**April 8, 2018 – Divine Mercy Sunday**

**Fr. John Edmunds, ST**

A poet once said: “Two men gazed through prison bars. One saw mud, the other stars.” The insight is that circumstances don’t control attitude. Both men were in prison but because one was looking up instead of down, he didn’t let his experience depress him. During these days we are celebrating the presence of the Risen Jesus in our midst. This Easter season provides a living reminder of the change in attitude that the Resurrection causes among Christians. We believe that Jesus has triumphed over sin and death, that Good Friday does not get the last word, that our story has a happy ending. And we hold on to the Easter attitude despite sometime dire circumstances. We gather here on Sunday morning as families who are hurting. Perhaps you are grieving a loss or sickness threatens a family member, perhaps a dear one is infected with AIDS or addicted to drugs or alcohol, perhaps someone is in jail or a financial crisis looms on the horizon. Add to that, fears about the future of our children and youth, pain over strains in a marriage, and plain old loneliness, guilt and exhaustion and you don’t have a very pretty picture. Yet in faith we don’t let our circumstances control us. When we possess an Easter attitude we see the stars and not the mud.

A story to illustrate the Easter attitude: In medieval times a traveler noticed three men pushing wheelbarrows full of bricks. We asked the first man, “What are you doing?” The man snapped back, “I’m pushing a load of bricks. What does it look like I’m doing?” The traveler asked the second man, “What are you doing?” He answered wearily, “I’m working hard to support my wife and children.” The traveler asked the third man the same question. He put down his wheelbarrow and answered eagerly, “I’m helping to build a cathedral.” Three men, all doing the same thing, but feeling very differently about it depending on their attitude. Our prayer during the Easter season must be to obtain the attitude that trusts the Risen Jesus will triumph over whatever circumstance life dishes out to us.

All of which serves as a long introduction to the gospel story of Doubting Thomas. We should be able to relate to him because he was in dire circumstances. He was part of an unjust and racist society which brutalized anyone who was different. He was grieving the loss of someone he relied upon. He had seen pain and suffering on the face of someone he loved. He was disappointed in himself for his weakness and fear. He found that his companions were losers, no better than he was. So his response to good news that the Lord had appeared was cynical. “Let me touch the wounds. I only believe in the pain.” When the Risen Jesus appeared again, he invited Thomas to have an Easter attitude. “Yes, the wounds are touchable, the pain is real. But believe that God can make a way out of no way. God can change Good Friday into Easter Sunday.”

Church, our scripture readings for this Sunday give us some suggestions on how to get an Easter attitude. In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles we read: “The community of believers was of one heart and mind.” You can be sure that the first believers weren’t all that much different from us. The gospels tells us something of the faults and foibles of the apostles. No doubt the other early Christians were a motley crew as well. They had the same troubles, the same difficulties, the same kind of personalities to cope with as we do. But because they had an Easter attitude they lived in unity, being of one heart and mind. That meant they learned how to forgive and accept forgiveness. They strove remove the speck of judgment from their own eyes. They tried to treat every individual as precious and worthy of respect. With an Easter attitude they could overlook the shortcomings in the community in order to see the grace and the goodness.

The first lesson goes on to say: “There was no needy person among them.” For that blessed condition to exist the first Christians had to involve themselves in the lives of those around them. Certainly needs existed. People grieved. Some were depressed or overworked. Hunger and homelessness were problems. For there to be no needy person required a community which was concerned about one another. Our Easter attitude demands nothing less. This community is filled with gifted people. Once we learn how to share our talents, to share our faith, to share our lives with one another we will find there are no needs we can’t address. God will not be outdone in generosity. God has called us together so that we can embody the power of the Risen Jesus to make all things new.

Church, our faith in the Risen Jesus does not change our circumstances, only our attitude. If we want, we can focus on the mud, we can feel like we’re pushing a load of bricks. However, faith holds out another option to us. When we adopt an Easter attitude we see the stars, we’re building a cathedral. Our unity and our care characterize faith in the Risen Jesus. So church, get yourself an attitude, an Easter attitude!