

even death.

In the first part of today's Gospel reading, John reaches the end of his narrative of the Spirit. Jesus shared the Spirit with the apostles and directed them to use it for the forgiveness of sins. With the Spirit, the apostles were able to speak with divine authority. They could forgive offenses against God on God's behalf. This ministry continues today both in the church, through the sacrament of reconciliation, and among individual Christians when they forgive and perform works of mercy.

In the second part of the Gospel reading, Jesus chides Thomas for his slowness of faith, but he also shows that he is able to overcome Thomas's doubts and bring him to belief. At various times in history, Christians have used this Gospel to defend the use of material things like sacramentals, pilgrimages, icons or other religious art. Christ is willing to use things that are seen to strengthen us when we are weak in faith. Those of us who through baptism continue his mission in the Spirit must remember that as individuals and as church, we are icons of Christ. The world must see in us the same merciful Christ who appeared to the apostles. Then from us they can learn of Christ's mission and perform great works with his Spirit.

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# Weekly Reflection

FOR APRIL 11, 2021

## Divine Mercy Sunday



*"Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, I will not believe."*

### **First Reading: Acts 4: 32-35**

The community of believers was of one heart and mind.

### **Responsorial Psalm: 118: 2-4, 13-15, 22-24**

***R: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,  
his love is everlasting.***

### **Second Reading: 1John 5: 1-6**

Everyone who loves the Father, loves also the one begotten by him.

### **Gospel: John 20: 19-31**

Peace be with you.

*"Lord Jesus Christ, through your victory over sin and death you have overcome all the powers of darkness. Help me to draw near to you and to trust in your life-giving word. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and strengthen my faith in your promises and my hope in the power of your resurrection."*



## ***Gospel: John 20: 19-31***

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

## ***Gospel Meditation***

Early Christians knew that they were different. Each literary strand of the New Testament speaks of a mysterious force that propelled the Christian community to success even in the face of intimidating obstacles. This force gave authority to speech and success to works. It strongly resembled the Spirit that had motivated Jesus, and Christians came to realize they now shared in that same Spirit. It was a gift from Jesus to his disciples that allowed them to continue his mission.

John the Evangelist was especially interested in the Spirit. He first presents it as the bond of love between the Father and the Son (1:32). It was the power that gave authority to Jesus' preaching and deeds, and the power that would save him from death (6:63). At his death, Jesus handed the Spirit back to his Father, the source of all life (19:30). In today's Gospel passage, Jesus, risen in the power of the Spirit, shares this gift with his disciples and, by implication, with believers of every generation.

In today's first reading, Luke provides three illustrations of the effects of the Spirit on the Christian community. First, the apostles, speaking with power, convinced many people that Jesus had risen from the dead. Just as important was the lack of poverty in the early community; the Spirit led the wealthy to act with extraordinary mercy toward others. Finally, the Spirit was the source of peace, forging a community "of one heart and mind."

In the second reading, John speaks of the Spirit's transformation of the individual. John knew the obstacles that Christians faced, but he also knew that those who maintained their faith through such difficulties overcame them. Jesus had promised to send the Spirit, and faith kept the memory of that promise alive. In difficult times, those who kept faith found that, like Jesus, they were children of God, who could face