

The doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. It's okay to feel a little fearful, to feel perhaps that the world is out to get us. "Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe." It's okay to have doubts. It's okay to find Christianity difficult, to find Catholic teaching difficult. It's okay to feel you are being plagued by all sorts of trials, the slow drip of betrayal, character assassination and just general frustration.

Today is Divine Mercy Sunday. Before the advent of Pope Francis, Divine Mercy was just one more devotion on the annual round, with its own traditions, its own special prayers and its own plenary indulgence. But no longer. In conjunction with an Italian journalist, Pope Francis has just brought out a book called *The name of God is Mercy*. Divine mercy is not just an add-on. Divine Mercy is everything. It is by God's mercy, his sheer gratuitousness, his ardent desire to share himself with others, that he creates us in the first place. It is by his mercy that he gives us the Law and the Prophets. It is by his mercy that he lives and suffers and dies among us. It is by his mercy that he appears to the disciples behind closed doors and says, *"Peace be with you"*.

It is by his mercy that he gives Thomas a second chance. *"Put your finger here...Give me your hand....Doubt no longer, but believe."*

We will still have fears. We will still have doubts. Maybe these are the wounds we will carry around for ever. But within these wounds, beyond these wounds and through these wounds, God is there standing among us in all his love and compassion.

The first reading today gives us a summary of Church life - faithfulness to the teaching of the apostles, faithfulness to the brotherhood, the sisterhood, the community, faithfulness to the breaking of bread, the Eucharist, the Mass, and faithfulness to the prayers. But no amount of faithfulness, no amount of loyalty and obedience, no amount of churchiness or piety will do us any good whatsoever, unless we have some kind of appreciation of God's own mercy. God's love, God's mercy is the heart and soul of everything. Without it, there is just nothing, so much hot air and artificiality.

Jesus is here among us. And, as St Peter says, *"This is a cause of great joy for you...a joy so glorious that it cannot be described."*

*Give thanks to the lord for he is good;
for his love has no end.*