

Divine Mercy Sunday 2024

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MASS

On this Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday, we offer prayers of thanksgiving for the endless love and mercy God bestows upon us, as reflected in Psalm 118 from Sunday's Mass, "Let those who fear the Lord say, 'His mercy endures forever.'" At the canonization of St. Faustina Kowalska in 2000, St. John Paul II declared that the Second Sunday of Easter each year will be designated Divine Mercy Sunday. He wrote an Encyclical on God's mercy in which he cites the Gospel passage from St. John proclaimed at Sunday's Mass: "In His resurrection, Christ has revealed the God of merciful love, precisely because He accepted the cross as the way to the resurrection... Our faith and hope are centered on the Risen One: on that Christ, who "on the evening of that day, the first day of the week ... stood among them" in the Upper Room, "where the disciples were ... breathed on them, and said to them: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

During her lifetime in the first part of the 20th Century, St. Faustina was dedicated to a deep, loving and mystical connection with Christ. She wrote in her diary about the abiding love and mercy of the Lord: "It unites the creature with its Creator... His greatest love, the infinite depth of His mercy, is in the Incarnation of the Word, in the Redemption He accomplished ...".

HOMILY

Our Resurrected Lord Jesus entreated us during the Octave of Easter that we open our hearts fully to His Fount of Divine Mercy, His Most Sacred Heart, from which pour His every grace and favour in perfect Love. On Divine Mercy Sunday the Church celebrated the depths of God's mercy that emanate from His Love, a love that has suffered passionately for us and conquered death to bring new life eternally at Easter to those who believe.

In the message of Divine Mercy, Jesus expresses His intimate desire to enter into the temple of our heart, but for Him to be able to enter we first must open the door of our heart to His Divine Love. Jesus gently knocks at our door and awaits our response, reassuring us not to be afraid but rather to trust always in Him. Only in opening our hearts to Him may we plunge into the depths of the flows of love and mercy that emanate from Jesus' Sacred Heart.

Since the fourth century, Saint Augustine has taught the Christian Faithful that the Living Water pouring eternally forth from the Heart of Jesus is none other than the birth waters of the Church in the Sacrament of Baptism. The Church is born precisely at the moment that the Roman soldier's lance pierces open the

Sacred Heart of our Lord. The cleansing waters of Baptism, alongside the passionately loving water of the Most Holy Eucharist, flow sacramentally from the Heart of Christ to water the souls of the People of God, bringing us to realize the steadfast and saving hope found only in a personal encounter and relationship with our All-Merciful Lord.

It is impossible for us to love and adore Christ deeply enough as He is present in the Most Holy Eucharist. When we are before Him, present in the Most Holy Eucharist, we should see the Almighty God present in veiled form. He is: Mercy, Eternal Life, The Eternal God, The Saviour of Sinners, The Living Water, The Fire of Pure Love, The Medicine for All Our Ills, All Sentiments of Love, The Hope of All, The Lifter of Burdens...and He is worthy of all our trust.

What do you see when you gaze upon the Sacred Host? With your eyes you see bread, but with your soul you should see God. You should see God in all His glory and power and you should adore Him with all your might. Think about how you relate to our Lord as He is present in the Holy Eucharist. Pray that God will flood your mind with a true knowledge of Him and inspire your heart with a burning love.

The Blessed Sacrament is truly sacred. It is revered and treated with the greatest respect. We would never throw our Lord away or discard Him on the floor or in some irreverent place. And yet we often fail to treat others with the same respect we show Jesus present in the Sacred Host.

Do you realize that each person is a tabernacle? Each person is an image of God and is precious and sacred beyond imagination. We must see all people this way and we must seek to treat them with the greatest reverence and respect. In doing so, we honor our Divine Lord more than we could ever know. Reflect upon how you treat others this day. Reflect upon whether or not you treat them with the same love and respect you would show our Lord in the Sacred Host. Ask Jesus to help you to see His divine presence in everyone you meet.

John Paul II the Great considered his preaching on the love and mercy of our Lord to be central to the mission of his pontificate, as we see in his great encyclical letter on Divine Mercy, *Dives in misericordia*. The words of the Blessed Apostle of Divine Mercy echo now for all future generations concerning our celebration of the profound mercy of our Lord: “The Church must consider it one of her principal duties - at every stage of history and especially in our modern age - to proclaim and to introduce into life the mystery of mercy, supremely revealed in Jesus Christ. Not only for the Church herself as the community of believers but also in a certain sense for all humanity, this mystery is the source of a life different from the life which can be built by man”.

Pope Benedict told the participants at the conclusion of the first World Apostolic Congress on Mercy that the Church holds in her grasp a Divine Mercy mandate to be fulfilled: "I address my cordial greeting which now becomes a mandate: Go forth and be witnesses of God's mercy, a source of hope for every person and for the whole world. May the Risen Lord be with you always!"

