

Rev. Derek Fairman

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter A

This Sunday is called Divine Mercy Sunday. This special devotion to God's mercy came into the Church following the time that the Jansenist heresy was spreading through the Church in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. What was the Jansenist heresy? Well, perhaps what most characterized the Jansenist heresy was an overemphasis on original sin, and how it affected the soul's free will. The Jansenists tended toward scrupulosity and rigorous discipline in order to overcome the tendencies of a soul they believed was thoroughly corrupted by original sin.

The errors of Jansenism were condemned by Pope Clement XI and their spread was stopped mostly by the Jesuits. However, the influence of Jansenism did not completely go away. The devotion to the Divine Mercy, most notably praying the Divine Mercy chaplet, that we trace to St. Faustina, began at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We note that an emphasis upon God's mercy is in contrast to the scrupulosity of the Jansenists.

We keep this in mind as we examine our readings for today. We might imagine what it was like for the Apostles gathered together. Perhaps they were filled with self-reproach for having abandoned the Lord Jesus during His trial and suffering. Perhaps their consciences were filled with fear and anxiety. After all, they not only feared their own consciences, but they also feared what might happen once the authorities found out where they were. They felt that they were without direction and did not know what to do next.

When the Lord Jesus came to them, He showed the Apostles mercy and forgave them. He pronounced His peace upon them. His Divine Mercy came upon them. He also gave them a commission: He sent the Apostles as the Father had sent Him. He bestowed upon them the Holy Spirit and enjoined them to extend His mercy and forgiveness to others.

