

Cycle A 2nd Sunday of Easter; Divine Mercy Sunday

Reading 1, [Acts 2:42-47](#)

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Responsorial Psalm, [Ps 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24](#)

R. (1) Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting.

Let the house of Israel say, "His mercy endures forever." Let the house of Aaron say, "His mercy endures forever." Let those who fear the LORD say, "His mercy endures forever."

R. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting.

I was hard pressed and was falling, but the LORD helped me. My strength and my courage is the LORD, and he has been my savior. The joyful shout of victory in the tents of the just:

R. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the LORD has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it.

R. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting.

Reading II, [1 Pt 1:3-9](#)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time. In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him, you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, as you attain the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Gospel, [Jn 20:19-31](#)

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

3 weeks ago today (2008) I was in Haiti with Father Rafael and 4 of our fellow parishioners visiting the people of Notre Dame de Fatima in Bassin-Zim. Today I am sharing a few stories of our trip so that we may understand the words of the 2nd reading, *“Although you have not seen Him you love Him; even though you do not see Him now yet believe in Him, you rejoice in an indescribable and glorious joy as you attain the goal of your faith....”* You see, we met the Risen Jesus in Haiti, and it was a humbling and joyous experience. It may sound strange to find joy in the midst of poverty and suffering. But the joy is not in the suffering....it is in the promise of God’s blessings. There is joy in Haiti.

You may ask, “Why did you ever go to a God-forsaken place like Haiti?” The quick answer is, “to visit our sister parish Notre Dame de Fatima.” But, on this the 2nd Sunday of Easter, which is also known as Divine Mercy Sunday, we hear in the Gospel that Jesus told His disciples, *“Peace be with you. As the Father sent me so I send you...Receive the Holy Spirit.”* We took that to heart, we went and now we better appreciate what “dirt poor” means....dusty and dirty poor. We discovered that our trip to Haiti was a Lenten retreat of sacrifice, and, a profound experience of God’s love and mercy. We met angels in Haiti...We saw where you go to learn to be a saint...Our faith was tested...We praised God with the vibrant, loving and hardworking people of Notre Dame de Fatima...and, I heard God's voice saying that he loves us more...much more than we imagine.

I asked, "Do they know they are poor?" “Yes,” I was told, “because they can't feed their families." Inflation is high and food prices are higher. But, we at St Brendan are making a difference in Bassin-Zim, with the resources we are sharing, especially the micro-loans. Did you know that we just bought a generator for the church compound? More than that, with your help we will build a parish hall and then dedicate it 14 months from now on the Feast of St. Brenden, May 16, 2009. And,

maybe...eventually...Father Meres will get his dream of a Catholic school. There is hope in Haiti.

We met angels in Haiti that took care of us every step of the way...Bernard, a true Haitian renaissance man, Father Meres, our interpreters Bastia & Berry, our cooks, Memem and Nanush, to name a few. These angels kept us safe in a place where I don't know how people survive. Common place things for us in the United States, like drinking water or taking a taxi ride, in Haiti are missteps that can have dire consequences.

When we arrived in Bassin-Zim, Mass had already started. We heard a glorious sound of singing from the open-air sanctuary. Father Meres told us to quickly vest, and he pushed Father Rafi and I out onto the Altar. Suddenly, we were in front of over 600 people. They were raising the roof with a truly joyful noise. What a grand and glorious introduction to the people of Notre Dame de Fatima. Later our teens who came on the trip, Desiree Simon and Kat Cretes, were introduced so they could begin bridging the divide between our communities. After Mass I met another teen, Ellivens. I asked, "What do you want to tell the people of St. Brenden's?" He answered, "I love to speak English, but I am a student who has no books." I challenge the youth of our two communities to begin communicating, but also find a way to share the amazing music we heard in Haiti and to select the books for Ellivens and his friends to practice their English.

We went to the nutrition clinic that Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity run caring for over 100 children at a time. It is the place where we can go to see God's mercy and to learn to be a saint. I saw someone scoop-up into their arms a youngster no more than 2 years old...and then be told to put him down because he may have the contagious scabies itch mites. Others in our group fed the babies laying in their little cribs...some listless and puffed up from malnutrition...one with his head swollen

from hydroencephalitis whimpering in his crib....but, most of the 30 or so babies quietly looked at us with their big round eyes...none were smiling. I am still in awe of the good sisters and the grace of their Mother Superior.

Another day, as we were waiting to meet the people that have the micro-loans, we jumped in to help the mason and his crew to move rocks from the front of the church about 100 yards to the back of the property to build the foundation of the hut for the generator. Soon more people began helping and then there were over 20 of us hauling rocks...just talking and laughing and working... there is a real sense of community at Notre Dame de Fatima. "Father Meres, " I asked, "Isn't the generator hut very close to the voodoo priest's house? Won't the noise bother him?" " Yes," he smiled, "I think he will probably move within a month☺" " We may be helping things along," I said, "Kevin, Father Rafi and I snore like banshees. We are making a lot of noise every night." Although, I have to tell you that since coming back my wife says I have not been snoring. Maybe that voodoo priest knows something☺

Most of us, I think, are like Thomas in today's Gospel, searching for proof of the resurrection. We are told to live by faith. But, I am learning that when we live by faith, we discover tangible proof. This proof is in our Christian communities... like St Brendan's and Notre Dame de Fatima. We find many people sharing their possessions and involved in ministries of God's love and mercy. These are the tangible proofs that Jesus is alive among us. It wasn't easy for Thomas to understand the words of others and it isn't easy for us. So I want to take 4 of you to Haiti within the next 12 months, so you too will come to understand why we have to go to Haiti.

I have many more stories I want to tell you, but for today I have just one more. Someone recently told me that it is easy to love, but much more difficult to be loved. It is a control thing I think. It is easy for us to say to the people of Haiti, "I Love You" and send them a nice check. It wasn't so easy, I found, to be in Haiti in the least

likely place, and hear God's voice very clearly saying that he loves us all. Dear God, I thought, I know you love me, but do you love these people of Haiti? We were walking down the dusty main road in Bassin-Zim when I heard voices crying out from a yard close by, "I Love You, I Love You, I Love You." I couldn't believe my ears. This is a place where people don't speak English. "I Love You," Father Rafi and I called back, "I Love You." Nine smiling children appeared at the fence...a typical Haitian fence of cactus woven with barbed wire...I want to show you their picture. "I Love You," we heard again, so I responded, "I Love You Too." The reply came, "I Love You More."

