

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

From the Pastor's Desk

We have been into this thing for over four weeks now. Who would have ever guessed this two months ago. However, we are enduring this trial. It is inconvenient to say the least. But we must keep in mind that it could be worse. We are thankful that it is not. We do pray for those who find themselves caught, by no fault of their own, in the most difficult situations. There are a number of "hot spots" and people are facing life and death situations. We must be mindful and prayerful for those who are in the greatest need of help.

It is a curious thing that whenever there is news of a serious tragedy or crisis our hearts are turned to compassion. When there is something that we can do we usually rise up to offer whatever assistance we can offer. Tragedies are one of those things that touch our hearts. We know this from our responses when we hear the news of tornados, hurricanes, hunger, sickness and so forth. This was particularly evident last Sunday when several tornados swept across the southern part of our country. Couple this with the coronavirus crisis, it is overwhelming.

On the other hand, there is one other kind of tragedy that doesn't always touch us on the sympathy or compassion level. That is the spiritual tragedy of sin. There is something about the nature of sin that evokes a different response. We do not find within us a sense of compassion or sorrow for the sinner. Sin turns everything upside-down, backwards and inside-out. We easily slip into condemnation as opposed to compassion. We don't have sympathy for people who do sinful things especially seriously sinful things. Or for lesser sins we usually find ourselves being indifferent. In our Catholic Christian sensitivities, we should know that sin is a tragedy. It is the worst kind of tragedy. Yet we fail to have compassion or mercy for those trapped in sin.

This Second Sunday of Easter has recently been declared Divine Mercy Sunday. Considering this day, I am reminded of the Fatima prayer we say after each decade of the Rosary. "*Oh, my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell and lead all souls to heaven especially those in the greatest need of thy mercy.*" This particular prayer reminds us that we are to have compassion for those who are in the greatest need of mercy, forgiveness, and salvation. In light of the saint of Divine Mercy, St. Faustina, there is one thought from her writings that should challenge us and give insight and hope. "*The greatest sinner has the greatest claim on God's mercy.*" This thought is contrary to our natural inclinations. It is not an easy thing for us to pray for the greatest of sinners with compassion. It takes a great deal of love and faith: the theological virtues found only in grace. This is particularly difficult when we personally experience having been sinned against. Our natural inclination is reprisal.

Generally speaking, I think we experience difficulties about having compassion for the sinner because it touches deep within our own heart/soul. We find it easier to have compassion for someone who is sick since we could just as easily contract an illness. We can also sympathize with someone who has been in a serious accident since we can easily see ourselves caught in a serious accident as well. We can easily see ourselves as victims of a natural disaster such as tornados or hurricanes etc. But these are all external/physical manifestations. They are external and their presence is obvious and we can do something tangible to help. Whenever we extend ourselves in a tangible way it looks good externally and is a manifestation to some degree of compassion and mercy internally.

Sin is a very different kind of tragedy. Sin does have an external manifestation that has an internal motivation

that remains secretly in the heart/soul. There are also many sins that only exist and hide within the heart and soul. Sin is a spiritual sickness that afflicts the soul. For various reasons we do not find ourselves overly concerned with the health of our soul much less for the spiritual health of the soul of another. We give little thought to those who may be struggling with sin in their life. We usually consider such things to be a matter that concerns only the individual and God. As for ourselves we insist that our spiritual health is our own business: between me and God. We don't want anyone concerning themselves with our spiritual life. We would rather figure out our spiritual health for ourselves and we are more than willing to let others take care of themselves. I'll take care of myself and you take care of you.

In the meantime, we do not seriously consider that we have an important responsibility to pray for those who are in the greatest need of God's mercy. Our lack of concern is symptomatic of a lack of seriousness about the business of sin. If we don't consider sin a big deal then there is nothing to be concerned about; for my soul or the soul of another. Somehow, we have slipped into a nonchalant attitude about sin.

I recall a theme found in the writings of C. S. Lewis. In his "Screwtop Letters" there is a senior devil instructing a junior devil. In the instruction the senior Screwtop says something insightful. He says that the biggest advantage they could have is if we can convince human beings that there is no devil. If we can accomplish that we will win their souls. A lack of belief in the presence of evil leads to a lack of the seriousness of sin. Then the presence of sin in the soul, even the small "venial" sins, has a way of making the heart numb to the spiritual sickness of the soul. A heart that is numb becomes a hardened heart. Long story short, the talk of sin, temptation, the devil, hell, the spiritual sickness of the soul all sounds rather silly in a world that has become indifferent to the spiritually sick soul.

