

Father O'Connor's Homily for 7 April 2024
Second Sunday of Easter-B
Divine Mercy Sunday

Acts of the Apostles 4: 32-35

1 John 5: 1-6

John 20: 19-31

This Sunday after Easter is called “Divine Mercy Sunday.” After Jesus had risen from the dead, He appeared to many people who had failed Him badly. The apostles had run away and left Him by Himself when He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Except for His Mother, the holy women and John the Apostle, He had gone to the cross alone. After He rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, you might be inclined to think that “it was pay-back time.” But instead He was kind and merciful to those who had failed Him, as today’s Gospel tells us.

Divine Mercy Sunday is a gift to us from Saint Pope John Paul II. In the year 2000, on this Second Sunday of Easter, he canonized the Polish nun, Sister Faustina Kowalska [1905-1938], the apostle of Divine Mercy, and the first canonized saint of this new millennium.

The private revelations given to this humble Polish nun have mesmerized countless numbers of people. The message of Divine Mercy is most consoling in the difficult times in which we live. Conversations of Jesus with lost souls are recorded in the revelations of Saint Faustina. And they have given great hope to those whose family and friends – at least by the evidence of their lives – left this world quite unprepared to meet Our Lord.

Saint Faustina wrote that Jesus revealed to her that He visits every soul at the moment of their imminent death and offers them the grace of a final repentance. They are free, of course, to receive His merciful offer or to reject it. And so we can mercifully live in the well-founded hope that they accepted it.

This revelation, which may seem startling, is completely consistent with the experience of the Good Thief on the cross next to Jesus [Luke 23: 39-43]. He was a convicted criminal who evidently had not led a good life in any way. He said to Jesus, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And Jesus replied, “This day you will be with Me in paradise.” Jesus heard his confession on the cross and, in His Divine Mercy, absolved that Good Thief from all of his sins. And, because of this, he has been called “the saint who stole heaven.” We now know him as Saint Dismas.

This revelation of Saint Faustina reminds us of Jesus's own prayer – for all of us sinners – on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do [Luke 23: 34].

On display here in the front of the church is the beautiful image of Jesus, the Divine Mercy. And in the back of the church, right next to the reconciliation room, is the Divine Mercy Shrine.

The image of Divine Mercy was also revealed by Jesus to Saint Faustina. As she tells us, it is really an alternate image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Jesus appeared to her the way that we see Him in the image. Dressed in white, His right hand is raised in blessing, and His left hand is touching His heart.

White and red rays shine from His heart, standing for the water and blood that flowed from Christ's heart at the crucifixion when the soldier pierced His side with a lance. The water and the blood signify the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist.

When you look at this image, the face of Christ looks back at you, as though from the cross.

On His hands and feet the marks of the nails are visible.

And the caption reads: “Jesus, I trust in you.”

The loving heart of Our Savior calls each of us and all of us to come to Him for forgiveness. No one is outside of Jesus' circle of mercy. No one – no matter what we have done or what we have failed to do.

Just look at the cross. His arms are wide open for everyone!

And so, am I ready to accept His Divine Mercy? Notice, I say “accept” His mercy and not “deserve” His mercy. Why? Because if we needed to deserve it, it wouldn't be mercy, now would it?

Let us pray.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Mercy of God, you came into this world to reveal the Father to us in ways that no one else ever did or ever could.

Your message of mercy is an immense consolation to those who are often struggling to practice their faith and who have family and friends who have been overwhelmed by the spirit of this world. We are renewed in our prayers for ourselves and for them by the hope of your Divine Mercy.

We pray for our world which is in such desperate need of your divine forgiveness. All around us we see acts of violence and terrorism. But behind all of the dreadful news and scenes is your face that is calm, peaceful and loving, calling

to us. You say to us in this image of your Divine Mercy, “Come to Me.” And we say in response, “Jesus, I trust in You.”

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.
Amen.