

## **Divine Mercy Sunday 2021 (April 11, 2021)**

Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 5:1-6; Jn 20:19-31

“Are you really out there Lord”? How many times have we thought this? Things in the world can seem crazy - our own lives are a rollercoaster of ups and downs. We just celebrated Jesus’ rising from the dead on Easter - but what does that mean for us today, and what does that mean for us day after day as we ride the rollercoaster of life?

Speaking about being on a rollercoaster, just look at the disciples we hear about in the Gospel. They are on top of the world as Jesus’ movement gains speed, they are welcomed with Him into Jerusalem with a parade, and three days later he has been killed and they are afraid and hiding. They had heard from Mary Magdalene that Jesus was alive, that he had risen as he promised - but they hadn’t seen him and were still hiding. This is often the way we approach the crazy world. We hear that Jesus is there, we somehow know that he has a great power, we remember the promises he made - but we wind up hiding and in fear. Fear for what can happen, fear that we will be overcome by the world, fear that maybe it is all an illusion, and he may not be there. He **is** present, but often not as we want him to be (the heavenly butler and fixer that goes around and takes care of everything for us), but he is there as he is. Jesus is powerfully there but gives us the dignity of working through our lives ourselves. He is present, not as a man throwing lightning bolts and zapping all the bad people, but as an unseen presence in our world, our hearts, and in the Eucharist. It is by deeply accepting this faith, and cooperating with Jesus as he is really is in the world (not as we want him to be) that will lead to a victory.

We heard in the second reading: *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?* Belief in what Jesus said, belief in what he did, belief in the voices of those in our own time who, like Mary Magdalene, have encountered Jesus in their lives and can vouch for the power of that presence. On top of that, if we realize that the rollercoaster of life is normal, and not a sign that God is messing something up or is not there. When we realize that evil people are still given their free will by the God of mercy that we speak of today. When we know that God has shown us mercy and can see and accept that - then we will have victory by faith.

To understand the mercy God has given us, we first have to understand our true situation. Although we think that God should be pretty lucky to have us around, although we think that me

just being me is all that is needed for salvation, although we think that as long as I am a good person (as I define that) then I go to heaven - all of this this is not true! It is a pure privilege to be able to even have contact from God. None of us deserves what God has done for us in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, and none of us deserves heaven. But we walk around the earth doing as we please - like a person who you let in your home who decides they are going to raid the fridge, rearrange the furniture, take out a all or two, and talk about how nice it will be when it is their house!

It is out of love and a great mercy that God puts up with us, and offers to give us the house one day. With that same mercy God “puts up with” people who we think are bad and should be popped out of existence. A lot of our frustrations in life are because we loose perspective of who we really are, we want to be in more control of the world than we are, we want to tell God the right way of doing things. If we can accept the mercy of God in what God has done for us and others despite our attitude and situation, and we can believe the truths of God without demanding our own brand of proof, then we will be a lot more happy. Look at Thomas in the Gospel - all that frustration! He wants proof of his own description, he might be a little upset that they are in the situation they are in and on the rollercoaster that he has been on. Jesus comes to the disciples despite the doors being locked, he comes back a second time to be sure that he meets up with Thomas. Jesus goes right up to Thomas as soon as he gets in the room to reach out to him. It is only in Thomas accepting Jesus in faith that it was possible to know that somehow this rollercoaster is going to come into the station, only then is he is truly at peace.

In his meeting with the disciples Jesus showed that all he said was true, he confirmed the mercy God had shown in giving them a way to attain eternal life. In another act of mercy Jesus gives the Apostles the power to pronounce forgiveness of sins so that more people could be touched by Jesus’ mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He inspired them to show mercy to others, which they did. We heard about that in the first reading: *There was no needy person among them ... they ... distributed to each according to need.* Would that we could believe fully in Jesus and his presence in the Eucharist and sacrament of Reconciliation, and also know that the rollercoaster of life becomes more bearable when you are not fighting the turns and when you are holding on to Jesus’ hand. That same merciful hand that guided Thomas to touch his wounds, will guide us to a peace that we can only reach by faith in his power to transform and save us as we ride the rollercoaster of life.