionary expedition to India in A.D. 52, his fearless preaching, and the powerful testimony given by his martyrdom in A.D. 72.

Living faith enables us to see the risen Lord in everyone and gives us the willingness to render to each one our loving service. ("Faith without good works is dead" James 2:17). It was this faith in the Lord and obedience to his missionary command that prompted St. Thomas to travel to India to preach the gospel among the Hindus, establish seven

Christian communities (known later as “St. Thomas Christians”) and eventually face martyrdom. The Fathers of the Church prescribe the following traditional means to grow in the living and dynamic faith of St. Thomas the Apostle: a) We must come to know Jesus personally and intimately by the daily and meditative reading of the Bible. b) We must strengthen our faith by the power of the Holy Spirit through personal and community prayer. c) We must share in the divine life of Jesus by frequenting the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist. Mother Teresa presents it this way: “If we pray, we will believe; if we believe, we will love; if we love, we will serve. Only then we put our love of God into action.”