

Second Sunday of Easter
April 11 & 12, 2015

S. Kathy Osbelt, OSF
All Saints Parish, Syracuse

Do You Believe in Resurrection?

It is the year 3030 and a young Christian discovers a paper entitled: All Saints Chronicles. He reads: "The community of believers devoted themselves to what they studied in the words of the prophets, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of early disciples. They broke bread and prayed together at one another's houses. They gathered at church. They shared all things. Those that had extra property, cars, supplies and goods sold them and gave the money to a fund for those who were poor. They praised God in all things. By their love and joy many were attracted to join them."

Wow! Too impossible? What do you think?

Peter writes to tell us that God is to be praised because God gives us a new birth through God's mercy. This birth draws its life from Jesus' Resurrection. New life is always possible. Jesus confirms that He is risen. He appears to those gathered in the locked room, locked because the disciples were fearful that they were the next to die. "Peace be with you!" Jesus said, and then showed them the marks of crucifixion. Then they were filled with joy. "Peace be with you," he said again. "As Abba sent me, so I am sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained." In other words, don't let someone go without forgiving them in my mercy. We celebrate that mercy today, a day called Divine Mercy Sunday.

Thomas misses it all. "I won't believe until I put my finger in his wounds." He said. He has gotten a bad name being called "Doubting Thomas". Actually, I would call him "Courageous Thomas" because he had the guts to say what all the disciples were feeling before Jesus appeared to them.

Jesus is quoted: "Blessed are they who have **not** seen and have believed." Then the Gospel writer makes an aside to us: "This has been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah! So that through this faith you may have life!"

By way of the Resurrection stories our faith in the living Christ is made strong. If our faith does not instruct the way we live, then that faith is empty. Faith changed the lives of the early Christians; it must change ours, too.

We don't have to look too far for an example. Pope Francis began his pontificate with a vow to turn the Catholic Church into a Church for the poor...to turn the Catholic Church into a **Church for the poor**.

Four homeless men celebrated his 77th birthday with him during the first year of his papacy. Many more homeless people were invited to celebrate with him this year.

Pope Francis ordered the alms giver to give out 450 sleeping bags to the homeless
Umbrellas were given out too.

Showers were installed near the public bathrooms under the colonnade of the Vatican.

Every Monday a volunteer gives free haircuts.

Laundry services and a clothes bank are available to those on the streets.

The homeless people are invited to hand out prayer books on Wednesdays before the Papal audience.

150 homeless men and women were invited to see the Sistine Chapel and Vatican Museums which usually costs about \$40.

One homeless man was buried in a cemetery in Vatican City.

Last Holy Thursday the Pope washed the feet of those who had AIDS, this year it was prisoners in jail who received his love and care.

In Peter's letter read today, he states: "You may for a time suffer trials." Indeed, there are many who are critical of the Pope's generosity, just as they were of Jesus. Many store owners have complained whose stores are along the Via Conciliazione where most of the homeless sleep.

There has been a report of an increase in petty crime since the homeless have moved in.

There are too few public toilets open overnight, so street cleaners are having to disinfect the streets they clean.

But the upside of the Pope outreach far outweighs the negative impact.

The book, Joy of the Gospel, is like a pep talk from the Pope on how to be a Christian. In it, he explains what the real message of the Gospel is and why it should bring us joy.

Basically: God loves us without limits, conditions, always. Is ever there for us.
 God shows us how to love as God: going out to the peripheries to
 where people are in greatest need. We absorb that love and reach out to others.

We are sent out to go where there isn't love
Go where people need to be encouraged
Bring the joy of the story into your home, neighborhood, city, country and world.

Resurrection happens when love transforms life.

Resurrection happens when there is forgiveness in spite of a desire for revenge.

It happens when enemies sit down together to compromise for the common good.

It happens when immigrants and refugees are not shut out. Resurrection happens when those in prison are treated with respect.

Resurrection happens when those who are poor, hungry, homeless are attended as brothers and sisters.

Do we believe that we can be members of a Christian community from which Resurrection emanates?