

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY)

St. John 20:19-31

Today, the Second Sunday of Easter, has, since the year A.D. 2000, been called Divine Mercy Sunday, when Pope St. John Paul II declared it be a universal day of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Christ and His Divine Mercy, as made known to St. Maria Faustina Kowalska. According to the diary of St. Faustina, the Lord made known to her that “On [this] day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day all the divine floodgates through which grace flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity” (*Diary of St. Faustina*, n. 699). It is mercy that God has always offered to mankind—from the moment of the flood when God said to Noah, “the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh,” to the moment the Lord hung upon the Cross and He said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

The Ark of the Covenant, which contained the tablets of the ten commandments given to Moses, the rod of Aaron, and the Manna that fell from heaven, was also known as the “Mercy-Seat,” for it held the signs of God’s mercy to the Hebrew people bound in a covenant or vow of God to man. In the New Testament mercy continued to be understood as fidelity but it also came to mean the deeply felt love of one man for another who suffers unjustly and it also came to mean grace. The suffering brought about by the sin of Adam and

Eve has been met throughout history with the mercy of God and is still met today, in particular, by the grace of the Sacraments. God always intended that we should live bound up in Him. But we must trust that God's grace is enough, we must accept that we are not the best we can be, but that takes courage. To face up to our sinfulness, to our wrong-doing can feel life-threatening, as though plumbing the depths of our souls and confronting the evil within us will somehow undo us and tear us apart, obliterating us. That is why the Lord says in the Apocalypse: "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive for ever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades." We must place ourselves in the death-dark wounds of our unconscious just as the Apostle St. Thomas placed his hands in the wounds of Christ, so that by His wounds our wounds are healed. It is why in the image of the Divine Mercy we see from the heart of Christ two rays of light, one white and one red. The white being the waters of Baptism, which makes souls righteous, and the red being the blood of His passion, which must become mingled with our blood.

Everything that the Lord has given us, from the moment of creation to the moments beyond our death are bound in mercy. The greatest mercy was shown to man in the passion and death of Christ, but so that His mercy may be known forever He gave us the Holy Spirit to make that mercy known in every age and at every time and to the Apostles, the ministers of that mercy, He said, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." In Baptism we are dragged into the death of Christ so that we may rise with Him by being freed of sin. But for the most part none of us makes it through life unscathed and so the Lord gave to us His Precious Blood, by which in the Sacrament of Penance—confession—we are restored to the state of grace we have lost. Even after death the Lord does not leave us alone but grants us mercy in Purgatory. And Purgatory is a place of mercy for if we were to die as we are now then we would be left forever in the mire of our unconscious

confronting the long-repressed evil of our life and we would die for those places of our souls which we dare not go for fear would annihilate us. But by the mercy of God, His fidelity and His compassion, means that we are not left to the consequences of our pain and suffering but find rest in the arms of He who suffered and died so that we might live and live life to the fullest. So let us pray on this Divine Mercy Sunday that we might always say, "Jesus, I trust in You."