

## Divine Mercy Sunday (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter Year B)

### Acts 4:32-35—The Community of Believers in Jerusalem

1. Unity: “of one heart and soul” (4:32)
2. Community: “they had everything in common” (4:32)
3. Charity/Alms: “there was not a needy person among them” (4:34-35)

### Psalm 118—Give Thanks to the Lord, for He is Good

1. Three Groups: (1) Priests, (2) Israelites, (3) All who “fear the LORD”
2. Mercy: “his mercy (Hebrew *hesed*) endures forever!”
3. Resurrection: Stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone! (vv. 22-24)

### 1 John 5:1-6—Believers are Children of God

1. “Everyone who *believes* that Jesus is the Christ is *a child of God*” (5:1)

### John 20:19-31—The Power to Forgive and the Doubt of Thomas

1. Jesus Gives the Disciples the Power to Forgive Sins (Easter Sunday “evening”)
  - a. “Peace be with you” (Hebrew *shalom*)
  - b. Apostles given: Power to *forgive* sins and power to *retain* sins
2. Jesus Appears to Thomas and the Disciples (8 Days Later = Today!)
  - a. Believing Thomas: “My Lord (Greek *kyrios*) and my God (Greek *theos*)”!
  - b. Beatitude for those who believe *without* seeing

### The Catechism on Communism

A system that “subordinates the basic rights of individuals and of groups to the collective organization of production” is contrary to human dignity...*The Church has rejected the totalitarian and atheistic ideologies associated in modern times with “communism” or “socialism.”* (CCC 2424-25)

### The Catechism on Religious Life

From the very beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty, and to imitate him more closely, by practicing *the evangelical counsels* [poverty, chastity, and obedience]. (CCC 918).

### The Catechism on Stewardship of Goods (Corporal Work of Mercy)

“*They had everything in common.*” [Acts 4:32] “Everything the true Christian has is to be regarded as a good possessed in common with everyone else. *All Christians should be ready and eager to come to the help of the needy ... and of their neighbors in want.*” A Christian is a steward of the Lord’s goods. (CCC 952; cf. CCC 2424-25)

### Living Magisterium: the Sacrament of Mercy

[T]he Lord instituted the sacrament of penance, principally when after his Resurrection he breathed upon his disciples and said: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” [John 20:22f.]. (Council of Trent, Session 14; DS 1670).

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year B)

1. Nowadays it is common to use the picture of the Jerusalem community in Acts 4:32-35 as a biblical justification for communism. Review the *Catechism’s* teaching on communism, socialism, and capitalism, in CCC 2424-25 and analyze the differences between the Jerusalem community and contemporary economic systems.

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2. Have you ever struggled with doubt in Jesus’ resurrection? What does the account of Jesus’ encounter with Thomas reveal to you about how Jesus deals with doubt? And what do you make of his “blessing” upon all those who believe *without* seeing?

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3. According to the Gospel of John, one of the first things Jesus did on Easter Sunday was give the disciples the power to forgive and retain sins. The Church interprets this event as the origins of the sacrament of confession (see CCC 1442). Have you ever connected this passage with the power of confession before?

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### For Further Study

1. CCC 1420-1498: This section of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* contains the Church’s official teaching the sacrament of reconciliation. It is essential reading.
2. Scott Hahn. *Lord’ Have Mercy: The Healing Power of Confession*. An excellent, easy-to-read book on the biblical roots of confession. A great resource to give to people who have questions about why the Church practices sacramental confession.
3. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia* (The Mercy of God) (1980). A must read for anyone interested in Divine Mercy Sunday. (available at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30111980\\_dives-in-misericordia.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html))