

2nd Sunday of Easter (B)  
(Acts 4:32-35 / John 20:19-31)  
11.04.2021  
*To Give & To Receive*

To give and to receive are two components of our DNA as human beings. They make us really human.

However when we reduce receiving and giving to a commercial transaction, then they become synonyms of *Click and Collect*. When we receive without giving or give without receiving, when we give with strings attached, then we wound ourselves and others in what should be our shared growth in humanity.

In our readings today, the main focus is precisely on giving, receiving and sharing. To the disciples gathered together behind closed doors, Jesus gives peace, the Spirit of forgiveness and to Thomas he gives faith.

That Jesus gives should not surprise us. In his very nature Jesus is the gift of God (cf. Jn 4:10). In his life and in his death, Jesus is given to us and for us. According to St John Paul II the fact that “the Son of God made himself a gift for us (...) means to stress our availability to become a gift for others.” (*Address to Members of the Roman Curia*, 24.12.1996) Maybe here it is important to be precise: “others” does not mean first those with whom we agree, those who are in a distance from us but first those with whom we live, those around us who may disagree with us and think differently than we do.

Everything that Jesus gives us is not supposed to be enjoyed alone. When he gives the disciples peace, forgiveness and faith, Jesus reminds them that he is sending them into the world. Just as he is sent by the Father so he sends us, just as he gives to us so we must give to others. Our Churches cannot, should not, become small bubbles of self-satisfied people. Sharing generously, taking the risk of sharing with others, is not an option for us if we want to be obedient to the Lord. It is a requirement.

In our reading from the Acts of the Apostles we see the first Christian community being faithful to its vocation and identity: obediently sharing with one another, and particularly with those in need. Each one shared what he or she had received from the Lord.

For you and me, the challenge is to give as freely as we have received (cf. Mt 10:8). The problem is that our desire to feel secure tends to make us accumulate things, cling to people and ideas. We perceive any form of letting go as a threat to our security and stability.

The sad thing is that the less generous we are, the less alive and fruitful we become, the poorer we become. On the contrary giving makes us rich, sharing makes us grow. Pope Francis sums up the challenge very well when he says: “The ‘economy’ of the Gospel multiplies through sharing, nourishes through distributing. (...) We have to learn to share in order to grow together. (...) To grow truly, we must grow together, sharing what we have.” (*Hom.* 23.06.2019; *Message for the 106th world day of migrants and refugees* 27.09.2020)

At the moment in the secular world and among religious people from all persuasions, the greatest temptation may be to allow our fears to prevent us from growing in life. Our insecurity isolates us from one another and makes us individualistic and stingy. It narrows our field of vision and imprisons us behind inner and outward walls.

What is striking in the Acts of the Apostles, in the few verses we heard today and in the whole of the book, is that the sharing of goods, attentiveness to one another as well as

support and encouragement generously given and received build up and manifest the unity of the community. Sharing and unity are closely linked.

In a way that is what St John Paul II meant when he encouraged us to foster unity between Christians by developing a dynamic of exchange of gifts between our Churches. What is true at the ecumenical level is also true within each one of the Churches.

In our communities, our dialogue with one another must be an exchange of gifts. At the moment on internet, there are many Catholic preachers, clerics and lay people, who think that the unity of our Church and the integrity of our faith depend on divisive and insensitive words, on aggressively judgemental and condemnatory sermons.

On this Mercy Sunday, we are reminded that since we have received mercy (cf. 2Co 4:1), we have to give mercy. As the "*Name of God is Mercy*" (Title of Pope Francis' book published in 2016), God's Church, all our Christian communities are built on mercy. Our unity and our fruitfulness must be continually preserved not by violence and hate but by the arduous work of God's mercy in and through us.

It is in sharing mercy that we will make our communities grow in unity because, like St Paul, we believe that only "love builds up" (1Co 8:1), it builds up in the image and likeness of God who is love (cf. 1Jn 4:8).

In God's Mercy, we can find the strength to be truthful about what we believe, the patience to be caring with everyone, the courage to change what is amiss in our lives, the perseverance to forgive and to heal wounded relationships, the hope to move on beyond all failures and mistakes.

A week after Easter Sunday, we are invited to remember our baptism, to return to the font of our baptism which is for us the font of mercy. Through our baptism we have received "the invincible power of the Father's mercy" (*Hom.* 10.01.2016) and according to Pope Francis, "in the measure that we welcome the grace of mercy, we become ever more fully God's people, and also become capable of proclaiming to everyone his marvellous works." (General Audience, 20.01.2016)

During this Easter season, at this time of a pandemic which has wounded and still hurts many of our brothers and sisters in humanity, let us implore and open our hearts to receive anew the grace, the strength, the patience, the courage, the perseverance and the hope we need for the journey. Let us also share everything we are and have with love, so that everyone may "have life, and have it in all its fullness." (Jn 10:10)