

Divine Mercy Sunday

*Divine Mercy, this is the Easter gift that the Church receives from the risen Christ,
a gift which it offers to all humanity.*

St. John Paul II (1920-2005)

This Sunday the Second Sunday of Easter we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. This Feast was promulgated for the Universal Church by Saint Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of the canonization of St. Faustina on April 30, 2000. In the decree dated May 23, 2000 the Congregation of Divine Worship stated that *“throughout the world the Second Sunday of Easter will receive the name Divine Mercy Sunday, a perennial invitation to the Christian world to face, with confidence in divine benevolence, the difficulties and trials that mankind will experience in the years to come.”* In this time with the Covid-19 crisis, these words written in 2000 by a Congregation in the Vatican to some might appear prophetic, others might disagree with this assertion. What we might all be able to agree on, is that the Feast of Divine Mercy when it was promulgated twenty-one years ago was intended to remind us of our merciful Lord in our daily lives, especially in challenging and difficult times.

In the year 2000 the Congregation of Worship, through its statement announcing the Feast of Divine Mercy, proclaimed the intention and purpose of the Feast. This Feast that we celebrate this Sunday is not only a reminder to us of the Divine Mercy that our Lord has for each one of us, but this Feast is an invitation to us to face the difficulties and trails of our lives trusting in the divine benevolence of our God. Last Sunday we embraced the joy of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior. This Sunday as we continue to embrace the joy of the Season of Easter we are provided with a reminder of the divine benevolence of our Lord and Savior. No matter what challenges or trials we face in this world may we always rely on and trust in the mercy of our God. Jesus’ death and resurrection assures us that we have a merciful Lord that has reached out to us in every age and every place. The mercy of our Lord knows no bounds or limits it is there for all of us who call upon Him, in our time of need.

It is important to note that “Divine Mercy” is a central biblical theme of God’s benevolent and compassionate love. St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Catherine of Siena all spoke, wrote and taught about God’s Divine Mercy. The modern devotion to the Divine Mercy of Jesus is based on the private revelations of a Polish Nun, St. Faustina. It was in the Convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Warsaw, Poland, that Sister Faustina immersed herself in prayer and the practice of the Divine Virtues. In time Christ gradually led her into a special intimacy with His merciful heart. It was also at this time that Sister Faustina began to receive mystical revelations centered on the theme of “God’s Mercy.”

In a revelation in 1931, while Sr. Faustina was stationed in the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy convent in Plock, Poland, Jesus requested that an image of Him as He had appeared to Sr. Faustina, with the words, “Jesus, I trust in you” be created and venerated, first in her convent and later throughout the whole world. It was also at this time that Jesus gave her the Divine Mercy Chaplet and requested that she and her confessor work to establish the Feast of Divine Mercy to be celebrated by the Universal Church.

The mercy of our Lord is truly the Easter gift that Christ through His resurrection has shared and continues to share with all humanity. May we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christ today in 2021 is reaching out to each one of us with His Divine Mercy. It is through His mercy that we can experience forgiveness, love, peace, and joy. Our world is hurting due to a pandemic, racial unrest, natural disasters, and violence. There is much we as individuals and as a community can do to help our world heal and overcome the many things that are dividing us. Without forgiveness, love, peace and joy our efforts will come up short, this is where the Divine Mercy of Jesus Christ is needed, we can be His legs, His arms, His eyes, and His voice, but we need His heart so that His Divine Mercy is evident in our words, actions, and deeds.