

Second Sunday of Easter

Father Ed's Homily

Theme: Jesus, The Perfect Model of God's Divine Mercy For Us

On this Second Sunday of Easter, we celebrate Divine Mercy. Why do we call it Divine Mercy Sunday? The feast of Divine Mercy was instituted by St. John Paul II in 2000, based on the revelation Jesus gave to St. Mary Faustina Kowalska. The Novena of Divine Mercy ends on Saturday evening prayer of the Easter Octave. The central message of Divine Mercy Sunday is to remind us that God's mercy is greater than our sins. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says it well: "The Gospel is the revelation in Jesus Christ of God's mercy to sinners" (#1849).



Jesus is the perfect model of God's divine mercy for us. In the Gospel reading today, we hear how Jesus shows his divine mercy to Thomas. Jesus did not reprimand Thomas for his lack of faith in his resurrection. He gave his unconditional love and divine mercy to Thomas. Jesus restored his faith as well future Christians. St. John tells us when Jesus appeared to his disciples the first time after his resurrection, Thomas was not there. It seems Thomas

was not just a rationalist, but he was grieving alone. It is very difficult to grieve alone. You need the support of your family and community for a healthy healing of your grief/loss. That is why Grief Support Groups are available. So, when his fellow disciples told 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." He was very honest; he did not conceal his lack of faith in Jesus' resurrection. St. John tells us a week later, when the doors were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus appeared to them again. He gave his peace to them and breathed on them and said, "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 saying of Jesus. Jesus breathing on them recalls in 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 comes from Jesus breathing on them.

Jesus then invited Thomas to "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 then made a very profound profession of faith: "My Lord and my God." Beloved, because Thomas was not ashamed of his lack of faith, Jesus healed him of his lack of faith. Thomas became a faithful apostle of Jesus in India and died for Jesus and his Roman Catholic Church there.

St. John the Evangelist tells us that Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." In other words, faith, not sight, matters for our salvation. In the second reading, St. Peter addresses not only the early Christian community but also people like us who have not seen Jesus, the risen Lord. He says it beautifully: "Although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him." He is referring to what theologians called the "historical Jesus," meaning Jesus in person. We have not seen Jesus in person, but we love and believe in him by faith, not by sight. We have seen the Jesus of faith, as theologians termed it.

My dear people of God, there is so much for us to learn from the early Christian community in the Acts of the Apostles. In today's first reading, we hear of the chief characteristics of this early Christian community church, namely: adherence to the teachings of the twelve apostles, focusing on its religious life in the Eucharistic liturgy—the breaking of bread and sharing goods to help the less fortunate ones in their community. St. Luke tells us, "And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." When Christians live together, they bear witness to the Gospel of Christ. It is true that there is power in UNITY. Unity does not mean uniformity. It is okay for us to have our differences and still work to build the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Do you all not think/believe if we walk in their footsteps, I mean, the early Christian community, our churches would be full? Let us continue to pray for unity and love for our polarized Church and the world.

What can we take home today from celebrating Divine Mercy Sunday? God is very merciful to us, and we also must be merciful to ourselves and to those we may meet in our community--family, church, workplace, etc.

We must also remember that FAITH is more important, more precious than sight. Remember: where our reason can't take us, our faith in Jesus takes us beyond our imagination/comprehension.

We must also learn to share our talents and gifts with those who may not be able to reciprocate so that our rewards will be in heaven, as Jesus tells us. Let us remember what St. John Paul II said: "Mercy is the heart of God." Yes, being merciful, loving and sharing our gifts and talents, especially to the poor and needy in our communities, we become part of Jesus' divine mercy. That is, Mercy becomes Heart of God.

Happy and blessed Divine Mercy Sunday to you all.