

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday), April 19, 2020, Cycle A

The Acts of the Apostles tells us that the very first Christians “devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles and to the Communal life.... “The communal life meant for these Apostles and early Christians coming together to devote themselves to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.” In other words, the Risen Lord calls them together in community to “do this in memory of me,” to celebrate the Eucharist, and to pray as one body. Celebrating the Eucharist and praying in common, they grew stronger and stronger into a communion - the one body of Christ.

For 5 weeks now, our ideas of connection and community as the Christians have been sorely put to test. For 5 weeks now, we have not been able, as the early Christians were, to devote ourselves to the communal life by the breaking of bread and common prayer, while being able to live-stream the Mass is a real blessing; live-streaming is still not the same as coming together to celebrate the Lord's Meal and being nourished by his very real presence in that bread and wine that becomes His Body and Blood, and nourished as a community by His very Word in the scriptures.

While social distancing can be mitigated by our spiritual closeness through the means of modern media, I dare say most of us are feeling a real hole in our lives being unable to gather as one to devote ourselves to the communal life by celebrating the Eucharist, and praying in common. The early Christians knew how vital the communal life was, and we modern day Christians are hopefully rediscovering just how vital Christian communal life is and how we should never take for granted our communal life as the Body of Christ.

The Second Sunday of Easter is also Divine Mercy Sunday. In our Gospel passage from John we are told Jesus breathed on his disciples in that upper room and said: “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them....” Jesus commissions us with his mission of reconciliation, forgiveness and mercy. He says: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Admittedly at the present moment it seems difficult to fulfill our mission, but maybe in small ways we can still be bearers of God's mercy to others.

Thanks to the works and commitment of Sister Faustina Kowalska of Poland in the 1930s, we are more conscious of our mission to be apostles of mercy – as Jesus calls us to be.

As we are reminded on this second Sunday of Easter of the mercy God showers on us through the Risen Lord, let us remember in mercy that many people may not be able to connect virtually for prayer and the Eucharist. Some do not have the means; others may be incapable. Maybe in mercy we can reach out to those who are most isolated, by phone call or a letter, and let them feel they are still connected to their community of faith, and that we remember we are still all one communion, one body in the Risen Lord.