

## Divine Mercy Sunday

The readings for this Sunday are about God's mercy, the necessity for trusting Faith and the need for the forgiveness of sins. The opening prayer addresses the Father as "*God of everlasting Mercy.*" In the Responsorial Psalm (Ps 118) we repeat three times, "*His mercy endures forever!*" God revealed His mercy, first and foremost, by sending His only begotten Son Jesus, who would become our Savior and Lord through His suffering, death and Resurrection. Divine Mercy or the unconditional love of God, is given to us also in each celebration of the Sacraments, especially that of Reconciliation.

The first reading, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, explains how the Risen Lord continued to show His Divine Mercy to the sick through the healing and preaching ministry of the apostles in the early Church. The Faith of the apostles enabled them to minister to the people, giving them the Lord's healing love in "*signs and wonders*".

St. Faustina of Poland is the well-known apostle of Divine Mercy. At 10:00 AM, April 30, 2000, the Second Sunday of Easter, His Holiness Pope St. John Paul II celebrated the Eucharist in Saint Peter's Square and canonized Blessed Sister Faustina. That day was Divine Mercy Sunday, the Feast requested by Jesus in His communications with St. Faustina. St. Faustina invites us by the witness of her life to keep our Faith and Hope fixed on God the Father, rich in mercy, who saved us by the precious Blood of His Son. During her short life, the Lord Jesus assigned to St. Faustina three basic tasks: 1. To pray for souls, entrusting them to God's incomprehensible Mercy; 2. To tell the world about God's generous Mercy; 3. To start a new movement in the Church focusing on God's Mercy.

At the canonization of St. Faustina, Pope St. John Paul II said: "The cross, even after the Resurrection of the Son of God, speaks, and never ceases to speak, of God the Father, who is absolutely faithful to His eternal love for man. ... Believing in this love means believing in mercy." "The Lord of Divine Mercy," a drawing of Jesus, based on the vision given to St. Faustina, shows Jesus raising his right hand in a gesture of blessing, with His left hand on his heart, from which gush forth two rays, one red and one white. The picture contains the message, "Jesus, I trust in You!" (*JezuufamTobie*). The rays streaming out have symbolic meaning: red for the Blood of Jesus, which is the life of souls and white for the Baptismal water which justifies souls. The whole image is symbolic of the mercy, forgiveness and love of God.

Let us accept God's invitation to celebrate and practice mercy. One way the Church celebrates God's mercy throughout the year is through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Finding time for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is another good way to receive Divine Mercy. The Gospel command, "*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful,*" demands that we show mercy to our fellow human beings always and everywhere. We radiate God's mercy to others by our actions, our words, and our prayers. It is mainly through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy that we practice mercy in our daily lives and become eligible for God's merciful judgment.

We need to meet the challenge for a transparent Christian life -- "*I will not believe unless I see.*" This "seeing" is what others demand of us. They ask if we reflect Jesus, the Risen Lord, in our lives by our selfless love, unconditional forgiveness and humble service. The integrity of our lives bears a fundamental witness to others, who want to see the Risen Lord alive and active, working in us. Christ's mercy shines forth from us, whenever we reach out to the poor, the needy and the marginalized. His mercy shines forth when we remain open to those who struggle in Faith, as did the Apostle Thomas in today's Gospel. We should be able to appreciate the presence of Jesus, crucified and raised, in our own suffering and in our suffering brothers and sisters, thus recognizing the glorified wounds of the Risen Lord in the suffering of others.

Like St. Thomas, let us use our skepticism to help us grow in Faith. It is our genuine doubts about the doctrines of our religion that encourage us to study these doctrines more closely and thus to grow in our Faith. This will naturally lead us to a personal encounter with Jesus through our prayer, study of the Word of God, and frequenting of the Sacraments. However, we must never forget the fact that our Faith is not our own doing but is a gift from God. So, we need to increase our Faith every day by prayer so that we may join St. Thomas in his proclamation: "My Lord and my God."

Let us have the courage of our Christian convictions to share our Faith as St. Thomas did. We are not to keep the gift of Faith locked in our hearts, but to share it with our children, our families and our neighbors, always remembering the words of Pope St. John XXIII: "Every believer in this world must become a spark of Christ's light."