

Reflection for the 2nd Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy

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, at 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.”* For all who were born in the 21st Century Divine Mercy Sunday has always been a part of their lives. But for all who were born before the 21st Century many will remember Saint Pope John Paul II promoting and encouraging devotion to the Divine Mercy. The words on the image of the Divine Mercy, *“Jesus I trust in You,”* remind us that it is through Christ’s merciful love that we can look forward to eternal salvation.

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; this mercy is there for us to call upon, 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 of Hippo, 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 at the Our Lady of Mercy convent in Plock, Poland, Jesus requested that an image of Him as He had appeared to her, with the words, *“Jesus, I trust in you”* be created and venerated, first in the Convents of Our Lady of Mercy and later throughout the whole world. It was also at this time that Jesus gave Sr. Faustina 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.

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* there is this statement, *“The Theological or Divine virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as His children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. There are three Theological (Divine) virtues: faith, hope and charity.* It was these Divine Virtues that Sr. Faustina embraced, which prepared her for her ultimate calling of bringing the devotion to the Divine Mercy of Christ to the whole world.

So today one week, 7 days, 168 hours after we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. An event that has changed and continues to change the world we have a Gospel Reading on this Divine Mercy Sunday taken from the Gospel of John in which we hear of St. Thomas was not willing to believe that Jesus had appeared to the other disciples. It was only when Jesus appeared to Thomas that he was willing to believe. May we learn from St. Thomas and be willing to embrace the Divine Mercy of God through the witness of St. Faustina, and be able to proclaim "*Jesus, I trust in You.*" This past Monday Pope Francis was called from this world to his eternal reward, may we learn from his example of embracing this Divine Mercy of God and reaching out to the world with the Divine Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. In closing let us pray for the repose of the Soul of Pope Francis and may we reach out to each other and the world in faith, hope and charity.