On Divine Mercy Sunday, Jesus appeared to the Apostles saying, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21). This one verse is a good summary of our 1st Reading from the Acts of the Apostles (9:31-42).

“The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace” (9:31). Saul had really stirred up a lot of trouble in his persecution of Christians. Struck down and blinded, Saul had plenty of time to reflect on his persecution of Jesus and to repent of his zealous ways. The new man, Paul, undergoes a period of formation and acceptance before he can refocus that zealous attitude and use it to build the church he had once tried to destroy. Meanwhile, there is a period of peace enjoyed by the Christian community through the cessation of Paul’s activities against it.

One might liken the sudden change in the religious climate to our global environment. In the midst of the pandemic with everyone staying at home, the demand for gasoline has dropped so dramatically that the air pollution that usually hovers over big cities has quite noticeably disappeared. For those whose lungs are very sensitive to pollution, it is like a new spring. It is a period peace and tranquility.

In his ministry, Jesus was constantly on the move traveling from one place to the next. Having sent the Apostles out to build up the church, we are not surprised to see Peter doing the same. And the church is flourishing. It is being built up and its numbers are growing.

Peter is traveling from place to place and reinforcing the Christian message by his preaching and through miracles. Jesus healed paralytics and Peter does the same.

- Peter healed a man who had been crippled from birth. “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, [rise and] walk” (Acts 3:6).
- Here, he heals a man confined to his bed for 8 years. “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed” (9:34).

Jesus raised Jesus’s daughter back to life. The laying on of hands and the faith of the father were instrumental in Jesus bringing her back to life. “Little girl, I say to you, arise!” (Mark 5:41). Peter clears the room, and after kneeling and praying says, “Tabitha, rise up” (9:34). The two miracles help others to believe. “This became known all over Joppa, and many came to believe in the Lord” (9:42).

Before her death, Tabitha had been completely occupied with good deeds and almsgiving. When Jesus healed Peter’s mother in law, she immediately got up and began to serve. Tabitha, whose name means gazelle, was no doubt back on her feet serving and sharing the good news in no time at all.

While many are converting from the Jewish faith, the church is growing in leaps and bounds as Gentiles become Christians. Peter will remain in Joppa for some time with one Gentile until he is summoned to help another Gentile in Caesarea.

Peter healed in the name of Jesus. He did not take credit for the good he did, but humbly recognized, any power he exerted was only possible through Jesus. I am reminded of my years in North Pole with Deacon Walt. On more than one occasion, his health was restored through the healing hands of skilled physicians. One in particular was a man of faith. He recognized that he was merely an instrument of God’s healing and any good he accomplished should always be credited to God.

During my years in Nome, I encountered an elderly woman named Marie from the lower 48. Whenever she would write, she would put “J.M.J.” at the top of her letters. In grade school, the Sisters had taught her to always ask for help from Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Marie’s “J.M.J.” was an acknowledgement, that whatever one accomplishes, one does it through the grace of God, with the help of Mary his Blessed Mother, and Joseph, the quiet protector of the Holy Family.

There is great peace in knowing that we live and breathe by the grace of God. And there is a great trust that Jesus places in us. Just as the Father sent Jesus into the world, Jesus sends us to carry on that mission.