

# April 19, 2009 – Divine Mercy Sunday

## LESSON: The Ultimate Revelation of God's Mercy

The Lord is Risen! Alleluia! - Didn't Fr. Thoms remind you of the answer last week? Today is **still** Easter Sunday – the Octave of Easter – Easter is too great and significant a feast to celebrate just one day – we need **eight** days to celebrate this feast of our redemption. Today is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter – but it is also now called **Divine Mercy Sunday**. Why?

- ? On April 30, 2000, Pope John Paul II **canonized** the Polish nun who had received from Christ the amazing **revelations of the Divine Mercy** in the early 1900's, century, Saint Mary Faustina Kowalska [koh- VAHL-skuh] – whose image is here in the sanctuary this weekend...
- ? During that ceremony, the pope fulfilled one of the **requests** that Christ had made through those revelations: that the entire Church reserve the Second Sunday of Easter to **honor and commemorate** God's infinite mercy – Divine Mercy Sunday.

Where do we see this mercy revealed in today's Readings?

First of all, we see it in the reaction Christ shows to those men, his chosen Apostles, who had **abandoned** him just two nights before.

- ? They had abandoned Jesus in his most difficult hour, but **Jesus wasn't going to abandon them**.
- ? He passes through the locked doors, passes through **their fears, regret, and guilt**, and appears to them.
- ? He **hasn't given up on them**. He brings them his **peace**. And he reaffirms his confidence in them by **reaffirming their mission**: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

We also see God's mercy in Christ's reaction to the men who had crucified him.

- ? Does he **crush** them in revenge? No.
- ? Instead, he sends out his Apostles to tell them - and to tell the whole sinful world, the world that had crucified its God - that they **can be redeemed**, that God **has not condemned them**: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

And then, just to make sure that the Church is **fully armed** to communicate this message, Jesus gives the **ultimate revelation** of God's mercy - he delegates to his Apostles his divine **power to forgive sins**: "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

This is the explicit institution of the sacrament of Confession, the sacrament in which **the limitless ocean of God's mercy overwhelms the puny ocean of our misery**.

It was the ultimate revelation of the Divine Mercy.

## **ILLUSTRATION: The Doubts of Thomas**

Of all the Apostles, perhaps Doubting Thomas experienced this mercy most dramatically.

- ? Thomas was **mad** that Jesus had failed. He was brooding over it, nursing his anger and sorrow in solitude – remember, he wasn't present Easter night – he isolated himself for a time.
- ? So when he finally heard the news of the Resurrection, he wouldn't accept it: "Unless I see the mark of the nails... I will not believe."
- ? A week later, on the Sunday one week after the Resurrection, (what is now called "Divine Mercy Sunday,") Thomas is with the other Apostles, still **locked inside** their fears and doubts.
- ? Jesus comes through those locked doors once again, and wishes them **peace**.

And then what does he do?

Right after he greets the whole group, his **very next words** are for Thomas: *Touch my wounds, Thomas; believe in me!*

What look do you think was in Jesus' eyes at that point?

- ? I think he was smiling. He was glad to give in to Thomas' stubborn request to see the nail marks and touch His side.
- ? He wasn't **offended** by the Apostle's hesitation and resistance, he was just **eager** to get his faith back.
- ? And Thomas sees this, and he sees that **Christ humbly lowers himself to Thomas' level**, letting him **touch** him, letting him feel Christ's real, physical presence...
- ? And Thomas **falls on his knees** and is the first Apostle to proclaim his faith in Christ's divinity, calling him "My Lord and my God", the very titles given to God throughout the whole Old Testament.

In a lot of ways **we** are all Doubting Thomases.

We all **resist** God's action in our lives in one way or another, get mad at him, don't trust him, rebel against him.

And it is precisely in those moments and those corners of our lives where **Jesus wants to show off his boundless mercy**, come down to our level, and win back our faith.

