

*Dear friends, After Easter, I presided at the Requiem Masses for Rosa Gervasi and Margaret (Rita) Pereira, as well as researching our financial situation. That left no time for writing the liturgical reflections. This week, I will preside at the Requiem Mass for Bernadette Sheeran. Rather than write a reflection, I will post three or four snippets from the outstanding homily that Pope Francis preached this Sunday at the shrine of Divine Mercy in Rome. He presents us the two abiding themes of his teaching: the mercy of God, and the Christian vision of justice in the world.*

“Last Sunday, we celebrated the Lord’s resurrection; today we witness the resurrection of his disciple. It has already been a week, a week since the disciples had seen the Risen Lord, but in spite of this, they remained fearful, cringing behind “closed doors” (Jn 20:26), unable even to convince Thomas, the only one absent, of the resurrection.

What does Jesus do in the face of this timorous lack of belief? He returns and, standing in the same place, “in the midst” of the disciples, he repeats his greeting: “Peace be with you!” (Jn 20:19, 26). He starts all over. The resurrection of his disciple begins here, from this *faithful and patient mercy*, from the discovery that God never tires of reaching out to lift us up when we fall.

He wants us to see him, not as a taskmaster with whom we have to settle accounts, but as our Father who always raises us up. In life we go forward tentatively, uncertainly, like a toddler who takes a few steps and falls; a few steps more and falls again, yet each time his father puts him back on his feet. The hand that always puts us back on our feet is mercy: God knows that without mercy we will remain on the ground, that in order to keep walking, we need to be put back on our feet.

You may object: “But I keep falling!”. The Lord knows this and he is always ready to raise you up. He does not want us to keep thinking about our failings; rather, he wants us to look to him. For when we fall, he sees children needing to be put back on their feet; in our failings he sees children in need of his merciful love.

Today, in this church that has become a shrine of mercy in Rome, and on this Sunday that Saint John Paul II dedicated to Divine Mercy twenty years ago, we confidently welcome this message.”

Continued tomorrow.