

Second Sunday of Easter A
Acts 2:42-47; Peter 1:3-9; Jn 20:19-31
April 16, 2023

The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. What about us? If someone who knew nothing about Christianity were to drop in at Mass on a Sunday morning in a typical Catholic parish, would they be struck by our joy? If not, why not? Part of the reason is our emphasis on Sunday Mass as an obligation.

Sunday Mass is so much more than an obligation! Sunday Mass is meant to be a celebration. Today's Gospel tells us how Jesus celebrated the first two Sundays after his Resurrection with his closest friends. "*On the evening of that first day of the week,*" the day of the Resurrection, seeing Jesus was the last thing his frightened friends were expecting. After Jesus' scourging and trial, after the tragedy of Calvary two days prior, and then Jesus' burial, they had then found that his body was no longer in its final resting place. Terrified of what fresh disaster might await them, the disciples had locked the door of the room where they met.

How filled with joy Jesus must have been at being able to surprise his friends! Even the locked door was no barrier to Jesus now. He had not been brought back to his old life. That ended on Calvary. Jesus now had been raised to a new life. The Gospel tells us that Jesus returned a week later in the same room. Again, it was the *first day of the week, Sunday*.

He greeted his frightened friends with the conventional Jewish greeting: "*Shalom*" – *peace be with you*. The peace Jesus gives is far more than the mere absence of care and worry. Before his crucifixion Jesus had told the disciples: "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.*" The world cannot give this gift because the peace Jesus gives comes from outside this world.

It comes from God. It is available to those who enter into a relationship of living trust with Jesus the Christ.

All of God's gifts are given under one strict condition: that what we freely receive, we freely share with others. Immediately, Jesus tells his friends: "*As the Father has sent me, so I send you.*" And to enable them to fulfill this sending, He gives them another gift, his Holy Spirit. Breathing on them, as God breathed on the first man, Adam, in creation, Jesus imparts the Holy Spirit; and with the Spirit the power to forgive sins. This power lives on in the Church today in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

On the first Easter evening those friends of Jesus in the locked room were filled with joy at seeing Jesus again, and hearing his familiar voice. We who cannot see the Risen Jesus or hear his voice, except with the eyes and ears of faith, can share their joy. For us, Jesus has a gift and a blessing not given to those first friends of his. It is contained in the closing words of today's Gospel. Jesus is speaking those same words to us in this church, right now: *Blessed* (the word means happy and joyful) *are those who have not seen, and have believed.*"

- Fr. Stephen Lattner, O.S.B.