

## SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER/SUNDAY OF THE DIVINE MERCY

THEME: "MY LORD AND MY GOD!"

The Second Sunday of Easter is also known as Sunday of the Divine Mercy. Divine Mercy Sunday was instituted by St. Pope John Paul II in 2000 based on the divine revelation Jesus gave to St. Mary Faustina Kowalska. The Divine Mercy novena, a nine-day of prayer we started on Easter Sunday, ended yesterday, Saturday. Today, we celebrate Mass in honor of the Divine Mercy of Jesus. The central message on Divine Mercy Sunday is to remind us that God's mercy is greater than our sins. The Catechism of the Church put it beautifully: "The Gospel is the revelation in Jesus Christ of God's mercy to sinners" (#1849).

"My Lord and my God" is a profound profession of faith Thomas made when he finally saw the resurrected Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of St. John on this Second Sunday of Easter, John tells us when Jesus appears to his disciples the first time after his resurrection, Thomas was not there. When his fellow disciples tell him they have seen the risen Lord, he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." I think got the nickname "Doubting Thomas" from his disbelief in the resurrection. I truly admire him because he was very honest with his disbelief. I would rather call him "Honest Thomas." Beloved, he did not pretend! Remember, they're all grieving since the death of their Master, Jesus. Since we are different and unique, we all grieve differently. It seemed Thomas' grief led him to disbelief, doubt, loneliness, and rationalization. Being true to your loss is a very important step to grief recovery. Thomas was honest about his loss and recovered from his grief when he made his profound profession of faith in Jesus during their encounter.

St. John tells us a week later, when the doors were locked for the fear of the Jews, Jesus appears to them again. He gives his peace to them and breathes on them, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." The Council of Trent traced the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation to this commandment of Jesus. St. John tells us when Jesus breathed on them, it recalled Genesis 2:7, where God breathed on Adam, the first man, and gave him life. Just as Adam's life came from God, so now the disciples' new spiritual life emanates from Jesus breathing on them. This may be John's version of the Pentecost since he doesn't have the account of Pentecost like St. Luke does.

Jesus invited Thomas: "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas made his great confession or profession of faith: "MY LORD AND MY GOD." Fellow parishioners, Thomas, who was not ashamed of his disbelief in the resurrection, was healed by Jesus of his unbelief. Jesus gave him another chance to have faith in him. Thomas got it this time and went on to become a faithful and great apostle of Jesus in India where he died for Jesus and his Roman Catholic Church.

Jesus said: "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." It means those Christians who have believed without seeing him have faith which is in no way different from that of the early Christians.

John wants his early Christian community and future Christian communities to know that even seeing as Thomas did is not in any way a guarantee of faith. This reminds us of the saying that "Faith comes by hearing the word of God."

St. John, in the second reading, again highlights the importance of faith as a key factor for our salvation. With faith in Jesus, the early Christians were able to do the great things we read in the Scripture. You notice faith is found in all the three readings.

The first reading taken from the Acts of Apostles describes the community life of the early Christians. Luke describes their community life as marked with shared faith and shared possession. It was a community in which the members truly loved and cared for one another. That explains why many people joined them. As Luke put it beautifully: "And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."

My dear parishioners, are we walking in the footsteps of these early Christians? Do we generously share our faith and resources together with others, especially those that may not be able to reciprocate?

During this Divine Mercy Sunday, let us also meditate on the Divine Mercy of Jesus. St. Pope John Paul II says it well: "Mercy is the heart of God." Yes, being merciful, loving, and sharing our gifts and talents, especially with the poor and needy in our communities, we become truly part of Jesus' divine mercy. That is to say, Mercy becomes Heart of God.

May you all have a blessed Divine Mercy Sunday!