

30 March 2008 – 2nd Sunday of Easter / Divine Mercy

LESSON: The Ultimate Revelation of God's Mercy

Why is today **Divine Mercy Sunday**?



- ✍ 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 years of the twentieth century, Saint Mary Faustina Kowalska.
- ✍ 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 the Easter Season to **honor and commemorate** God's infinite mercy.

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: Transformed by God's Mercy (St. Maria Goretti)

The amazing thing about God's mercy is that it not only **forgives** us, but it can also **transform** us.

One of the greatest **sufferings** in life is **being wronged.**

When people **lie** about us, **deceive** us, or **betray** us, it can **tear our souls apart**, ruining our **peace of mind**, even after we recover from the **material** damage.

But God's contagious mercy can fill even those **darkest experiences** with his **redeeming light.**

St. Maria Goretti was just twelve-years-old when she was **violently assaulted** by a young man named Alexander who lived in her village.

- ✍ When she **resisted** his advances, he **stabbed her repeatedly** before help arrived.
- ✍ She was **rushed** to the hospital, but the wounds were too many and too serious, and her life slowly ebbed away.



- ✍ She fell in and out of **consciousness** for the next twenty-four hours, until she **died.**
- ✍ In one of her conscious moments, this twelve-year-old girl **explicitly and spontaneously expressed her forgiveness** for the man who had so brutally ended her young life.
- ✍ Alexander was captured and sentenced to thirty years in prison.
- ✍ He was unrepentant until he had a dream that he was in a garden. Maria was there and gave him flowers.
- ✍ When he woke, he was a changed man, repenting of his crime and living a reformed life.
- ✍ When he was released after 27 years he went directly to Maria's mother to beg her forgiveness, which she gave. "If my daughter can forgive him, who am I to withhold forgiveness," she said.
- ✍ When Maria was declared a saint in 1950, Alexander was there in the St. Peter's crowd to celebrate her canonization.
- ✍ She was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1950 for her purity as model for youth.

She is called a martyr because she fought against Alexander's attempts at sexual assault. However, the most important aspect of her story is her forgiveness of her attacker -- her concern for her enemy extending even beyond death.

This is the **power of God's mercy**: it can fill our hearts with **supernatural strength and peace** even while we are hanging on the cross with Christ.

As St Faustina Kowalska once said, "We **resemble God most** when we forgive our neighbors."

APPLICATION: The ABC's of Divine Mercy

We **all** need to be **reminded** of the power of God's mercy, because life in this world can get **distracting**.

And the reminder he is giving us today will **bear fruit** in our lives if we follow the **ABC's** of the 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.

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).*



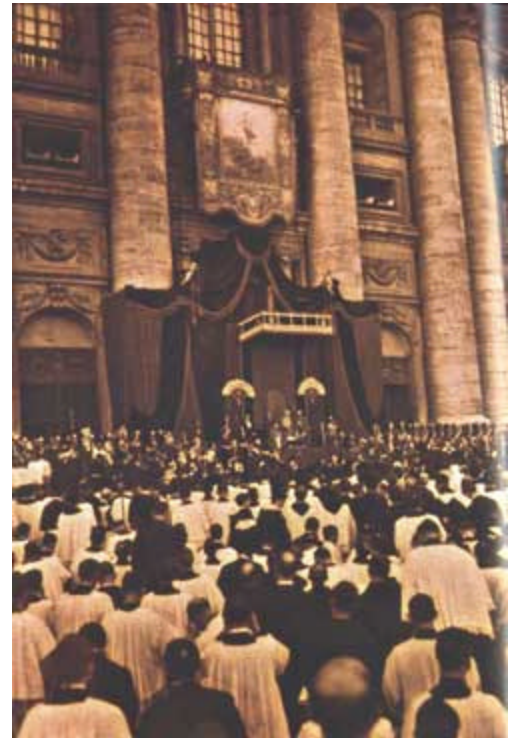
But we can also ask for mercy **for others**, especially by praying for those who don't trust or believe in Christ's mercy.

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."

In the revelations of his Divine Mercy, Jesus asked St Faustina to commission a **painting** (a copy of which is here in church)

The painting shows Jesus **standing**, dressed in a **white alb**, with his right hand raised in **blessing** and his left hand **opening his heart**.

Out of his heart there were to be streaming **two beams of light** - one **white** and the other **red**.

In the vision to St. Faustina, Jesus explained what those rays **symbolized**:

- ✍ *The two rays denote Blood and Water.*
- ✍ *The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous [baptism].*
- ✍ *The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls [the Eucharist].*
- ✍ *These two rays issued forth from the depths of My tender mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross ...*
- ✍ *Happy is the one who will dwell in their shelter, for the just hand of God shall not lay hold of him (Diary, 299).*



Today Jesus is reminding us of the **power and abundance** of his mercy.

We should be full of **joy and confidence** at this reminder.

But what about all of our brothers and sisters who aren't **with** us? What about all our neighbors, colleagues, and classmates who have **never experienced** Christ's mercy or never heard about it?

Jesus died for **them** too. And he is sending **us** to be **messengers** of his mercy to them.

- ✍ By our kind, truthful **words**, avoiding all gossip and useless criticism, we shine forth the white light of Christ's mercy.

✍ And by our **selfless acts of service** to others, seeking **no reward** except the joy of following Christ, we become extensions of the red ray of Christ's very own life, given up for us on the cross.

Today, as Christ feeds us once again from the very **fountain** of mercy, Holy Communion, let's ask him for the grace to be **living images, living paintings, of his mercy** in this world so wounded by sin.



To learn more about Divine Mercy, go to: <http://www.ewtn.com/Devotionals/mercy/>