

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson
16th April 2023 – Divine Mercy Sunday - 2nd of Easter
Readings (Year A): 1st: Acts 2:42-47. 2nd: 1 Peter 1:3-9. **Gospel:** John 20:19-31

Listen to this homily:

www.penzancecatholicchurch.org/audio/homilies/2023/hm160423pd-Divine-Mercy-Sunday.mp3

Fear is very real for all of us at different times throughout our lives. During the pandemic fear stalked the world, and some of it remains with us still. There are irrational fears also that affect us.

The images of gathering darkness and closed doors accentuate the mood of fear in the opening of our gospel passage. They were afraid of what the Jewish authorities might do.

Human prudence might say there was every reason for fear because whenever tyrants taste blood, it rarely stop at one, as we know.

No doubt the story of empty tomb was known and the disciples may well be charged with stealing the body. Jesus had been crucified - will they be next?

The closed doors vividly express their mental condition'.
As a group they were without leadership, purpose or direction.

As individuals each one covered in a private little hell of lostness, guilt, sadness, fear & anxiety.

That picture is relayed to us in much of present time's news. We hear often of how people, but youngsters in particular are feeling in today's world and what faces them.

The disciples are probably also terrified of Jesus.
Luke tells us they are "in a state of alarm and fright" when he appears to them.

And there is good reason to be scared because they have betrayed and failed him. The news of Jesus' resurrection is tempered by the knowledge of how they deserted him. How will he react?

A situation we all recognise. Most of us have betrayed someone at one time or another, even if it was only in a small way. We have left them alone in the hour of their greatest need; refused to listen or open our hearts to offer a word of support or a helping hand.

However and why we reacted in the way we did, as the gospel shows people we have wronged in the past have a habit of appearing again out of the blue. A meeting, perhaps even a confrontation inevitable. How will that person react to us?

The disciples know that Jesus is alive, and that Mary of Magdala has even embraced him, but he has not appeared to them in person – could that signify his anger with them?

So there they are, shut in that dim room, afraid to move, listening anxiously for any noise.
In a way the closed doors contradict the message of the stone rolled back from the tomb.

Suddenly Jesus is standing in their midst saying "Peace be with you"
They may recall him saying "Peace I leave you; my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid."

Jesus invites them to come out of their caves of darkness and to discover new life.
He gave them a new breath, divine breath.

That simple phrase is sufficient to let them know that their betrayal and desertion are forgiven, and they are filled with joy.

Their betrayal has not overcome Jesus. His sense of self-worth is great enough not to let his love for them be tempered by their treacherous behaviour. He had told them before and repeats it in Matthew, before he sends them out – that he will be with them even until the end of time.

There is nothing that can undo his love.

In doing so he passes on to us his self-esteem, spiritual maturity and love. They become our own. This does not mean that we are as mature and emancipated as he is, but it does mean that, through him, we now have the capacity to develop in that way.

John writes that Jesus came to give us life, life to the full - His life.

Fear is the enemy of this life because it eats away at that self-esteem, spiritual maturity and love Jesus came to restore to people.

Perfect love cast out fear. There should be no fear in the life that Jesus brings: it is what changes us, and what he sends us out to bring to others.

© Canon Philip Dyson & Holy Family RC Parish www.penzancecatholicchurch.org

Listen to this homily:

www.penzancecatholicchurch.org/audio/homilies/2023/hm160423pd-Divine-Mercy-Sunday.mp3