I'm not sure what it is, but it seems in recent years, anger, or at least expression of anger, has continually grown. Social media, nice for sharing pictures of things, can often degenerate into a cesspool of bickering back and forth, often through the use of a fake online name or handle where people make snide comments at one another. On the road, it seems people are driving more aggressively and showing signs of road rage. And it's not uncommon to see people yelling and shouting at one another over politics. I know myself, I can get riled up over things. And I also, like most all of us, know what it's like to be targeted by people who really are upset with something.

But of course anger isn't new; it's always been a part of who we are as one of the deadly sins, and history and literature are full of countless examples of anger between people or groups of people. And what the result of returning anger with just "upping the score" is time and time again the same: one of making the situation worse, and certainly not helping yourself or the other person. This is not to say that anger is not justified; indeed it often is. But the question is what do you do with that anger? Because for so many, their anger, along with their other sins or struggles, become this prison from which they cannot escape. Wounded in some way, the person takes this out on others. The bully for instance may have a hard home life, learning such behavior. Or maybe the angry person at you is really anger at themselves for life choices, or afraid about things in their life. To find true peace, we have to realize that all of us are wounded, and as the psychologist Carl Jung and Fr. Henri Nouwen would put it, we become the wounded healer, bringing peace to others.

Some years ago, Mayra Morin, a freelance writer, found this out when she moved next door to a very difficult woman. Reflecting on the experience, she writes that the neighbor was determined to make the lives of her family miserable from the moment they met. Edna Strom looked to be in her late 70s. She had a perpetual squint. Her lips curled sourly, as if she had mistaken a bottle of vinegar for soda.

Mayra and her family had barely moved one stick of furniture into the lower duplex they'd rented next door to her converted two-story home when Mrs. Strom hobbled onto her upstairs front gallery. She glared down at Mayra's 12-year-old son David and then at her, announcing "You make sure you keep that child out of my yard!"

Since their buildings shared a communal six-foot-high privacy fence that separated their lots, Mayra couldn't understand her concern or hostility. Nevertheless, she replied curtly, "Don't worry!" as she ducked into her entryway with the box she was carrying.

That encounter set the tone for weeks. The next day, while Mayra's son was laughing on the phone, they were stunned to hear a loud pounding from the other side of the bedroom wall, which connected their dwellings.

"Stop that racket right this minute" came the yelling voice.

Mrs. Strom's furios voice filtered right into the kitchen she was painting. She rushed towards David to find him sitting on the bed, eyes wide with shock, his conversation forgotten.

He looked up at his mom and said Mom, I was just laughing!"

Mayra said "I know, honey" and soothed, gulping back her own growing anger. "Listen," she said, "lets just let this go until were a little more settled in. I'll deal with it in a few days if it continues, okay?" David reluctantly agreed.

That same afternoon, he and a friend went out front to play pitch and catch. Within minutes, they both returned, their expressions clearly indicating that they were upset about something.

"What happened?" Mayra asked, knowing inside that it was probably the neighbor again.

"She yelled at us from her balcony to go play in the back yard" David complained.

Mayra handed each of the kids a soda, instructing them go go out back. Then, she marched out the front door to confront the cranky old woman. This was their home too, and she said to herself that she was going to nip the problem in the bud. There was no way this woman would continue to scold her child, especially since he'd done nothing wrong, nor been excessively loud.

Mayra found Edna sitting ramrod straight in a rocking chair on her front porch, peering out into the street. Her summer dress was crisply ironed, her polished shoes gleamed, and every hair was in place. She wore a pearl necklace with matching earrings. When she saw Mayra approach, she narrowed her eyes, pursing her lips even tighter.

"Is something wrong?" Mayra asked her.

"My boy is coming to visit," she informed her haughtily. "I didn't want to get hit by your son's baseball while I wait for him."

