

Homily for Divine Mercy Sunday

April 28, 2019

By Deacon Stuart Neck

What a privilege it is for me to offer the reflection on this the “Feast of Mercy” as our Lord refers to this day or as we know it on the Church calendar, “Divine Mercy Sunday”. The Divine Mercy devotion has been part of my spiritual life and journey for over twenty years.

Why is this Feast Day so important? Why is this message so important? Where did it come from? I will attempt to answer these questions in my reflection. I will also have a few quotes from St. Faustina’s diary to introduce you to its beauty.

The devotion as was recited before mass was revealed to a mystic nun in Poland in the first part of the twentieth century who we know as Sister Faustina Kowalska. She was instructed by our Lord and her spiritual director to keep a diary of the messages she received from our Lord. How we know of the Divine Mercy Chaplet that was recited before mass came from her diary. She died before the Second World War in Poland in 1938. She was canonized on April 30, 2000 by another great apostle of Divine Mercy, St. John Paul II. The key elements of this

message are as follows:¹

First, we must seek God's mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world. The primary way we do that is in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. From our Gospel today, we read how the Lord gave the authority to the Apostles of the Church to forgive sins which that authority is passed down to our bishops. What a wonderful instrument of God's Divine Mercy we have in this sacrament. As we know, the priest is the visible instrument which the sacrament's sanctifying means are made real through the rite and its prayers, but it is Christ that acts on our behalf to forgive our sins. Our Lord relayed this message to St. Faustina about going to confession, *"...when you go to confession, to this fountain of My mercy, the Blood and Water which came forth from My heart always flows down upon your soul and ennobles it. Every time you go to confession, immerse yourself entirely in My mercy, with great trust, so that I may pour the bounty of My grace upon your soul. When you approach the confessional, know this, that I Myself am waiting there for you. I am*

¹ <https://www.thedivinemercy.org/message/>

only hidden by the priest, but I Myself act in your soul.

*Here the misery of the soul meets the God of mercy.”*² It is also important we seek this fountain of God’s mercy for the right reason and the right way, which is out of love, contrition and humility. When we approach the sacrament this way, our Lord’s response is Divine Mercy as we just heard. Second, God wants *us* to be merciful. To receive his mercy, we must extend the same love and forgiveness to others as he does us. When we recite the Our Father, we state, *“...forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”* Additionally, from sacred scripture this theme is echoed in the Beatitudes where we are told, *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”*³ In St. Faustina’s diary she recorded our Lord stating that to receive God’s mercy, there must be acts of mercy, *“...because even the strongest faith is of no avail without works.”*⁴ Finally, we are to completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive. This may sound like it’s something that is very easy, but I have come across people who have told me they feel their

² Diary, 1602

³ Matthew 5:7

⁴ Diary, 742

sins are too great for God to forgive. To think this way leads to despair and to a world of darkness. I have tried to point out that that is not how God works. It may be how we humans act, but not God. To this point our Lord conveyed the following message to St. Faustina, *“Encourage souls to place great trust in My fathomless mercy. Let the weak, sinful soul have no fear to approach Me, for even if it had more sins that there were grains of sand in the world, all would be drowned in the unmeasurable depths of My mercy.”*⁵ Maybe this message is for someone sitting here today. There is no sin so great that cannot be forgiven if we seek God forgiveness out of love, contrition and humility. God’s Divine Mercy shows us how much value he places in each of us and how much he loves us. At the canonization mass of St. Faustina, St. John Paul II, then pope stated the following, *“It is this love which must inspire humanity today, if it is to face the crisis of the meaning of life, the challenges of the most diverse needs and, especially, the duty to defend the dignity of every human person. Thus, the message of divine mercy is also implicitly a message about the value of every human being. Each person is precious in God's eyes; Christ gave his life for each one; to everyone the Father gives his Spirit*

⁵ Diary, 1059

and offers intimacy.”⁶

The declaration of this day as being Divine Mercy Sunday or the Feast of Mercy, was at the request of our Lord himself and it comes with special graces. This is made clear in the diary where our Lord stated the following, *“I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the Fount of My Mercy...On that day all the divine floodgates through which graces flow are opened...My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity...The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness.”⁷*

I could stand here and quote from the diary for the entire hour, but obviously I cannot. I would challenge you to learn more about this wonderful devotion and its message. In closing, I would like once again take a quote from St. John Paul II from the canonization mass and the need for this devotion. He states,

⁶ St. John Paul II, *Homily on Canonization of Sr Mary Faustina Kowalska*, April 30, 2000, paragraph 6

⁷ Diary, 699

*And you, Faustina, a gift of God to our time, a gift from the land of Poland to the whole Church, obtain for us an awareness of the depth of divine mercy; help us to have a living experience of it and to bear witness to it among our brothers and sisters. May your message of light and hope spread throughout the world, spurring sinners to conversion, calming rivalries and hatred and opening individuals and nations to the practice of brotherhood. Today, fixing our gaze with you on the face of the risen Christ, let us make our own your prayer of trusting abandonment and say with firm hope: Christ Jesus, I trust in you!*⁸

Finally I would like to end this reflection in an untraditional way by traditionally ending the Divine Mercy chaplet in song. At this time I would ask everyone to kneel and face the image of divine mercy and sing with me if you are familiar with this chant. We will also end by saying “Jesus I Trust In You” three times.

Amen

⁸ St. John Paul II, *Homily on Canonization of Sr. Mary Faustina Kowalska*, April 30, 2000, paragraph 8