

**Homily – Second Sunday of Easter (Sunday of Divine Mercy)
Mass with African Community – April 16, 2023**

The whole purpose of Lent and its disciplines, prayer, fasting and almsgiving, was to prepare us for Easter, when we live and celebrate the Paschal Mysteries. This time is about recognizing the presence of the Risen Jesus in our midst. Failure to recognize the presence of God among us, through Jesus, is precisely the root of all sin. Let us fully dive into this wonderful season, which helps us better appreciate Sunday Mass. Let us live these fifty days intensely, preparing well for the renewal of our Baptism and Confirmation – as individuals and communities – on Pentecost. We must be re-born of water and Spirit.

This second Sunday of Easter is called “Divine Mercy Sunday”. The title highlights the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, which lays at the foundation of God’s plan of salvation for humanity. As Pope Francis has explained, *“Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy. (...) Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him.”*¹ Jesus has revealed God’s love for us in a definitive way. Christ, *“by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.”*²

Let us lay down a path for this season in three steps: (1) recognizing Jesus, (2) recognizing myself, and (3) recognizing who we are together as a community. First, the disciples really get to know Jesus only when he appears to them after the resurrection. On their way to Emaus, the two disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of

¹ Misericordiae Vultus, 1.

² Gaudium et Spes, 22.

the bread, after their hearts were burning on the way when he opened the scriptures to them. Then, Thomas **recognizes him as his Lord and his God.**

Faith is not simply a coherent collection of ideas. It is a personal relationship with God, through the living Jesus. This relationship necessarily transforms a person radically. When Thomas confesses Jesus as “my” Lord, “my” God, he is also recognizing his new self. In our personal relationship with our Lord and our God, we cannot be indifferent to his immense and gratuitous mercy. We owe Him just as much. We must be reborn from above, of water and Spirit. (Cf. Jn 3: 3-5). There is discomfort in leaving something behind, dying to our-old-selves. However, the reward is that we are progressively transformed into Christ. Thus, we **recognize ourselves.**

The disciples go through the experience of the Lord’s resurrection together. Throughout the process, they enter into a new Communion, becoming one Body. They share with each other and become bread of life for others. They pray together, and share a joy that surpasses any hardship. They become open to everyone and serve all. They learn to celebrate, announce, live and witness to the Resurrection, together. Their Sunday gathering is the height of that new lifestyle. Throughout the centuries, this has not changed, and it is what we do every Sunday Mass. It is who we are. Gathered around the real presence of Jesus in our midst, let us **recognize that, together, we are truly the Body of the risen Christ.** Our identity includes our diverse cultures and everything we are.

Our Lady of Africa, help us to make Sunday Mass the center of a new life of witness to the mercy we have received from God.