

Resources for the homily – Sunday April 19, 2020
Second Sunday of Easter, Sunday of The Divine Mercy
Readings: Acts 2:42-47, 1 Peter 1:3-9, Gospel John 20:19-31

1. Summary: Divine Mercy Sunday describes the great mercy of Almighty God, what he has done for us, especially in the Paschal Mystery. This calls forth a life-style of mercy and care of others.

2. St. Faustina Kowalska (d. 1938) who was a Polish Sister, received the messages from Jesus reminding us of God's great mercy for our time. She also received certain devotional practices for obtaining that mercy including the picture, the feast, the Hour of Mercy at 3:00 every day, the chaplet of Divine Mercy, and the Novena. Each of these practices involves special promises from Jesus.

For example, concerning the Picture she reported that Jesus said to her:

“I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish (go to hell). I also promise victory over its enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death. I Myself will defend it as My own glory.”

3. Jesus said to Sr. Faustina one day: "Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to My mercy" (Diary, 300). Divine Mercy! This is the Easter gift that the Church receives from the risen Christ and offers to humanity at the dawn of the third millennium.

4. Pope John Paul could well be called the Pope of Divine Mercy, for not only did he canonize St. Faustina on April 30, 2000 but he also instituted the feast of Divine Mercy for the Universal church at that same time. Furthermore, he died in April 2005 on the vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday. He was himself beatified on Divine Mercy Sunday, May 1, 2011, by his successor, Pope Benedict XVI, and was canonized together with Pope John XXIII on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 27, 2014, by Pope Francis.

5. St. Faustina and Pope John Paul II certainly experienced the Divine Mercy in their lives. St. Faustina was a Polish Nun who took her vows in 1928 and lived until 1938. She received the vision of the image of the Divine Mercy in 1934. I invite you to think of what happened in Poland immediately after this revelation. Remember that St. John Paul the Great worked as a laborer under the Nazis and then was a priest under the communist regime in Poland for decades!

6. To show how important works of mercy are as a means of glorifying Him and giving due worship to Him as the Divine Mercy, and that the image is intended to be a reminder of this, Jesus stated:

“Yes, the first Sunday after Easter is the Feast of Mercy, but there must also be acts of mercy, and I demand the worship of My mercy through the solemn celebration of the Feast and through the veneration of the image which is painted. By means of this image I shall grant many graces to souls. It is to be a reminder of the demand of My mercy, because even the strongest faith is of no avail without works.”

Was this not a divine set-up for the world at this time? What was going on in the late 1930s? In 1939 Poland was invaded. What happened in the years and the decades after this revelation?

7. The three elements of the message of mercy can be called to mind simply by remembering A-B-C.

Ask for His Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly. Practically this means participating in the devotional practices; chaplet, 3:00 hour of mercy, novena from Good Friday to Divine Mercy Sunday, and honoring the picture of Divine Mercy. All these practices are ways to appeal to Jesus for his mercy.

Be Merciful. In turn, I show my thankfulness, love and appreciation by extending mercy to others. Here it is helpful to consider the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Completely trust in Jesus. The graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust.

8. The readings and the prayers for this Sunday represent well these three dimensions of the Divine Mercy and our response to it. The opening prayer addresses the Father as "God of Mercy." In the Psalm we repeat several times, "His mercy endures forever." *"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever!"* (Ps 118).

9. The first reading (Acts 2: 42- 47) from the Acts of the Apostles illustrates the call to **be merciful**, especially the corporal works of mercy. It gives a summary portrait of the gracious and generous sharing of the early Christian community before the Jews and the Romans started their persecutions. It was a community which practiced the sharing love, compassion, and the mercy of God as taught by Jesus. It was also a witnessing community deriving its strength from community prayer, "the breaking of the bread" and

the teaching of the apostles which were read at the worship service. This is more difficult than it might appear for we must be good stewards and require necessary responsibility (See 1 Thess 3:10).

"In fact, when we were with you, we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat."

10. In the second reading (I Peter 1: 3-9) Peter reminds the early Christians **to trust completely in Jesus**, for Jesus Christ showed them great mercy by giving them a new birth to a living hope of imperishable heavenly inheritance through his resurrection. He warned them of the trials waiting for them and challenged them to keep their faith. These reminders also apply to us in our world.

11. Today's gospel (John 20:19-31) vividly reminds us of how Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a sacrament of divine mercy, during his very first resurrection appearance. Its importance is shown by its being the Gospel reading for all three years on the Divine Mercy Sunday. The Risen Lord gave his apostles the power to forgive sins by the words, "*Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained*" (Jn 20: 19-23, see also, Mt 16:19, 18:18). Presenting Thomas's doubt and demand, finally yielding "*My Lord and my God,*" the Gospel illustrates how Jesus showed his mercy to the doubting apostle and emphasizes the importance of faith. Therefore we need to **ask for his mercy**.

12. Application (following the three major themes of the Divine Mercy).

A. Praying and asking for the Divine Mercy using our devotions.

1. What is the Divine Mercy Devotion? While the "Mercy of God" is an important theme running through both the Old and the New Testaments, Jesus, through his revelation to St. Faustina is focusing our attention again upon this attribute of God which we need so much at our time in history. Devotion to the Divine Mercy involves a total commitment to God as Mercy. It is a decision to trust completely in Him, to accept His mercy with thanksgiving, and then to be merciful in our lifestyle to others as He has been merciful to us. This involves some specific practices:

2. Note that we must ask God for His Mercy. Sr. Faustina, in her revelations, had a vision of the punishments of Hell, general punishments for all those in Hell and specific punishments for particular people. It is fundamentally necessary that we turn to God asking for mercy, desiring to repent of our sins.

B. Putting all our faith and trust in God to guide and to bless us.

C. Performing those acts of mercy concretely for others. See point six above.

13. It might well be helpful to take a fresh look at the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy, a list of 14 ways to respond to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of others:

The Corporal Works of Mercy	The Spiritual Works of Mercy
1. Feed the hungry.	1. Admonish sinners.
2. Give drink to the thirsty.	2. Instruct the uninformed.
3. Clothe the naked.	3. Counsel the doubtful.
4. Shelter the homeless.	4. Comfort the sorrowful.
5. Comfort the imprisoned.	5. Bear wrongs patiently.
6. Visit the sick.	6. Forgive offenses.
7. Bury the dead.	7. Pray for the living and the dead.

Being merciful to others (some examples among others).

1. Do we take the time and energy to notice that a person might have a sorrow or a need, in the family.
2. If someone is having trouble with a class, do I help them out if I can? Do I volunteer to be a tutor?
3. Do I pray for others? Those in Purgatory? Those on earth? Those around me?
4. Am I able to give up something so that I could give time and/or money to help another?

12. Mayor's mercy and justice: One night in 1935, Fiorello H. La Guardia, mayor of New York, showed up at a night court in the poorest ward of the city. He dismissed the judge for the evening and took over the bench. One case involved an elderly woman who was caught stealing bread to feed her grandchildren. La Guardia said, "I've got to punish you. Ten dollars or ten days in jail." As he spoke, he threw \$10 into his hat. He then fined everyone in the courtroom 50 cents for living in a city "where an old woman had to steal bread so that her grandchildren should not starve." The hat was passed around, and the woman left the courtroom with her fine paid and an additional \$47.50.

Several notes: Fr Paul out of parish for five days. Church open daily 8-7p.m. Adoration Thursday.