

Fr. Perozich comments —

Fr. Paul Scalia always gives me good insights through his inspirational reflections.

Many people read “The Catholic Thing” online.

The richness of the Divine Mercy of God is beyond words and comprehension.

Fr. Scalia gives something to reflect upon and to uplift the soul

- The Catholic Thing - <https://www.thecatholicthing.org> -

Peace, Wounds, and Breath

Fr. Paul D. Scalia Sunday, April 24, 2022

Place yourself with the Apostles in the Upper Room. Consider the emotions present in each heart. These men are in the very place where Jesus gave them the Eucharist and ordained them priests. The place also where each of them promised to be faithful to Him even to death. Incredible sadness and shame now filled their hearts. They had neglected His gifts and failed Him miserably. Perhaps their shame led to mutual recriminations, as it so often does.

Then there’s the situation outside the Upper Room. The religious authorities who put Jesus to death are still in power. Wouldn’t it seem reasonable for them to come for the Apostles too? Finally, by this point on Easter Sunday, the Apostles have heard about the empty tomb. Peter and John had run to it, returned, and reported it empty. It’s not immediately obvious that this is good news. If He’s alive, how would He come to them? With forgiveness or

condemnation? How would He greet them? How should they greet Him?

Then, suddenly and without warning, *Jesus came and stood in their midst*. That is, in the midst of this fear, shame, and fragile hope. He doesn't bring condemnation or even scolding. Instead, he brings what we celebrate today. The words and actions of the risen Lord in the Upper Room both bestow and reveal Divine Mercy.

First, Divine Mercy establishes peace: *He said to them, "Peace be with you."* For the Apostles to hear those words must have been a balm to their tortured souls. He did not return to condemn them but to reconcile them with God. Which is what it means to be at peace: to be made one, once again, with God. Christ accomplished this reconciliation on the Cross and now reveals and extends it with the simple words, *Peace be with you*.

There are various dimensions of this peace. The Apostles are first reconciled with the Father through Christ the Son. This reconciliation comes not through any work of their own, but through the Father's initiative and mercy in the Son. Because they are reconciled with the Father, they are also reconciled within themselves. Our division from God produces a terrible division within ourselves. Our reconciliation with Him then produces a peace within our own hearts, a reconciliation with ourselves. This also sets them at peace with one another. Because only the one at peace with God and himself can be at peace with others.

We all desire peace and try to accomplish or attain it ourselves. But no amount of personal advancement or popularity . . . no legislation, economic growth, or cultural renewal can produce it. Peace comes only from the Father's work through Christ His Son. It is a work of Divine Mercy that we should beg the Father to bestow.

Second, Divine Mercy bears the wounds of sin: *When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.* That is, he shows them His *wounds*, the *holes* in His hands and His side, as Thomas had wisely insisted. Unlike what passes for mercy among us, Divine Mercy takes sin seriously. It does not gloss over or make light of the evil that we do. It is not a shrug of the shoulders or an indulgent, *Don't worry about it. . . .It's all good.* Divine mercy looks at sin in all its horror and, even more, it bears the wounds of our sins.

He knows our sins thoroughly because they have pierced Him through. His mercy is no trivialization of what we've done. He keeps the wounds, not to accuse or condemn us but to show that His mercy is more real than our sins and stronger than them.

Third, Divine Mercy has power even to raise the dead: *And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."* This gesture of breathing would have been as odd to the Apostles as it is to us. But they at least would have grasped its meaning. His breathing on them is not just a gesture or a greeting. It is a sign of what His mercy accomplishes.

We read in Genesis: *the Lord God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.* We are brought to life by the breath of God. Now in the Person of Jesus, God breathes upon the Apostles, to show that **His mercy brings about new life, a new creation. We are brought to new life by the breath of God.**

Finally, his mercy takes on a specific form: *“Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”* In these words, we have the Sacrament of Confession in seminal form. Jesus gives to mere men the power to forgive sins and, significantly, the responsibility to discern what should be forgiven and what retained. How does a man with that authority know which to do? Well, **it requires that the person seeking forgiveness makes his soul and his sorrow known. We call that Confession.**

And as often as we avail ourselves of this Sacrament, the risen Christ is present to us, breathing His new life into us, so that we, in turn, may become instruments and messengers of this mercy that brings peace, bears all wounds, and raises the dead.