

Unity with One Another Second Sunday of Easter/B Sunday of Divine Mercy
April 8, 2018 10:00 AM **Acts 4:32-35;** **1 Jn 5:1-6;** **Jn 20:19-31** (How has
the resurrection of Jesus changed my life, or has it?)

Last week we celebrated very solemnly the central mystery of our Christian faith, the death and resurrection of Christ. This week the point of the liturgy is to reflect on: How has that affected us? **How is my life different because God raised Jesus from the dead?** We should be able to answer that, and it should be specific. We should keep that in mind throughout the whole week: **How has the resurrection of Jesus changed my life, or has it?** There are many people who claim identity with Christ or Christianity, but who give no evidence at all of being affected by the resurrection of Christ.

The beloved disciple, the author of the second reading today, calls **our faith a conquering hero overcoming the world**. And for him the world means society where God is irrelevant. That's the world: society, people, **where God is irrelevant**. Now the world into which Jesus came was largely that; for the most part God was irrelevant, except for a small group of people into which he was born for whom **God was rigid. Neither are good**. Irrelevant is not good; rigid is not good.

These three readings shine forth like a prism the glorious colors of the light arisen in Christ enlightening both our inner life, the life of our mind, our hearts, our souls, but also our outer life, the life of our relationships with other people. And the point that Jesus always made is they can no longer be distinct; they have to be brought together. **Just as heaven and earth are married in Christ, so the inner life and the outer life must be married in the rebirth of Baptism**, so that we grow as whole beings filled with God inside and out, **our relationships being blessed as our inner minds are blessed and renewed**.

There are three emphases. The first in the gospel emphasizes how **the resurrection of Christ heals our relationship with those who have hurt us**: hurt us, abandoned us, betrayed us, injured us. The resurrection of Christ **empowers us to show mercy and extend forgiveness**. This is not a normal human capacity. It is supernatural. It is the work of grace, the work of the Holy Spirit, and nothing less. That's why Jesus breathed on his disciples saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit," because **without the Holy Spirit it will not take place**, this mercy and forgiveness. On the cross Jesus identified with all victims at all times. **In the resurrection victimhood itself is shattered, and mercy and forgiveness reorients the whole world order**, or at least that's what God has made possible, **although the world order may be very resistant and hidebound and rigid and unwilling to be reoriented**, because after all the world is made up of **free human beings. And even when freedom is for bad things, God respects it**.

Second, as children of God through faith we gain mastery over ourselves and we can keep the commandments just as Jesus did. We can. Again, this is an empowerment of grace of the Spirit of God. We are no longer just little old me and my human nature. **We are now God-filled and we can keep the commandments of love just as much as Jesus did**. And this makes concrete **the brotherhood and sisterhood born in Baptism**. And that's the point of the second reading.

Third, as the Acts witness, **we live now in peace and unity with one another**, and we are empowered to share generously of the blessings we have received so that **no one need to be in need**. This is because there was a radical shift through the power of the resurrection whereby **we are no longer centered on our own little separate self, but rather on the risen Christ in our midst** into whom we are all baptized. This Christ is the source of abundance.

Now before the resurrection we could be excused for living a very defensive, fearful life. But now that is completely unnecessary and in fact passé, and we need to get over it and let go. Thus we recognize others not only as friends, neighbors, acquaintances, or strangers even, but **now we recognize one another as members of the very selfsame body that we are**. They are in fact part of ourselves. They are really part of us, and we are part of them. And this is not just a manner of speaking; there is a profound truth in it. We have been made part of one another through the death and resurrection of Christ and the sacrament of Baptism that we have all received. So **if others are hungry, we feel their hunger**. If they are hurting, we experience their hurt; and we recognize also that what befalls them may eventually befall us. This is a wisdom that even some of the pagans have. **Caring for others and caring for self merge together as a single work, loving God and loving neighbor one single action**.

One of the facts that has astounded me through the years, and I know has astounded many other Americans and especially foreigners, is the fact that **in our country there are so many hungry mouths**, even though we are a rich and prosperous nation. How can this be? And now **there is a plan afoot to reduce the federal budget for the most vulnerable of our citizens by billions of dollars**. Because this *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program* nourishes 40 million people, including 20 million children, 5 million seniors and 4 million disabled, **I invite you to do something about this**. Something relatively minor would be to **sign a postcard** in the narthex on the way out of church asking our senators and representatives **to protect the funding for this program**, or maybe you can think of something even more significant.