

## Second Sunday of Easter - Sunday of Divine Mercy 2020

The Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/041920.cfm>

“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked for fear of the Jews...” That first line of today’s Gospel sounds a bit too familiar. Behind closed doors; behind locked doors; quarantined.

That sounds a lot like us, closed up, locked down in our homes for fear of the Coronavirus! The disciples were not behind closed doors for quite as long as us, however.

But take heart in what Jesus says next to his disciples, “Peace be with you”. “Peace”, because our Lord is in control...always. He is with us even when our lives have been turned upside down. “Peace”, because he has given us a great gift; a great treasure. And we must not waste it. He has given us time with him. How have we used these days as an opportunity to meet the Lord? To dialogue with him.

Have we used this time behind closed doors as an opportunity to focus on what really matters the most? Have we come face to face with who we really are - our limitations, our weaknesses, our fears, failures, insecurities, our sins and our wounds?

Many of us have looked for ways to escape our predicament. Both good and bad ways of escape. Satan of course is NOT in lockdown. He never rests. He prowls about like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

In the first letter of Peter (5:6-7), he writes, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on him for he cares about you."

It seems our Lord is also giving us a new perspective on some things that many of us have taken for granted. For us Catholics, that would be attending Mass and receiving the Eucharist especially. Holy Week and Easter Sunday have come and gone and yet it feels like we missed it all.

Yet maybe, we are beginning to yearn and long for him a little bit more. But it's still nothing like the way God longs and yearns for us; the way God longs for you, personally. We are learning that all we can do is submit ourselves to God's Holy will and throw ourselves upon his never-ending mercy.

Every five years, the deacons of the Archdiocese all go on retreat together. The retreat master for our last retreat was Father Michael Gaitley. That was pretty exciting for me because I was familiar with his books, the most well-known is probably 33 Days to Morning Glory, a preparation for Marian Consecration.

Fr. Michael would start his sessions with us by asking, "what time is it?" The first couple of times he caught us off guard and someone would tell him the clock time. But eventually, we deacons would catch on and respond, "it's the time of mercy!"

NOW truly is the time of Mercy!

Our world is in such desperate need of mercy!  
Now more than ever. Now, on this Sunday of Divine Mercy 2020.

Back in the early 1900's, a little Polish nun, Sister Faustina Kowalska experienced a series of apparitions and conversations with Jesus, which she recorded in a diary now known as Divine Mercy in My Soul.

Jesus gave Sr. Faustina a mission, saying: "Today I am sending you with My mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish aching mankind, but I desire to heal it, pressing it to My Merciful Heart."

While still Archbishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla (St. John Paul II) was deeply moved by Sister Faustina's diary. And after he became Pope, he canonized Saint Faustina. He called it the happiest day of his life.

And 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 be an official feast to honor and commemorate God's infinite mercy.

Saint Faustina experienced that Christ's mercy comes to us through his wounds, and so Jesus asked Sr. Faustina, "Paint an image of my divine mercy according to my instructions, along with the signature: "Jesus, I trust in You".

A print of this image hangs in our church on the wall above Father Jeff's chair. Jesus' right hand is raised as in giving a blessing, and his left hand is

touching his heart from which flows red and white rays, the blood and water of his divine mercy.

St. Faustina asked the Lord about the meaning of the rays in the image. Jesus told her, "The two rays denote Blood and Water. The pale ray stands for the Water, which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood, which is the life of souls. These two rays issued forth from the depths of My tender mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross."

There is a stunning scene in the movie "The Passion of the Christ" when Christ's side is pierced by the soldier's lance as he hung on the cross at his death. Blood and water burst forth and spray everyone gathered beneath the cross. Even his executioners were showered with his Mercy!

The Mercy of God comes to us through our wounds, yet often we're afraid to let God see them. What if I were to go to a doctor because I cut my foot, and say, "I don't feel so good... My foot is killing me." But then I don't let the doctor look at it. He can't really do that much for me if I don't show him the wound. When we bring our wounds to Jesus, he can heal them.

In the Gospel, when Jesus breathed on his disciples, he said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." This commission from Jesus is the basis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the sacrament of mercy.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, *To receive his mercy, we must admit our faults. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Every time we confess our sins two things happen:

- First we receive the mercy of God who forgives our sins.
- Second we receive the grace and strength from God to live as his beloved children.

And when we bring him our wounds, we experience the peace and the joy that Christ wants to give us.

So, who would be a perfect example for Divine Mercy? Someone who has REALLY messed up in their life. Someone who, instead of falling into despair, sought out the Lord's mercy.

Let's consider St. Peter. You know, the one who denied Jesus 3 times and then became the first Pope. Remember Peter's vow to Jesus at the Last Supper, "Lord, I am prepared to go to prison and to die with you. I will lay down my life for you."

But during Jesus' trial, surrounded by a hostile group of onlookers, Peter cursed and yelled and denied that he even KNEW Jesus. Not once, not twice, but he did it 3 times. Each time more vehemently and angrily. He denied Jesus out of fear and cowardice. He did it to save his own skin.

Jesus probably didn't even hear Peter's denials.

But he knew – he predicted it – he told Peter in advance that he would deny him. And the cock crowed. And then Peter got “the look” from Jesus.

And what was that look that Jesus gave Peter?

Was it a look of disappointment?

Was it a look of sadness?

Or did the look say, “I still love you, and I forgive you, return to me, receive my mercy”.

We know that Luke's Gospel is based a lot on Peter's firsthand accounts of following Jesus. Imagine Peter having to recount this moment of his life to Luke! Could he ever forget that moment? The raw emotions as he remembered that night, recalled that look; the pain and love in Christ's eyes; the wordless exchange...

Imagine how much Peter must have suffered after Jesus died. Imagine those 3 long days while Jesus was in the tomb. Imagine Peter's sorrow. He must have cried buckets of tears. Peter encountered the Mercy of God that night. And he accepted that Mercy.

And now look what Peter wrote in his first letter, which is our second reading today, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who IN HIS GREAT MERCY gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...”

The crucified and resurrected Jesus is the source of life that gushed forth for souls, and his ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world.

Mercy is the power of love to bring good out of sin and evil.

Some people may think their sins to be incurable; things that could never be healed or forgiven. They don't believe there is a chance for redemption. A man approached Pope Francis one day and said, "O Father, I have done some terrible things!" And the Pope replied, "Go to Jesus, he forgives, and forgets, EVERYTHING".

Jesus waits. He waits for us to give him even just a crack into which to pour in his Mercy and forgiveness. He never gets tired of forgiving, and he never tires of healing us; he never runs out of mercy.

I leave you with this powerful quote from St. Gemma Galgani - "If I saw the gates of hell open and I stood on the brink of the abyss, I would not despair; I would not lose hope of mercy, because I would trust in you, my God."

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on us poor sinners.

Deacon Kevin Heckman

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church

April 19, 2020

**NOTE:** The laity are encouraged to confess their sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a month; more frequently for clergy and

religious. Fr. Jeff is available for confessions in Campbell Hall with plenty of room for distancing. Just enter through the back door of Campbell Hall off the back parking lot.

Confession times are:

SUNDAYS: 7:30 AM to 7:55 AM and 10:00 AM to 10:25 AM

SATURDAYS: 8:00 AM until the line ends, and 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM