

## HOMILY FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN EASTER – DIVINE MERCY

When Queensland beats New South Wales in the State of Origin, it is an event worthy of great celebration. The other half of you might disagree. However, the win is spoken of for several days before life continues as before. Unfortunately, where there is a winner, there is a loser.

Last Sunday, we celebrated the greatest victory the world has ever known. We haven't forgotten it and we don't move on from it. We are not waiting for next year's competition to come around again. The resurrection is God's victory over death and sin. The entire Paschal Mystery which was our journey last weekend, is the work of a merciful God who leaves no stone unturned – not even the rejected one – to ensure that this mercy is presented to the world in its starkest reality. Unfortunately, where there is a winner, there is a loser.

The loser on this occasion is anyone who can't believe God's mercy – anyone who can't believe that Jesus came from God. It would have to be said that Jesus didn't do a lot to sort out the world's problems. He came with the breath of mercy, that the world might begin to live and breathe mercy. There is a new world to come where there won't be the problems we see in this world however, in the meantime we have received a winning way of coping in this world – mercy.

When Jesus greeted the disciples in the upper, his opening words were, "Peace be with you". The meaning of this as a greeting is connected to salvation – to mercy.

It was the very thing Thomas needed to hear. Thomas was obviously in a huff and not willing to accept the news of the resurrection from the others. He was not a good believer at this moment. Remember, he, as with the other disciples, had experienced their last moment with Jesus as an act of their desertion and for Peter, denial. Thomas was being hard on himself because mercy was not yet a part of his life. He was also being hard on the others.

While the others were relishing the mercy they had received, Thomas needed a little extra understanding. We can probably learn a lot from this encounter amongst friends. As I said, the losers of the world's most victorious moment are those who have not yet believed – we need to be merciful to them.

Belief is more than of the mind. Believe is a giving into a way of life, a purpose, a reality which we can't fully comprehend but, which needs our attention. Coping with life is a matter of belief. Mercy, is a matter of belief.

To move belief from the mind to our whole being, requires humility. It requires us to simply give ourselves to the reality of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the world.

Baptism puts us in the right place for it places us in a community based upon 'agape' love. As shown by the disciples in the first reading, who shared all they had, agape love is selfless, sacrificial and unconditional. It is this kind of love which must be demonstrated by the people of the Church in any generation for it to be the Church.

It doesn't mean we hold everything in common, as this first Church – this was simply what they chose to do. Agape love must be more than what we do when we come to mass. It is what we do when we go from here into the world. It is the attitude we take with us because we have met Christ in the Eucharist. When we are presented with, "The Body of Christ," we are with the first disciples who were presented with the words, "Peace be with you."

For the Church to increase its identity in the local community and become a testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, as the apostles did, there are also things we need to do publicly and together.

Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit on the disciples in the Gospel reading. Belief comes from breathing the breath of Christ. In other words, it is being merciful - kind and understanding, not judging or criticizing. It is giving oneself to humility as we must give ourselves to our natural need to breathe air.

That's how natural mercy needs to be and when it becomes natural in us, our belief will be even stronger.