

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Julia McDonough April 5, 2020

When the Divine Mercy Messengers at St. Joseph's Church in Charlton, Massachusetts held their first planning meeting on March 8, 2020, no one could have imagined that the Coronavirus would have escalated into a devastating global pandemic. Our parish had been taking precautions for weeks, but we believed that Holy Week and Divine Mercy Sunday would be celebrated as usual. But life as we knew it came to a grinding halt.

Because St. Joseph's has a reputation as being a "Divine Mercy Parish," with the endorsement of our Pastor, the team resolved to honor our Lord's request to celebrate His Feast on the Second Sunday of Easter. For the last several years, Divine Mercy Sunday services at our church began at 6:45 a.m. and concluded right before the 5:00 p.m. Mass. We knew that an all-day schedule would be impossible this year. During the next weekly Messenger meetings via Zoom, we brainstormed ways of how this event could be modified for these unprecedented, unsettled times and formulated contingency plans.

"Have mercy on us and on the whole world" was never more real and timelier for us who never knew the hardships of the Great Depression and World War II or the plagues of olden times. The pandemic could very well be why, this year, more volunteers than ever responded to the Lord Jesus, when He told

Faustina, **“I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially poor sinners “** (*Diary 699*).

It was agreed that the safest, most practical way to execute this mission would be a shorter, virtual event, to be viewed on our parish web site (stjosephscharlton.com) between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. on Divine Mercy Sunday. Each Messenger will participate, whether in front of the camera or behind the scenes. A notice was published on Flocknotes, to include copies of the Divine Mercy Chaplet and Novena. Images and devotionals are being made available at the weekend “drive-up blessings.” We were on our way!

Our event will offer an introduction to Divine Mercy, reflection and short meditation from Saint Faustina’s Diary, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (with the Divine Mercy Image and a picture of Saint Faustina in the background), the Most Holy Rosary, a Guided Meditation (Jesus speaking to Saint Faustina), the Divine Mercy Chaplet in Song, the Litany of Trust, singing of the Agnus Dei, and a final blessing. We encourage everyone in the parish to participate from the comfort and safety of their own homes.

We may not be on the front lines of the battlefield, but as prayer warriors, we can hope and trust that hearts will be healed if they lean into our Lord’s merciful embrace. He knows no social distancing.