

2nd Sunday of Easter - Divine Mercy

The Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/041121.cfm>

Today, we celebrate the Second Sunday of this joyous Easter season...
...AND Divine Mercy Sunday!

Back in the year 2000, Pope St. John Paul II officially declared that the world-wide Catholic Church would celebrate this great day of God's Mercy.

This happened almost 70 years after our Lord Jesus told St. Faustina Kowalska to paint his image and have it blessed on the first Sunday after Easter. And that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy.

The image you see on the wall of our sanctuary is that image. 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. It includes the signature that Jesus also requested to be placed on it: "Jesus, I trust in you".

St. Faustina's diary details her mystical life as a Sister of Our Lady of Mercy in Poland. This great diary titled, Divine Mercy in My Soul, documents her deep prayer life and her mystical conversations and encounters with our Lord Jesus in prayer.

St. Faustina's mission in life was to help all people to understand, to desire, and to accept the infinite mercy of God.

Jesus told her, ***“Today, I am sending you with my mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish mankind, but I desire to heal it, pressing it to my merciful heart... to make known to souls the great mercy I have for them...”***

The Mercy of God comes to us through our wounds, yet often we're afraid to let God see them and heal them.

What if I were to go to a doctor because I injured my foot, and say, “I don't feel so good... My foot is killing me.” And 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.

Every time we confess our sins two things happen:

First, we receive the mercy of God who forgives our sins; and 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 that Christ wants to give us.

For peace to be found, the roadblock of sin must be removed. Hence, the link between the Resurrection gift of peace and the Resurrection gift of mercy.

The Catholic Sacrament of Confession provides us with the ability to have a second chance, if only we are willing to repent and begin again.

That is so important in the lives of human beings that when the great English writer and convert G. K. Chesterton was asked why he became a Catholic, he said very simply: “To get my sins forgiven!”

And that remains a very powerful reason for belonging to the Catholic Church — to experience the compassion, the forgiveness, and the mercy of Almighty God.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus appears to his disciples in his glorified body. And he greets them with these words, “Peace be with you”.

Why does he greet them with those words?

What is this peace that Jesus offers to his disciples?

His very next actions answer the question. “When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side”. He showed them the wounds of his sacrifice.

His message to them is, “Look what I did for you!” This was all for you - for all of mankind!

THIS, is how much I love you!

And then he repeats again, “Peace be with you.”

Peace is the gift that Jesus Christ brought us from heaven. A gift so beautiful, so profound, that we shall never fully comprehend it in this life.

Indeed, the Risen Christ's first gift to His Church was His peace, which flows from His abiding mercy. We need to reflect on that and believe it with all our hearts, thanking God for this gift, which so many people desire and hope for but never realize is so readily available to them.

On his last night on earth, at the Last Supper, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid."

He sends each of us out as redeemed people; as people who have experienced the Lord's love, and mercy, and peace every bit as much as those first disciples in that locked room in the Gospel.

The love he poured out 2,000 years ago burns as intensely now as it did then. His love and mercy are everlasting. Our Responsorial Psalm sings out joyfully, "His mercy endures forever".

We are victors over the world because we are begotten by God. In St. John's first letter he writes, "And the victory that conquers the world is our faith. Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God".

Jesus instructs St. Faustina, ***"Tell aching mankind to snuggle close to my merciful heart, and I will fill it with peace... When a soul approaches me with trust, I fill it with such an abundance of graces that it cannot contain them within itself, but radiates them to other souls."***

Recall again the words of Jesus to the disciples in our Gospel, “As the Father has sent me so I send you.” He sends us out to be people of peace and mercy, and to radiate those virtues to the world. To share the Good News and pass on Jesus’s gifts to others.

Closing prayer:

Eternal God, in whom mercy is endless and the treasury of compassion, inexhaustible, look kindly upon us and increase Your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might not despair nor become despondent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to Your holy will, which is Love and Mercy itself.

Deacon Kevin Heckman

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