

Homily: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter – Divine Mercy Sunday – April 7, 2024 - Year B

Today, we celebrate the Second Sunday of Easter, also known as "Divine Mercy Sunday."

This feast of Divine Mercy reminds us of many parables taught by Jesus emphasizing God's Mercy. We remember the three beautiful parables in Luke 15. God is like a shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep to go in search of the lost one. God is like a woman who searches the entire house to find the coin she lost. God is like a father who comes out of the house to welcome back his prodigal son, who comes out of the house a second time to entice the elder son to come in and join in the feast.

"Pope John Paul II said in his Homily for the CANONIZATION OF SR MARY FAUSTINA KOWALSKA. *Sunday, 30 April 2000*

{“Divine Mercy reaches human beings through the heart of Christ crucified: *“My daughter, say that I am love and mercy personified,”* Jesus will ask Sr Faustina (*Diary*, p. 374). Christ pours out this Mercy on humanity through the sending of the Spirit who, in the Trinity, is the Person-Love. And is not Mercy love's "second name" (cf. *Dives in misericordia*, n. 7), understood in its deepest and most tender aspect, in its ability to take upon itself the burden of any need and, especially, in its immense capacity for forgiveness?

It is important, then, that we accept the whole message that comes to us from the word of God on this Second Sunday of Easter, which from now on throughout the Church *will be called "Divine Mercy Sunday"*. In the various readings, the liturgy seems to indicate the path of Mercy, which, while re-establishing the relationship of each person with God, also creates new relations of fraternal solidarity among human beings. Christ has taught us that "man not only receives and experiences the mercy of God but is also called "to practice mercy' towards others: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy' (*Mt 5: 7*)" (*Dives in misericordia*, n. 14). He also showed us the many paths of Mercy, which not only forgives sins but reaches out to all human needs. Jesus bent over every kind of human poverty, material and spiritual.

His message of Mercy continues to reach us through his hands held out to suffering man.

In fact, love of God and love of one's brothers and sisters are inseparable, as the First Letter of John has reminded us: "By this, we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments" (5: 2). Here the Apostle reminds us of the truth of love, showing us its measure and criterion in the observance of the commandments.

It is not easy to love with a deep love, which lies in the authentic gift of self. This love can only be learned by penetrating the mystery of God's love. Looking at him, being one with his fatherly heart, we are able to look with new eyes at our brothers and sisters, with an attitude of unselfishness and solidarity, of generosity and forgiveness. All this is Mercy!

Sr Faustina Kowalska wrote in her Diary: *"I feel tremendous pain when I see the sufferings of my neighbors. All my neighbors' sufferings reverberate in my own heart; I carry their anguish in my heart in such a way that it even physically destroys me. I would like all their sorrows to fall upon me in order to relieve my neighbor"* (Diary, p. 365). This is the degree of compassion to which love leads, when it takes the love of God as its measure!

It is this love which must inspire humanity today, if it is to face the crisis of the meaning of life, the challenges of the most diverse needs and, especially, the duty to defend the dignity of every human person. Thus, the message of divine Mercy is also implicitly *a message about the value of every human being*. Each person is precious in God's eyes; Christ gave his life for each one; to everyone, the Father gives his Spirit and offers intimacy.

This consoling message is addressed above all to those who, afflicted by a particularly harsh trial or crushed by the weight of the sins they committed, have lost all confidence in life and are tempted to give in to despair. To them, the gentle face of Christ is offered; those rays from his heart touch them and shine upon them, warm them, show them the way, and fill them with hope. How many souls have been consoled by the prayer *"Jesus, I trust in you," which Providence intimated through Sr Faustina?* This simple act of abandonment to Jesus dispels the thickest clouds and lets a ray of light penetrate every life. *Jezu, ufam tobie."*}

Trust in Jesus is the essence of the message of Mercy that Sr. Faustina received. When we go to a public fountain, we can draw water from it as long as we have a vessel or container of some kind to put water in. If our vessel is small, we can only bring back a little water; if it's large, we can bring back a lot. And anyone with a vessel can draw water from the fountain. The water is there for us, and no one is excluded. All we need is a vessel.

So it is with God's Mercy. In repeated revelations to Saint Faustina, Our Divine Savior makes it clear that the fountain is His Heart, the water is His Mercy, and the vessel is trust.

In the Diary of Saint Faustina, we hear Our Lord reminding us that we can depend upon His love.... that He alone is worthy of our trust: I never reject a contrite heart (Diary, 1485). Sooner would heaven and earth turn into nothingness than would my Mercy not embrace a trusting soul (Diary, 1777).

We can ask, then, for God's Mercy with complete trust, and Our Lord will fill us with grace so that we can be merciful; I am Love and Mercy itself. When a soul approaches Me with trust, I fill it with such an abundance of graces that it cannot contain them within itself but radiates them to other souls (Diary, 1074).

My beloved brothers and sisters! In God's Mercy, all of our infirmities find healing. His Mercy does not keep a distance: it seeks to encounter all forms of poverty and to free this world of so many types of slavery. Mercy desires to reach the wounds of all, to heal them. Being apostles of Mercy means touching and soothing the wounds that today afflict the bodies and souls of many of our brothers and sisters. In curing these wounds, we profess Jesus; we make him present and alive; we allow others, who touch his Mercy with their own hands, to recognize him as "Lord and God" (Jn 20:28), as the Apostle Thomas did. This is the mission that he entrusts to us. So many people ask to be listened to and to be understood. To be proclaimed and written in our daily lives, the Gospel of Mercy seeks people with patient and open hearts, "good Samaritans" who understand compassion and silence before the mystery of each brother and sister. The Gospel of Mercy requires generous and joyful servants, people who love freely without expecting anything in return.

On this Divine Mercy Sunday, we, the faithful, are called to reflect more personally on the graces won through Jesus Christ's life, death, and Resurrection. In this way, our hearts may be more fully aware of God's Mercy for us personally and for the sake of the world.

In today's Gospel, we see how the Apostle Thomas directly experiences this Mercy of God, which has a tangible face, the face of Jesus, the risen Jesus. Thomas does not believe it when the other Apostles tell him: "We have seen the Lord." It isn't enough for him that Jesus had foretold it, promised it: "On the third day I will rise." He wants to see; he wants to put his hand in the place of the nails and on Jesus' side. And how does Jesus react? With patience: Jesus does not abandon Thomas in his stubborn unbelief; he gives him a week's time; he does not close the door; he waits. Thomas acknowledges his own poverty and his little faith when he says, "My Lord and my God!" With this simple yet faith-filled invocation, he responds to Jesus' patience. He lets himself be wrapped by divine Mercy; he sees it before his eyes, in the wounds of Christ's hands and feet, and in his open side, and he discovers trust: he is a new man, no longer an unbeliever but a believer.

Lastly, the Apostle was able to "touch" the Paschal Mystery with his hands, which fully demonstrated God's redeeming love (cf. Eph 2:4). All of us, too, are like Thomas: on this second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday), we are called to contemplate, in the wounds of the Risen One, Divine Mercy, which overcomes all human limitations and shines on the darkness of evil and of sin. In His wounds, He heals us and forgives all of our sins. May our Mother, the Virgin Mary, help us to be merciful with others as Jesus is with us. Jesus, I Trust in You!