If our nonchalant attitude flourishes and we do not take our spiritual health and the spiritual health of others seriously then the most dangerous flaw for this attitude presents itself. Our observance of Easter which we have celebrated for the past week is not important. It was a charming waste of time. The Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord was pointless. We have done what St. Paul warns us about: we have emptied the cross of its power to save.

Sin is the worst! So much so that God sent his only-begotten son to us for our salvation. Sin is so serious that God became incarnate in the person of Jesus to save us.

We are reminded to pray for God's Mercy. We are to pray for those who are in need throughout the world and we do what we are able. With compassion we assist those who face physical crisis in our world. We are all too aware of those situations; we see them in the news. However, in this Easter season we are made aware of a greater need for God's mercy. We pray for God's Mercy for ourselves and for those who are trapped in the deadly spiral of sin: those who are in the greatest need of God's mercy.

Our great hope can be found in the words of St. Faustina: *the greatest sinner has the greatest claim on God's Mercy.* These are great words of Hope. God never turns his back on those who seek Him and His Mercy.

During this time of confinement, we can continue to pray and reflect on the goodness of God. We are blessed. We have hope. Hope gives us strength to persevere. See you soon.

Have a great Easter Season.

Fr. Ralko

Note Well: The church is open in the morning Monday - Friday until noon. You are welcome to stop in to say a prayer and maybe light a candle. There are copies of *The Word Among Us* available as well as copies of the *National Catholic Register*. We have plenty. Please help yourself and maybe take one for a fellow parishioner who cannot get out. Stay safe.

ELECTRONIC CONTRIBUTIONS

St. Nicholas Church has a convenient way to make your regular offerings. With our electronic giving program, you can easily set up a recurring giving schedule. We encourage you to set up a schedule of recurring contributions. It's convenient for you and provides much-needed consistency for our church. If you are currently giving on a weekly basis, you will no longer need to write out 52 checks a year or prepare 52 envelopes. Even when travel, illness or other circumstances prevent you from attending services, our church will continue to receive your contributions on an uninterrupted basis. To become an electronic giver, call or visit the church office for a brief form to fill out.

This week we pray Week II of the Liturgy of the hours.



Casa Santa Marta

Daily Mass Online

www.ewtn.com Holy Mass from the EWTN Chapel

www.vaticannews.va/en/pope-francis/masscasa-santa-marta.pagelist.html
Holy Mass with Pope Francis from



BOOSTER MANIA WINNERS FOR MARCH

\$100-Dan Backus, \$25-Bernice Sigrist, Linda Grieves, Jerry Wolfe, Greg Dodson, Steve Dickerson, Joyce Schilling, Kay Dozer, Gwyneth Paul, Charlie White, Fr. Ralko, Carolyn Arnold, Doug McDaniel

Readings for Week of April 20

Mon.	Acts 4:23-31	Jn 3:1-8
Tues.	Acts 4:32-37	Jn 3:7b-15
Wed	Acts 5:17-26	Jn 3:16-21
Thurs.	Acts 5:27-33	Jn 3:31-36
Fri.	Acts 5:34-42	Jn 6:1-15
Sat.	1 Pt 5:5b-14	Mk 16:15-20
Sun	Acts 2:14, 22-23	Lk 24:13-35



On that day all the divine floodgates through which graces flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity. Everything that exists has come forth from the very depths of My most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy.

Daily Mass Intentions

MONDAY, April 20

Cecil Mary Soller

TUESDAY, April 21, St. Anselm

Barbara Miller, anniversary

WEDNESDAY, April 22

Anthony Tung Nguyen

THURSDAY, April 23, SS George and Adalbert

Pastor's Intention

FRIDAY, April 24, St Fidelis of Sigmaringen

Daniel J. Paul

SATURDAY, April 25, St Mark

Gary Cooper

SUNDAY, April 26

St. Nicholas Parishioners

Glenn Sidwell and

Harold & Mary Roessler and Ellen Baker