

Homily of Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday), Year A, 2023

Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

In 2000, Pope St. 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 the Easter Sunday, to show that the events of the incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus for the redemption of humanity were from the gratuitous mercy of God. God's mercy is gratuitous because humanity did nothing to merit it. St. Peter writes in the second reading, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ..." St. Faustina wrote in her diary, "Proclaim that mercy is the greatest attribute of God. All works of his hand are crowned with mercy" (no. 301).

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. John 19:33-34 narrates, "But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out." Jesus tells us during the Last Supper the meaning of his blood, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

Jesus, also, tells us the meaning of his water in his encounter with the Samaritan woman, "Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

Let us visualize the blood and water flowing from the side of Jesus. Let us pray that the water from the side of Jesus wells up new life in us. May the water from the side of Jesus become the water of River Jordan where Naaman bathed and was healed of his leprosy (2 King 5). May it become that life-giving water that flowed from the temple in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 47).

Thomas' doubt brought him a positive result. He was privileged to be the only person Jesus asked to put his finger into his side where the lance pierced. When Thomas put his finger into the side of Jesus, his spiritual disease of doubt was healed. Thomas exclaimed the greatest profession of faith, "My Lord and my God." Let us encounter Jesus as Thomas did. Let us hear Jesus asking us to put our finger into his side. May we, also, receive our own healing.

The first reading informs us how the early Christians practiced their faith. They went to the temple to pray according to the Jewish religious tradition. They, also, gathered in their homes every day to celebrate the Eucharist, "breaking of bread," in obedience to the command of Jesus during the Last Supper, "Do this in remembrance of me." As Catholics, we are required to gather to celebrate the Eucharist in remembrance of him, and we are required to gather in our homes to pray. A family that prays together stays together. Unfortunately, many families do not gather to pray.

As we have read in the first reading, another special identity of the early Christians was the work of mercy. "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need." Work of mercy is a requirement for us all. Our God is a merciful God. Today's Psalm says, "His mercy endures forever." Jesus tells us, "Be merciful, just as your father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). Let us check on one another, support one another, and encourage one another.

We see, among the early Christians, the fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10, "Over the House of David and citizens of Jerusalem I will pour out a spirit of kindness and prayer." May this prophecy, also, come to fulfilment among us, Christians of today.

The disciples locked themselves up for fear of the Jews, but Jesus passed through the locked doors, stood in their midst, blessed them with peace, and breathed on them the Holy Spirit. May Jesus unlock every locked door, drive away all fears, and heal our anxieties. May he bless us with peace. May he breathe on us the Holy Spirit. May the wind of the Holy Spirit blow freshness into us. Amen.

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