

A 2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER, April 19, 2020

**The Gift the Risen Lord gives us.**

"Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (John 20:21).

At the completion of his Passover to the Father through his death and resurrection, the risen Lord brings us the Holy Spirit, the Gift that contains all other gifts. The Holy Spirit also known as the Holy Ghost is the third person of the Blessed Trinity. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (John 14:16, 15:26). The Lord bestows the Holy Spirit to his disciples saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you forgive are forgiven, and whose sins you retain are retained"(John 20:21).

This happened at Galilee in the evening of the day our Lord rose from the dead. To the Apostles, huddled behind a locked door for the fear of the Jews, the risen Lord said, "Peace be with you twice, breathed on them and gave them the Holy Spirit. With this gesture, the Lord empowered the Apostles and their successors, bishops and priests (presbyters) to be his agents of forgiveness and mercy. This is why today is known as Divine Mercy Sunday. The revelation Jesus granted to St Faustina, a polish nun in the

nineteenth century enabled St John Paul II to establish this day as the Feast of Divine Mercy. Our Blessed Lord also instituted on this day the Sacrament of Confession in which we receive the mercy of God in a palpable manner. The way our Lord gave the power to forgive sins to his Apostles evokes a prophecy in the Old Testament when God made Eliakim son of Hilkiah the Father of his people (the inhabitants of Jerusalem). Of this, the Lord said, "I will place the key of the House of David on his shoulder, what he opens, no one will shut, what he shuts, on one will open" (Isaiah 22:22).

By breathing on the Apostles our Lord gave them the Holy Spirit, bringing to mind what he did in the first creation after he formed man from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7). The gesture of breathing on the Apostles tells of a new creation in grace. We are like the dry bones of the slain that came back to life (Ezekiel 37:9) with the life breath of God. The sin of Adam had extinguished and killed the life of grace in us and the Lord rekindled it and brought us back to life. Through the Holy Spirit, God makes us a new creation. Christ the last Adam is the "Life-giving Spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45).

On the Pentecost day, fifty days after Easter, the Lord poured out the Gift of the Holy Spirit in fulness making it possible for the Church to speak in the language of all

nations showing that his Body, the Church, was and is by nature Catholic. The Church becomes where the Holy Spirit flourishes!

The Holy Spirit made the incarnation and conception of the Lord Jesus possible. At the Annunciation, the Holy Spirit descended on the Virgin Mary as in a tabernacle and temple. She became the Ark of the covenant and the Child Jesus in her womb anointed from conception. This is why he is the *Christos*, the Christ, the Anointed One! During his first preaching in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth, the Lord confirmed his anointing, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord" (Luke 4:16-19, Cf Isaiah 61:1-12).

The Lord Jesus pours forth the Gift of the Holy Spirit without measure on all who are open to receive. **This is the Gift of the Risen Lord.** What did the Apostles do in order to receive him? They waited patiently in prayer until the time came. The world comes to him who knows how to pray and wait. The Apostles persevered in three things, fidelity to the Magisterium, sharing of their gifts and the Eucharist. "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

We all have received the Holy Spirit. He comes to us through the water and blood. In other words, we have received him through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist. The sacrament of Confession, the cleansing bath the Lord gives us before we come to the Eucharist, makes us fit to receive Him. It is here we encounter firsthand the mercy of the Risen Lord. May we make use of it often.

What else shall we do so that Holy Spirit, the Gift we have received from the Risen Lord remains fresh in us? Not only that we shall believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but that we shall not be afraid to proclaim him in our daily lives. Like the first disciples, may we burn with the zeal to proclaim Christ. May this be our declaration, "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Even during these days of lockdown, owing to the pandemic, as we spend more time at home with our spouse or children may we learn to be the agents of God's mercy by our kindness and prayerfulness. CHRIST IS RISEN!  
"VIVA CRISTO REY!"