When you are at church, do you listen? Specifically, do you listen to the voice of God? Often times we sit and listen to the homily and our mind wanders and we miss all or most of what was said. Where does your mind wander? The truth is that sometimes a wandering mind is from the Lord. Sometimes there may be one thing said at Mass that our Lord then places on your heart to ponder. Do not be afraid to let Jesus take you on a spiritual journey while at Mass or while alone in prayer. He may often wish to speak a homily directly to your soul.

Reflect, today, upon how well you reflect. True prayerful reflection is not simply daydreaming. It's not distraction that leads us to obsess or worry about this thing or that. Prayerful reflection is a way of letting God take hold of our imagination so as to lead us into His Truth. He often desires to lead us into a particular word of Truth that we need to know at that time. How well do you do this? Ponder your prayerful pondering and next time you pray do not be afraid to let God take control.

In Pope John Paul II's last Divine Mercy message said: "As a gift to humanity, which sometimes seems bewildered and overwhelmed by the power of evil, selfishness and fear, the Risen Lord offers His love that pardons, reconciles and reopens hearts to love. It is a love that converts hearts and gives peace. How much the world needs to understand and accept Divine Mercy!"

In Pope John Paul II's opening words of his pontificate to the world on October 22, 1978, the Saint exhorted the Christian Faithful to break down any walls that would keep them from encountering the Lord of Divine Love and Mercy: *Non abbiate paura . Aprite, anche spalancate le porte a Cristo!* Be not afraid . Open wide the doors to Christ!

This initial message of John Paul II's pontificate was punctuated for the Christian faithful to see on last Sunday morning along the Colonnade of Saint Peter's Square. In the Gospel of Divine Mercy Sunday, we also heard Jesus encourage and strengthen His disciples: Peace be with you! . Receive the Holy Spirit! At the moment of His death on the Cross, Jesus -- full of the Holy Spirit - - pours forth His Love and Mercy upon the world in a certain sense passively (having just died on the Cross as Son of Man), at the moment of the Roman centurion's piercing Jesus' Sacred Heart. At the same time, Jesus as Eternal Son of God actively permits this piercing so that He may pour forth His Love and Mercy from the Cross transcending all ages, gushing forth the flows of the Holy Spirit as the never ending Source and Fountain of Eternal Life .

As Pope Benedict so beautifully articulated, we encounter in John Paul II a man of God who wrote his last encyclical without words as he suffered and died, teaching us how to do so in true belief, where he (and we with him) would discover genuine freedom in total abandonment to the loving mercy of Jesus Christ.

Do you love with a pure love? What does this form of love look like? Pure love is one that flows directly from the Heart of Christ to and through your life. This holy love has beautiful characteristics. First, it is plentiful. When we love with the Heart of Christ we love in abundance. There is no limit to how much love we can share. It's like the brightness of the sun at noon casting rays on all below. Second, it's ingenious, doing what is pleasing to God. It is not cautious or calculated. It does not hesitate or evaluate. Rather, the wisdom of love is immediate and knows in each moment how to radiate God's love. And third, it is happy. Even when love calls one to heroic sacrifice there is great delight in this total self-giving.

Reflect, today, upon how fully you love with a pure and generous heart. Do you give of yourself in abundance? Is it a delight to serve without counting the cost? Do you easily find ways to show Mercy to others and delight in doing so? Ponder these questions today and pray that the Lord shines through all you do. May we open wide the doors of our hearts to Jesus' Divine Love and Mercy, so that the Sacred Heart of Jesus may pour forth the Holy Spirit into our hearts of stone and convert them to hearts of flesh united in Him.

Sometimes we do not feel like going to Mass or may be deeply distracted as we approach the Blessed Sacrament. Perhaps one of the best things to do in this case is to live in holy obedience. Jesus wants you to receive Holy Communion every Sunday and every holy day because He knows you need it. He knows that this Food from Heaven is necessary for you to obtain happiness. It is the Gift of Himself given freely and completely to you. And He commands you to attend the Holy Mass for your own good.

Reflect, today, upon your attitude toward the Gift of the Holy Mass. Do you attend faithfully? That is, without fail? Are you perfectly obedient to our Lord's command? And when there, how do you enter into the Mass? Do you pray and seek Him inviting Him into your soul? After you receive Holy Communion do you kneel and truly pray? We could never be grateful enough for this sacred Gift. Make your next Holy Communion one that sets you down a path of holiness.

May we always hold with loving devotion the Church's liturgical prayer for the feast of saint Pope John Paul II:

*O God, who are rich in mercy,
And who willed that the Blessed John Paul II
Should preside as Pope over your universal Church,
Grant, we pray, that instructed by his teaching,
We may open our hearts to the saving grace of Christ,*

*The sole Redeemer of mankind.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God forever and ever. Amen.*