"I'm sure he was being careful," Mayra said, defending her son. "He's not a bad kid, ma'am. In the future, if there's a problem, please come to me so we can solve it instead of shouting at him."

Not waiting for an answer, Mayra turned and went back into the house. As she entered the common foyer, she almost bumped into the upstairs tenant who was checking her mail.

"I see you've met Edna Strom." She smiled. "Pay her no mind. She sits out there every day the minute the weather turns warm and waits for her son to visit. He only comes when he needs money. Even then, he's loud, rude, and obnoxious, treating her like dirt!"

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, Mayra almost muttered, but she bit her tongue. "Is she always crabby," she asked instead.

"Always. Just ignore her. Everyone does" was the answer.

Edna didn't let up on her tyrannical behavior. She hammered on the walls if they so much as dropped a pot cover or raised their stereo or television to a decibel above a whisper. Even adjusting the ring of their phone to accommodate her couldn't please the woman. They could almost feel her scowl sear into them as she kept her ever-present vigil on the balcony in the pathetic hope that her son might drop in.

Two months later, Mayra and her son were finally settled in and decided to have a cookout for friends and family. She prepared for the event, ignoring the persistent banging whenever she closed a cupboard or refrigerator door a little too hard. By that time, Mrs. Strom was becoming background noise.

The day of the barbecue, as people arrived, Mayra noticed that Edna wasn't at her usual post. Her son had dropped in two days earlier and was every bit as vocal and insufferable as Mayra had been told, belittling his mother and demanding money. Mayra assumed she wouldn't expect him again anytime soon and was taking a break from her lookout.

As the last guest arrived, they moved to the back yard. Mayra was serving appetizers when a movement from Edna's upstairs window caught her eye. She looked up to see her observing a laughing group of her visitors. Unaware that she could be seen, her usual bitter demeanor was absent. Instead, a combination of sad, wistful loneliness seemed to suffuse her features, and Mayra felt a growing sympathy tug at her heart.

Seconds later, Mayra was ringing Edna's bell. She opened the door, shocked to see her.

"Can I help you" she asked coldly, and Edna smiled.

"Mrs. Strom, I was wondering if you'd like to join us since we're neighbors. I'm sure my family and friends would love to meet you."

Edna was bewildered, and said perplexingly, "Well, I-that is-I-I'm not really dressed to-"

Mayra noticed she was clothed more casually than she'd ever seen her.

"You look fine," Mayra assured her. Everyone is in jeans or shorts. You'll fit right in. Please come."

For the first time ever, Mayra saw Edna smile, catching a glimpse of the beauty that must have been hers when she was younger.

“Well, if you’re sure,” she said shyly, patting her hair nervously and straightening her blouse. “I have a fresh cheesecake I can bring - my late husband’s favorite. I made it this morning.”

“Why that would be wonderful,” Mayra gushed. “Come, let’s go.”

Her husband and son hid their shock, welcoming their neighbor with warm smiles when Mayra escorted her into their yard on her arm.

“Everyone,” she called out. “I’d like you to meet my friend and neighbor, Edna Strom.”

Mayra and her family never heard a harsh word from Edna again. In fact, they became close friends, forgiving and forgetting their rocky beginning, and embracing their friendship instead. She no longer sat on her balcony waiting tirelessly for her son’s sporadic visits. she was far too busy teaching Mayra her favorite recipes , and joining Mayra’s family for their family occasions where she was welcomed and received with love and respect until she died peacefully five years later in her sleep. Only a week before her death, she had hugged Mayra so tightly and thanked her for being the daughter she never had. Mayra mourned her like she would a beloved relative, grateful that she looked pass the thorns to see the fragile flower within.

When Jesus appears to the apostles this week in the locked room, note his first word: “Peace.” He’s not coming to settle a score; not coming to get revenge for them abandoning him. Rather, he offers them his love and peace. What a gift that is.

