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Divine Mercy Sunday: the Gospel of Mercy is an open book in which the signs of Christ's disciples continue to be written

Vatican City, 3 April 2016 – "The Gospel is the book of God's mercy, to be read and reread, because everything that Jesus said and did is an expression of the Father's mercy. Not everything, however, was written down; the Gospel of mercy remains an open book, in which the signs of Christ's disciples – concrete acts of love and the best witness to mercy – continue to be written", affirmed Pope Francis in the homily he pronounced this morning during the Mass for the Jubilee of Divine Mercy in St. Peter's Square, attended by tens of thousands of faithful.

On this second Sunday of Easter "Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book. The Gospel is the book of God's mercy, to be read and reread, because everything that Jesus said and did is an expression of the Father's mercy. Not everything, however, was written down; the Gospel of mercy remains an open book, in which the signs of Christ's disciples – concrete acts of love and the best witness to mercy – continue to be written. We are all called to become living writers of the Gospel, heralds of the Good News to all men and women of today. We do this by practicing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, which are the hallmarks of the Christian life. By means of these simple yet powerful gestures, even when unseen, we can accompany the needy, bringing God's tenderness and consolation. Thus continues the great work of Jesus on Easter day, when he poured into the hearts of his fearful disciples the Father's mercy, bringing them the Holy Spirit who forgives sins and bestows joy".

He went on to note the evident contrast between the fear of the disciples, who gathered behind closed doors; and the mission of Jesus, Who sends them into the world to proclaim the message of forgiveness. "This contrast may also be present in us, experienced as an interior struggle between a closed heart and the call of love to open doors closed by sin", he observed. "It is a call that frees us to go out of ourselves. Christ, Who for love entered through doors barred by sin, death and the powers of hell, wants to enter into each one of us to break open the locked doors of our hearts. Jesus, Who by His resurrection has overcome the fear and dread which imprison us, wishes to throw open our closed doors and send us out. The path that the Risen Master shows us is a one way street, it goes in only one direction: this means that we must move beyond ourselves to witness to the healing power of love that has conquered us. We see before us a humanity that is often wounded and fearful, a humanity that bears the scars of pain and uncertainty. Before the anguished cry for mercy and peace, we hear Jesus' inspiring invitation: 'As the Father has sent me, even so I send you'".

"In God's mercy, all of our infirmities find healing. His mercy, in fact, does not keep a distance: it seeks to encounter all forms of poverty and to free this world of so many types of slavery. Mercy desires to reach the wounds of all, to heal them. Being apostles of mercy means touching and soothing the wounds that today afflict the bodies and souls of many of our brothers and sisters. Curing these wounds, we profess Jesus, we make Him present and alive; we allow others, who touch His mercy with their own hands, to recognise Him as 'Lord and God', as did the Apostle Thomas. This is the mission that He entrusts to us. So many people ask to be listened to and to be understood. The Gospel of mercy, to be proclaimed and written in our daily lives, seeks people with patient and open hearts, 'good Samaritans' who understand compassion and silence before the mystery of each brother and sister. The Gospel of mercy requires generous and joyful servants, people who love freely without expecting anything in return.

"Peace be with you!" is the greeting of Jesus to His disciples; this same peace awaits men and women of our own day. It is not a negotiated peace, it is not the absence of conflict: it is His peace, the peace that comes from the heart of the Risen Lord, the peace that has defeated sin, fear and death. It is a peace that does not divide but unites; it is a peace that does not abandon us but makes us feel listened to and loved; it is a peace that persists even in pain and enables hope to blossom. This peace, as on the day of Easter, is born ever anew by the forgiveness of God which calms our anxious hearts. To be bearers of His peace: this is the mission entrusted to the Church on Easter day. In Christ, we are born to be instruments of reconciliation, to bring the Father's forgiveness to everyone, to reveal His loving face through concrete gestures of mercy".

Francis concluded by citing Psalm 117 in today's liturgy, in which we read that God's love love endures forever. "Truly, God's mercy is forever", he reiterated; "It never ends, it never runs out, it never gives up when faced with closed doors, and it never tires. In this forever we find strength in moments of trial and weakness because we are sure that God does not abandon us. He remains with us forever. Let us give thanks for so great a love, which we find impossible to grasp; it is immense! Let us pray for the grace to never grow tired of drawing from the well of the Father's mercy and bringing it to the world. Let us ask that we too may be merciful, to spread the power of the Gospel everywhere, and to write those pages of the Gospel which John the Apostle did not write".
