Homily for the Second Sunday of Easter by Father Mike

Dear Friends on the Risen Savior,

Let me begin by thanking you for your prayers, support, and encouragement that you have offered to us, the staff of Annunciation Catholic Church. As of now we are all well and are doing those things that are recommended to keep us that way. I hope you are doing so as well.

The reading from the Acts of the Apostles (2:42-47) today shares with us the very early beginnings of the church and offers us a glimpse of its early formation. On the website of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati there is a description of the Church.

**The Four Levels of Church**

In reality, we can speak of four distinct levels of Church. There is the Universal Church led by the bishop of Rome and all bishops in union with him. There is the local diocesan church. Led by its local bishop, it is uniquely positioned to guide us on how best to implement our faith in our own time and culture. There is the local parish church, from which we receive most of our religious instruction and the sacraments. Finally, there is this fourth layer of Church. The Domestic Church plays a key role in our sanctification because it is the primary place where we practice coming to intimately love other persons.

The term “Domestic Church” refers to the family, the smallest body of gathered believers in Christ. Though recovered only recently, the term dates all the way back to the first century AD. The Greek word *ecclesiola* referred to “little church.” Our Early Church Fathers understood that the home was fertile ground for discipleship, sanctification, and holiness.

The early followers of Christ often gathered in homes to share in the Eucharist, to enter into prayer and support one another. They found themselves in very difficult situations; no longer able to worship in the Temple or Synagogues, under suspicion by religious leaders, and then being persecuted by local authorities. The Domestic Church thrived and enabled faith in Jesus Christ to increase. It could be one person in prayer or several people gathered as one.

We are in a present moment where this understanding of a Domestic Church can truly be reinvigorated. Yes, we miss gathering together for worship and fellowship. Yet we have an opportunity for personal faith growth. Our website, [annunciationdc.org](file:///C:\Users\lindb\AppData\Local\Packages\microsoft.windowscommunicationsapps_8wekyb3d8bbwe\LocalState\Files\S0\22266\Attachments\annunciationdc.org) will lead you to many resources of excellent reading material, videos, and websites. Here you reflect with the early church as well as thoughts from the present day for discussion with your family and friends.

St Peter proclaims in his first letter (1:3-9), “In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” We are being tested, we are enduring trials of isolation, disease, death and economic loss. Yet we gather, as a little church, to praise the Lord, to see his blessings even in the midst of woe. At 3 PM or whenever possible, let us gather wherever we may be and pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet on this Divine Mercy Sunday. Let us pray it as individuals, couples, families and friends. We are all in need of His Mercy

May our doubts and fears, like St. Thomas, give way to a profession of faith in which we call out, “My Lord and my God.” As we read and pray over the Gospel of John we come to know the depth of faith that John possessed and that this faith can also be ours. The work of Jesus is not complete for it continues to be shared in the way we live our lives for the Lord and each other. This is not a time for discouragement but a time of hope; it is a time of rejoicing. Continue to greet each other with “Happy Easter” and, “He is Risen.” Continue to respond with, “He is truly Risen.” May your home always be your domestic church and may we as a parish look forward to a time of gathering where the Body of Jesus Christ may be received and shared. Blessings on your day. Amen.