It’s on this Second Sunday of Easter that we also celebrate Divine Mercy; the feast being added as a part to end the Octave of Easter by Saint John Paul II, who had a special devotion to Sister Faustina, the polish nun who had the visions of Jesus depicted in the famous painting, and recorded in her diary the Lord’s message of mercy and wanting to give peace to the sinner if only they would come to Him.

As we all know though, sin can change us into people we don’t want to be. Sometimes it’s our own sins, or the sins of others; usually a combination of both. The challenge for us is to be open to that mercy and then being an instrument of it.

First, there is the fear. Fear is something we all have; for Mrs. Strom, it was perhaps the fear of being alone or the fear of never been really appreciated from her son. So she’d be behind the locked doors of her house and yell at people. All of us have fears, and we lock the doors. Some are legitimate; the disciples for instance understandably are afraid of being tracked down and killed like Christ. But sometimes fears can be overwhelming; the fear of failure, the fear of not being as successful as a sibling or friend; the fear of death; the fear of being alone; the fear of our sins; the fear of diseases like Covid. The fear takes over, and just as Covid spread despite lockdowns and all these other things, sin does too. Death will also come for us all. And what a miserable thing to be afraid for

a whole life. As I said a few weeks back, we can either get busy living or get busy dying as Andy Durfane put it in Shawshank Redemption.

Jesus of course wants us to get busy living, to have life and have it more abundantly, which is why He did all that He did for us all. As Mayra notes in her story, seeing the glimpse of her neighbors beauty with her smile, she also saw a glimpse of the more internal beauty and mercy brought it out. God does this for us.

It is done by the showing of the wounds. Notice what Jesus does; He shows the apostles His hands and His side. Surely it must have been painful to see, because the wounds are a reminder to the apostles of their own sinfulness. We as humans killed Christ, and as I noted on Palm Sunday, it's not as if the Romans were any worse than other humans in history. Christ would be killed today if He came into the world. But Christ also sees the good in us, and wants to heal us. And as such, we have to be OK showing Him our wounds. How often as humans we want to hide our wounds from the world and one another. We tell ourselves hey I'm pretty good, Im not all that bad. Sure, we do good things, but all of us have our struggles; our fears; our sins. That's why it's important not to pretend they are not there, but to show our wounds to the God who is love, knowing that His mercy is always there for us.

As we do this, we persevere. Sometimes we fall back into old ways; often we confess the same things as the years go by. Notice Thomas isn't there at first when the others are there. He's in a sense outside of the Church; the community of believers. It's within the Church that Jesus appears in the story, in that room. And when he encounters Jesus, and touches the hands and the side, he has this profession of faith, no longer a doubter but a believer. This gives us hope; it reminds us to also persevere on our journey too. When we doubt ourselves or think "will this get better," we have hope. We go to confession; we get counsel; we look at what caused us to maybe make a bad decision and above all else stay connected to the Church so that we can indeed have long term healing.

And lastly, remember Jesus' words: as the Father has sent me, so I send you. Mayra could have ignored Edna and heeded the advice of the neighbor. But deep down she knew there was more than meets the eye. Edna dressed nicely, but she had wounds from losing her husband, and also from how her son treated her. With people who are angry or acting in a certain way, there is often so much more than meets the eye. A wise parent knows when a child says "nothing" happened at school today but there's something more going on. Maybe you have someone in your life who your conscience is saying "I need to reach out to this person" who isn't quite themself, or moody or irritable. It could very well be someone you live with in your immediate family, or maybe someone at work or a neighbor, or someone online. When we truly answer sin with mercy, what we may just find is that God is using us to bring to the surface the truly beautiful soul within.

Sin is never pretty, and all of us are like Edna at one point or another: trapped inside a locked room that we've locked because of our fear or sins or situation in life. How

overwhelming it can be, and often change us into people we know we really aren’t. Into this though comes our Lord, offering us the gift of peace. Let us not be afraid to show Him our wounds so we can be healed, and in turn heal one another.