

Homily – 2nd Sunday of Easter C (Divine Mercy Sunday)

"Jesus, I trust in You!" Beloved, today is the Octave of Easter, the eighth day after Easter. We celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. What is Divine Mercy? Many apparitions of our Lord and the Blessed Mother echo the reality and need of the Mercy of God. Divine Mercy is not just what God does, as in the Old Testament; it has become personified in the New Testament. JESUS IS THE MERCY OF GOD, he is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world". He instituted the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance as the Covenants of Mercy for all time.

Our ecclesial life is a constant proclamation of the Mercy of God. The Church constantly implores God for mercy. All the Eucharistic prayers conclude by praying for mercy. For instance, in the first Eucharistic Prayer, the Church prays, "Almighty God.... Though we are sinners, we trust in your mercy and love. Do not consider what we truly deserve, but grant us your forgiveness." After the "Our Father" at Mass, she prays, "Deliver us, Lord, from evil, and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin...." And shortly before the exchange at the Sign of Peace at Mass, she prays, "Lord Jesus Christ... look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom..."

Dear friends, we are called to be witnesses of Mercy. Many people are desperately in need of the Mercy of God in our world. Some are struggling with the difficulty of showing mercy to others for past hurts: their parents, brothers and sisters, children, friends, and so on. With a misguided attitude, they have vowed, "I will never forgive him... I will never forgive her". Little do they realize that they are living in bondage. This is even more disturbing when it is within a family. Many are not on speaking terms and are really destroying themselves. Their spiritual life is in jeopardy. What a shame! Beloved, this is the Hour of Mercy as Jesus instructed through Sr. Faustina: "While there is still time, let them have recourse to the fount of My mercy...." (Diary 848) "He who refuses to pass through the door of My mercy must pass through the door of My justice." (Diary 1146).

Today, Jesus teaches us how to deal with past hurts. After his resurrection, he proclaimed MERCY, FORGIVENESS and LOVE. Think about it! Jesus had sufficient grounds to be mad at the apostles and the persecutors? Yet he excused them, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Our Gospel passage (John 20:19-31) demonstrates how he helped the apostles to deal with their inadequacies and failings:

the apostles, understandably, were nervous and afraid. Jesus came and said to them, "Peace be with you". Having granted them forgiveness, he proceeded to make them instruments of forgiveness, "[H]e breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." What a divine way of teaching! See also how he was patient with Thomas who would not believe until he verified everything to the last detail.

Mercy, Forgiveness and Love are the sure ways to experience the Victory of Christ's Death and Resurrection. People who take delight in hateful feelings and unforgiveness are in need of deliverance. The devil is keeping them in captivity and robbing them of inner peace and happiness. The resentment they feel over some past and enduring hurt is wrecking them. They feel they have a right to be angry and never to forgive. What a self torture! Ecclesiastes declares, "This also is a grievous evil.... what gain has he that he toiled for the wind, and spent all his days in darkness and grief, in much vexation and sickness and resentment?" (Eccles 5:16-17). Like "the sick and those disturbed by unclean spirits" in our First Reading (Acts 5:12-16), people in this situation of spiritual bondage also need to be cured of this sickness. Our Lord told Saint Faustina, "Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the fount of My Mercy" (Diary 699).

Finally, all must accept and submit to his Word of God: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). Never allow yourself to become a victim of enmity and resentment. Divine Mercy Prayer is important for all. Jesus instructed Sr. Faustina,

"Encourage souls to say the Chaplet which I have given you... Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death... When they say this Chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the Just Judge but as the Merciful Savior... Priests will recommend it to sinners as their last hope of salvation. Even if there were a sinner most hardened, if he were to recite this Chaplet only once, he would receive grace from My infinite mercy...." (Diary 1541).