

## Second Sunday of Easter-Divine Mercy Sunday

April 24, 2022

Reflection by Sister Susan Quaintance, OSB

Acts 5:12-16; Rev 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19; Jn 20:19-31

Though the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter is sometimes called “Divine Mercy” Sunday – and that’s a wonderful quality to think about – I’m going to be bold enough to say that other names might also work. Today might be more aptly called “Signs and Wonders” Sunday or “Coming to Belief” Sunday or “The Sacrament of Doubt” Sunday. While I don’t expect the universal church will adopt one of those names anytime soon, they do get at what these scriptures present to us today.

The very first line of our reading from Acts says that “Many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles.” That exact phrase, “signs and wonders,” is used four other times in Acts to explain what life was like for the community of believers after the Resurrection. Mighty and miraculous deeds, like healing resulting from simply being in Peter’s shadow, were manifestations of being an apostle. It was not, of course, that they were doing these signs and wonders but, rather, that Jesus was working through them.

Though John’s gospel doesn’t use Luke’s phrase “signs and wonders” to flesh out what the disciples were sent to do, Jesus’ commission of peace and forgiveness certainly helps unpack it a little more. Thomas, standing in for all of us, is absolutely genuine in his response to the group when they tell him what he missed. Seeing Jesus? Resurrection? Come on. Thomas digs in. “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my fingers in the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” That’s the first of seven times some form of the word “belief” is used in the next seven verses, and I don’t think it’s accidental that it’s a negative: “I will not believe.”

I can hear myself saying some version of the same thing when I think about Jesus in the midst of this assembly today, describing how we, too, will do signs and wonders. Hmm. Though I am “young” in our house, I get offered a seat on the Red Line regularly; out there in the world plenty of gray hairs and wrinkles tell a different story. And that’s just the outside: what about the ineffectual, flawed, and hapless inside? When I see us here at liturgy or in the dining room, I am often surprised by how small the community looks now, compared to ten or twenty or thirty years ago; I know I’m not alone in that feeling. I thought about how we sometimes speak of ourselves as “muddling along.” Hmm.

Signs and wonders? Yes. They will be done through and in us. Isn’t that what God does? Take the materials at hand – in this case, us – and bring healing and forgiveness to a broken world? No matter how impossible or unlikely it seems, our first task is to believe. It’s not just our church’s newly initiated that are given this season of mystagogy, that beautiful name for a time in which we can delve deeper into Easter faith. It’s ours, too.

Feel free to use any of the names I suggested earlier for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter. I kind of like “Sacrament of Doubt” Sunday. We know the power of honesty, and if Thomas teaches us anything, it’s that Jesus meets us in our fear and doubt and befuddlement and stays with us. If we

can make ourselves stay with him, that's where transformation happens. Signs and wonders. Belief. Amen. Alleluia.