

Divine Mercy Sunday



**Jesus,
I trust in You!**

As we prepare for 'Divine Mercy Sunday', we more than ever, are in need of "A Severe Mercy" and I believe it is coming! As I continue to reflect upon the situation that we find ourselves in as we approach the Second Sunday of Easter, ***Divine Mercy Sunday***; on this 20th anniversary of the great St. Pope John Paul II establishing Divine Mercy Sunday as a feast day for the entire Church and naming St. Faustina the 1st saint of the new millennium. For most of us, especially those of us considered 'Mercy runners'; those greatly and personally affected by the devotional aspects and promises of 'Divine Mercy', I tend to think that this year's celebration will feel more like a real experienced 'Severe' *Divine Mercy Sunday* given the many spiritual, social, economic and personal challenges that we face as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. I had anticipated using this octave of Easter week to offer a walk through series introducing us, a community to the mission or message of, and the devotion to Divine Mercy. The mission or message of Divine Mercy is nothing new rather; it is a reminder of what the Church has always taught through scripture and tradition, that God is merciful and forgiving and that we, too, must show mercy and forgiveness. The devotional aspects brought through the revelations of Christ to St. Faustina are ways for us to access the deep font of God's Divine Mercy ... and it is deep! I look forward again to our times together as community, as and with my OLC family, in our beautiful Church, full of those so hungry for His mercy. For now, we continue in isolation, some of us more isolated than others and we must pray!

Is the coronavirus pandemic a punishment from God as many have said? I actually do not believe our God, our loving Father operates like this.

Perhaps this is just a test — or something else. In the end, only God Himself knows with perfect certainty exactly why He has allowed any of this to unfold. What I do know with the certainty of faith is this: unlike us, God always takes an eternal view of things, and in the words of St. Paul to the Romans “... all things work together for the good for those who love God” (8:28), and the greatest good that God desires for each of us is an eternal one — namely, perfect union with Him in that blessed vision that we call heaven. I think that we can honestly say that whatever we are experiencing right now is, in some mysterious way, a gift of God’s mercy, however severe it might feel in the present moment. If we are honest, it still stings, hurts and disappoints us. As such it is natural for us to often focus on the question of “why?” It is only natural for us to ask “Why God?”, “Why now?”, “Why us?”, “Why this pandemic?” Perhaps, instead, we would do much better to ask the more spiritually productive question of “what?” “What is God asking of me in the present moment?” For what purposes; “What is God asking of me this Divine Mercy Sunday?” I would like to offer three suggestions. First, God wants exactly from us what He wanted from St. Faustina in those difficult years leading up to World War II: TRUST! **Greater trust!** God wants us to trust in His divine mercy, to trust in His providential plan, and to trust in His unfailing goodness in the face of our sufferings. In her diary, St. Faustina wrote, “Suffering is a great grace; through suffering the soul becomes like the Savior” (No. 57). Jesus, help us to trust that this is true, and help us to trust in you, so that in doing so we might continue to become more like you!

Second, God is inviting us to persevere in prayer. So let's take up the beautiful prayer of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Let us pray it for those who have died because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and for their loved ones, for those who are working on the front lines to treat and combat the virus, for a swift end to the pandemic, for all those who are struggling with loneliness, anxiety and financial/job concerns, and for those who despair and find it difficult in finding God's mercy, especially during this difficult time when so many of the Church's healing ministry are restricted. Let us remember, let us pray with our whole hearts; "Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world."

Finally, I believe that God is asking each of us to discover new and creative ways of practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Maybe this means calling a loved one more frequently or sending regular emails to check in on friends or on neighbors, or dropping off food for the elderly, those that are home bound or starting a prayer chain, or something else; where is the Spirit calling you? I'm certain that if you ask the Holy Spirit to inspire you, to renew you this Divine Mercy Sunday, He will! I firmly believe it is only a matter of time before the severity of His mercy gives way to His tenderness once again. You and your intentions are remembered by me on this 'Divine Mercy Sunday' ... join me in trusting; Jesus I trust in You!

God love you!

Deacon Steve