

Homily of Second Sunday of Easter Year B, 2021 (Divine Mercy Sunday)

Acts 4:32-35; Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; 1 John 5:1-6; John 20:19-31

In 2000, St. Pope John Paul II canonized St. Faustina, and made the second Sunday of Easter to be celebrated as Divine Mercy Sunday. St. Faustina was a Polish nun gifted with mystical visions, messages and revelations from the Risen Jesus. This is a rare instance when a personal revelation is authenticated to the degree that it becomes a Sunday celebration by the Universal Church.

The feast situates well following Easter Sunday to show that the events of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus for the redemption of humanity were out of God's gratuitous mercy. God's mercy is gratuitous because humanity did nothing to merit it.

St. Faustina wrote in her diary, "Proclaim that mercy is the greatest attribute of God. All God's works are crowned with mercy" (no. 301). God is so merciful and ever forgiving that he does not judge us according to our sin. Psalm 130:3 prays, "If you, Lord, keep account of sins, Lord, who can stand? But with you is forgiveness and so you are revered." God forgives no matter the depth of one's sin. The Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32 gives us a good idea of the depth of God's forgiveness. His banner over us is love (Song of Solomon 2:4).

We proclaim God's mercy, not only in words but also in deeds. God's mercy continues in our world through us if we become instruments of his mercy by works of charity. In the first reading, the early Christian community sets a good example for us. "The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. ... There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need" (Acts 4:32-35). We are invited to imitate the early Christian community.

Jesus says, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers [and sisters] of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). Yes, when we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit prisoners, bury the dead, and give alms to the poor, we are treating others as if they were Christ in disguise.

Jesus teaches us to be merciful even to enemies. Jesus says, "Love your enemies and do good to them, ... [like] the Most-High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as also your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:35-36). St. Paul tells us, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

The image of the Divine Mercy of Jesus showing two rays, one reddish (symbolizing blood) and the other whitish (symbolizing water), with the words "**Jesus, I trust in you**" at the bottom, is one of St. Faustina's visions. The image takes us back to the passion, crucifixion and death of Jesus. When the soldier pierced the side of Jesus, "immediately blood and water flowed out" (John 19:34).

Jesus tells us the meaning of his water in John 7:38-39, "Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: 'Rivers of living water will flow from within him.' He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive." St. John says in the second reading, "This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but by water and blood. The Spirit is the one that testifies, and the Spirit is truth."

Jesus said during the Last Supper, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). The blood of the new covenant means the physical blood Jesus shed on the cross for the salvation of humanity, and the sacramental blood present in the Eucharist.

These spiritual realities are impossible to attain without faith. For this reason, St. John says in the second reading, "Whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith" (1 John 5:4).

With faith, let us encounter Jesus and experience God's mercy. May our faith conquer our world of fear and doubt, and unlock every locked door. May we welcome Jesus and experience his peace. May he renew and empower us with his Holy Spirit. May we experience the same healing as Thomas, and exclaim as he did, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Amen.

Shall we sing:

O Lord, my God, how excellent is thy name;
O Lord, my God, how excellent is thy name.
O Lord, my God, how wonderful is thy name;
O Lord, my God, how wonderful is thy name.
O Lord, my God, how precious is thy name;
O Lord, my God, how precious is thy name.
O Lord, my God, how powerful is thy name;
O Lord, my God, how powerful is thy name.

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