## **APPLICATION: Claiming Peace of Heart**

What does this boundless mercy do for our troubled and busy lives in the here and now? What does Christ want it to do?

It can give us **peace of heart**.

- ? Anxiety and frustration and stress - the plagues of modern life - can all be traced back to **doubts**:
- ? doubts of our own **worthiness**
- ? or doubts about the **power and goodness of God**, about his desire or ability to forgive us, to fix our mistakes, to bring victory out of failure and good out of evil and life out of death.
- ? When we suffer from anxiety, frustration, and stress, we are suffering the “Doubting Thomas” syndrome.
- ? When we refuse to take any responsibility for our actions and blame everything that happens on everyone else, we are suffering the “Doubting Thomas” syndrome.
- ? When we demand “proof” of God’s presence or His love for us, we are suffering from “Doubting Thomas” syndrome.

But the revelation of God's mercy **wipes away** all doubts.

We know now, **without any doubt**,

- ? that **we are worthy**, because he has made us worthy,
- ? that he has **forgiven** us, and he will always be **willing** to forgive us - that's why confessionals are a permanent part of Church architecture and not an optional add-on.
- ? that God's **power** is as limitless as his **goodness**; he has conquered all the force of evil without ever resorting to evil himself.

Today God reminds us of his mercy, and with that he says to each of us, just as he said to his Apostles 20 centuries ago, those confused, frightened, anxious, and doubting Apostles, "**Peace be with you.**"

We **all** need to be **reminded** of these important truths, because life in this world can certainly be **difficult**.

Today, God is reminding us to follow the **ABC's** of His Divine Mercy.

**A.** Ask for mercy.

The best way to ask for his mercy for ourselves is through the **sacrament of confession**, entrusted to the Church on this very day 2000 years ago – today there are special confessions during our 3pm service of Divine Mercy.

Here is what Jesus told St Faustina about confession:

- ? *When you approach the confessional, know this, that **I Myself** am waiting there for you.*
- ? *I am only **hidden by the priest**, but I Myself act in your soul.*
- ? *Here the **misery** of the soul meets the God of **mercy**. (Diary, 1602)*

But we can also ask for mercy **for others**, especially by praying for those people that **we** don't trust, or people we know who don't trust or believe in Christ's mercy.

### **B. Be merciful.**

- ? Jesus told St Faustina, "I demand from you **deeds of mercy**... You are to **show deeds of mercy** to your neighbors always and everywhere."
- ? This means **doing good things** for others **not** because they **deserve** it or to get a **reward**, but simply in order to **follow in the footsteps** of our merciful Lord.

But where can we find the **strength** to do that?

### **C. Completely trust in Jesus.**

- ? Jesus **himself** will give us **his grace**, if we let him. He will **make us** into ambassadors of his mercy, just as he did with the first Apostles.
- ? Whenever we are afraid to **Ask** for mercy, when we feel too weak to **Be** merciful, we should simply pray the prayer that Jesus told St Faustina to write underneath the image of his Divine Mercy: "Jesus, I trust in you."

And let's **start right now**, during this Mass, when we receive the **fountain of mercy** himself in Holy Communion.

Today, when we receive Holy Communion - at least **today**, when the whole Church celebrates this **boundless mercy** of God - let's grab on to that peace and claim it for our own by praying the prayer that Jesus himself taught St Faustina: **Jesus, I trust in you**. This prayer will help to remove all doubt, all anxiety and frustration and stress.

Can you say "Jesus, I trust in you" and really **mean** it. That's the challenge for today – to let go of our fears, our doubts, our blaming of others, our demands for "proof," – and simply place all our trust in Jesus: in His love, His mercy, His concern for us – and most of all our worthiness to receive God's love.

Jesus, I trust in you. If you make **this** your motto, the core attitude of your life – then there will be no doubt or worries – then there will be **peace** – because trust in God helps us know that "for those who love Him, all things (even the most desperate and difficult of situations) will work for the good.