

Thoughts in the Time of COVID-19—#14, April 18, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters,

Since the year 2000, the Second Sunday of Easter, which features “Doubting Thomas” (our “twin”), is known also as Divine Mercy Sunday. From Good Friday to this coming Sunday afternoon at 3 o’clock, the “Hour of Mercy,” many millions around the world are taking part in a Novena, begging God’s mercy on the whole world, so apt in this time of COVID-19.

The inspiration for the Divine Mercy comes from revelations made to St. Faustina Kowalska in mystical visions from Jesus. Throughout history, there have been devotional developments that had as their goal to share with believers God’s merciful love for all his people. When love grows cold, God intervenes to remind us of his compassion and mercy.

The Divine Mercy devotion focuses on Jesus with the figure of a full-length standing Jesus, with one arm raised, and two dramatic streams of light, one red and one white, issuing from his heart. We find it today in countless churches and homes. The Divine Mercy image, with the phrase “Jesus I Trust in You” often written at its base, is a consolation to many, especially in light of the Corona Virus restrictions.

What a grace it is that so many believers will pause at three o’clock in the afternoon and pray the Divine Mercy chaplet, simply repeating those rich words on their rosary beads: “For the sake of his sorrowful passion/Have mercy on us and on the whole world”! God’s merciful love may be said to have begun with Thomas and his fellow Apostles. And it reaches to us at this difficult time of the worldwide pandemic.

Many people making the Divine Mercy Novena do so to obtain for themselves or someone deceased the Plenary Indulgence that the Church offers. The usual conditions for this spiritual benefit are detachment from all sin, celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation and reception of Holy Communion during the Novena or within 20 days of its closure, and prayers for the Holy Father’s Intentions.

Given the extraordinary conditions we are facing and the impossibility for most of confession or receiving Holy Communion, I am extending the time for these until 20 days following the removal of the restrictions now in place to protect the health of all, particularly our vulnerable and elderly.

God bless you.

✠ Terrence