

## **Divine Mercy Sunday 2020**

Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 1:3-9; Jn 20:19-31

It is easy to doubt. In this time of worry and fear, in this time of uncertainty we may doubt God's help and mercy. The larger culture is hostile to our beliefs, and actively tries to convince us that we hold a faith that is outdated and obsolete. But they have not disproven the faith in Jesus Christ that we proclaim - and, in fact, they misunderstand it - criticizing what they don't fully know - and many Catholics have fallen for it. It can be difficult to believe living in a culture that scoffs our beliefs, and who arrogantly look down on those who don't hold the secular faith they have in themselves. Amid all that rhetoric we can have a hard time holding to faith in the power and presence of Jesus. We see in the Gospel the doubting of Thomas - this guy knew and heard everything Jesus said come true, and still doubted. Can we expect ourselves to be any different than he was ... Jesus does.

Just remember, Thomas' lack of faith did not change the fact that Jesus had been in that room before he got there. Our, or another's, disbelief in the presence of Jesus in the world does not make him not there. We have become so arrogant in our discoveries that we think that what I do not see, what I don't think is so, what I don't have proof for must not be there. As if things come into existence only if you believe in them, or things in the universe change from one thing to another because they have been discovered, or things are only possible if you can understand them. Our ability to understand, or ability to see, our ability to have the proof we want don't make a thing so or not so. Look at the Gospel. Thomas' unbelief had nothing to do with the reality of Jesus' presence. But, Jesus, in a stunning act of mercy, gives Thomas the proof he wanted. Jesus is so eager to bring the lost sheep to the fold that he comes to him. Thomas is floored by this and speaks one of the greatest acts of faith recorded in scripture *My Lord and my God!* Think of the calm that came over him when he let himself believe what was always true anyway. Now there was no reason to be afraid of the crisis he was in, no reason to fear the future - he believes in a life after this one, and in Jesus who has made that passage ahead of him, and is now going to be with him - as the psalm says: *The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?* Jesus expects us to have at least as much faith as we have in all the other things we believe without definite proof. Jesus expects us to decide to believe (like we decide to believe in the sources we trust), he wants us to believe because he tells us it is true.

Jesus wants us to believe in love and faith not just because we get the proof we decided we needed. When someone says they love you you could demand, “well I’ll believe it when you get me a chocolate bunny” - even if they get the bunny you don’t really know if they love you. You could keep deciding what other proof you need, and demand these as well (“well then get me flowers, talk to me on the phone till 3am, come and give me a massage, give me your kidney”). No matter what they get, no matter what they do, you could always doubt their love, no matter how they support you you could always doubt their motives. Having proof does not really get us to believe - we don’t believe because of the proof, we believe because we decide that the proof we have is good enough, and we make the leap to believe till we think differently.

Jesus is calling on us - especially in times like this - to just let go of the need for more and more specific kinds of proof, and to take as our proof what he has told us - and what the Holy Spirit has clarified through the Church. Jesus wants us to look at him in love and to trust in one who cares for us - not find more things that we think God is supposed to do to prove God is there. What has been revealed to us is this: That God looked down upon us in our messed up ways, our sinful world, our world that had become separated from God’s love, and in mercy for us - God threw us a rope - built us a bridge - a bridge that provides a path to an eternal life, a bridge built of the flesh of the body of Jesus Christ. We hear in the first reading that God *in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.* In the Gospel Jesus giving a portion of his spirit to the Apostles so that they could transmit God’s forgiveness of sins and reconcile people to the Father (this is where we get the Sacrament of Reconciliation). Wonderful acts of mercy - God comes to be present with us in a mysterious way in the community of the Church, and also provides a way to something superior to this world.

With this knowledge we don’t need to be so focused on this life and so anxious. Thomas could calm down when he realized that Jesus was going to be there like he said - and we can too. If you look hard you may begin to see the things around us that could only come from some power outside of this crazy world. Jesus is here in the Eucharist and in our community, not as a single human body, not just as a fixer of what I want fixed, not just a healer of who I want to be healed, but in a more powerful and mysterious way that many are not even looking for - the merciful God giving us now more than we know or realize, and after this life, more than we could ever see or imagine: *Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.*