

Homily of Divine Mercy Sunday Year A 2020

In 2000, St. Pope John Paul II canonized St. Faustina, and made the second Sunday of Easter to be celebrated as Divine Mercy Sunday. St. Faustina was a Polish nun gifted with mystical visions, messages and revelations from the Risen Jesus. This is a rare instance when a personal revelation is authenticated to the degree that it becomes a Sunday celebration by the Universal Church.

The feast situates well following Easter Sunday to show that the events of the incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus for the redemption of humanity were out of the gratuitous mercy of God. The mercy is gratuitous because humanity did nothing to merit it. Psalm 130:3 prays, "If you, Lord, keep account of sins, Lord, who can stand? But with you is forgiveness and so you are revered." St. Paul writes in Romans 3:23-25, "All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God. They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as an expiation through faith, by his blood, to prove his righteousness because of the forgiveness of sins previously committed." St. Faustina wrote in her diary, "Proclaim that mercy is the greatest attribute of God. All works of my hand are crowned with mercy" (no. 301). St. Peter proclaims the mercy of God in the second reading, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ..."

The image of the Divine Mercy of Jesus showing two rays, one reddish (symbolizing blood) and the other whitish (symbolizing water), with the words "*Jesus, I trust in you*" at the bottom, is one of St. Faustina's visions. The image takes us back to the passion, crucifixion and death of Jesus. Luke 22:44, "He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground." John 19:33-34, "But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out." Jesus tells us during the Last Supper the meaning of his blood, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). St. Peter writes, "Realize that you were ransomed from your futile conduct, ... not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Jesus, also, tells us the meaning of his water in his encounter with the Samaritan woman, "Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

Please, close your eyes for a spiritual exercise. Let us visualize the blood and water flowing from the side of Jesus. Let us pray and plead the precious Blood of Jesus to help us conquer satanic forces. Let us pray and plead the water from the side of Jesus to well up new life in us. May it become the water of River Jordan where Naaman bathed and was healed of his leprosy (2 King 5). May it become that life giving water that flowed from the temple in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 47).

(Eyes remain closed.) Let us envision ourselves as Thomas and encounter Jesus. Let us hear Jesus ask us to put our finger into his side pierced by a lance. Jesus directs us, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side..." When Thomas put his finger into the side of Jesus, he was healed of his spiritual disease of doubt. Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." May we, also, receive our own healing. Repeat, "My Lord and my God" several times. Let these words resound in you. Stay with the experience for a while. End of spiritual exercise.

The first reading informs us how the early Christians practiced their faith. They went to the temple to pray according to the Jewish religious tradition, but gathered in their homes, every day to celebrate the "breaking of bread" in obedience to the command of Jesus during the Last Supper, "Do this in remembrance of me." The Eucharistic celebration as we have it now evolved through the ages from what Jesus did at the Last Supper and the celebration of the "breaking of bread" by the early Christians. Our present situation prevents us to go to the temple to worship God. We are to gather in our homes and pray. Unfortunately, some families did not know how to come together to pray. Covid 19 Pandemic is teaching us some lessons, hopefully, that will help our spiritual and family life at the end of the pandemic.

Another special identity of the early Christians was work of mercy as we see in the first reading, "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need." This perilous time has put almost everyone in need. That notwithstanding, many people, out of mercy and not minding their own needy situation, are going the extra mile to help others and risk their own lives to save others. May God bless them. Please, check on one another. Support one another. Encourage one another. May Jesus bless us with his peace and breathe on us the Holy Spirit he breathed on the apostles when he appeared to them. Amen.

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP