

**Resources for the homily – Sunday April 8, 2018**  
**Second Sunday of Easter, Sunday of The Divine Mercy**  
**Readings: Acts 4:32-35, 1 John 5:1-6, Gospel John 20:19-31**

**1. Why does Divine Mercy Sunday follow so close to Easter?** It does because the Paschal Mystery of Jesus's suffering, death, and resurrection is the supreme act of our merciful God for us. Now we are reflecting a bit on the importance of The Divine Mercy and what it means for our lives. Our texts suggest three ideas: first, the unity and sharing of the early Christian community; second, how to be wisely guided in our actions and; third, to receive gratefully the gift of Divine Mercy which we receive through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the actions of our Christian community.

**2. While always present in Sacred Scripture, this devotion to the Divine Mercy was promoted by a private revelation of Jesus to Sr. Faustina Kowalska of Poland in the Twentieth Century.** I believe it is significant that "mercy" is the subject of St John Paul's second encyclical, *Rich in Mercy*. In it St John Paul observes "love is transformed into mercy when it is necessary to go beyond the precise norm of justice" (5.6) This is illustrated by the following story.

**3. What is mercy?** Mercy is undeserved kindness or forbearance in punishment for actions in which one is indeed guilty. Example of Napoleon and the young soldier:

"Well, then, I will have mercy." The Emperor Napoleon was moved by a mother's plea for pardon for her soldier son. However, the Emperor said that since it was the man's second major offense, justice demanded death. "I do not ask for justice," implored the mother, "I plead for mercy." "But," said the Emperor, "he does not deserve mercy." "Sir," cried the mother, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for." The compassion and clarity of the mother's logic prompted Napoleon to respond, "Well, then, I will have mercy."

The Second Sunday of the Easter season invites us to reflect on God's infinite love and mercy for His people and to practice the **corporal and spiritual works of mercy**.

**4. Our God's mercy** is found throughout the Bible, well summarized by St. Paul in Eph. 2:4-5.

"God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ."

This is fundamental to our identity as Christians. "But God proves his love for us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). That is precisely the point of mercy. We did not deserve it. To be forgiven was not justice. To fulfill justice and to complete the mercy of God, Christ had to pay for our sins. This, then, should be fundamental to our fellowship as Christians. Should we not most fundamentally be known as those who show mercy to each other and to the whole world? See also Luke 15, Parable of the Prodigal Son.

**5. Let us then consider our morning readings and the encyclical of St. John Paul II, "Rich in Mercy."**

**6. The first reading** stresses the corporal acts of mercy practiced by the early Christian community. Christians were known for this distinctive love for centuries. This witnessing community derived its strength from the teaching of the apostles, the communal life, "the Breaking of the Bread" and the prayers. We can be inspired by the example of the Early Church in the first reading: See also Acts 2:42-47.

"The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common... There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the Apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need."

This was a wonderful spirit. Over the long run, that which was such spontaneous spiritual sharing would not work out because of the sinfulness of the members of the community. This is why we have the guidelines of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, actions required of Christians voluntarily while maintaining the practical incentives of private property and its ownership.

**8. The second reading:** Here our love is guided. We know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments (See the entire Third Part of the Catechism, Life in Christ).

**9. Today's Gospel** vividly reminds us of how Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a sacrament of Divine Mercy. The Risen Lord gave his apostles the power to forgive sins with the words, "*Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained*" (Jn 20:19-23). The

Sacrament of Reconciliation is precisely the Sacrament of Mercy. When we come to Reconciliation, does God owe us forgiveness based on our merits? Not at all! All this forgiveness is based on the sacrifice of Jesus which we represent and participate in at Mass.

Then Jesus shows his mercy to Thomas by welcoming him the next week and letting Thomas touch Him and prove his reality. Might we always be so merciful and understanding with our friends! Presenting the doubting Thomas' famous profession of faith, "*My Lord and my God,*" the Gospel illustrates how Jesus showed his mercy to the doubting apostle and emphasizes the importance of faith. Thomas, then in response, took the Christian faith all the way to India.

**10. A very helpful document for understanding the Divine Mercy is St. John Paul the Second's second encyclical: *Rich in Mercy (Dives In Misericordia)*.** Why does John Paul believe this emphasis on Divine Mercy is something especially for our time? He identifies an "unease and sense of powerlessness in our world. There are fears: mass destruction by nuclear arms, primacy attributed to things rather than persons, totalitarianism, the loss of freedom, environmental destruction, the ever increasing gap between rich and poor individuals and nations, moral conflicts, and other threats. An active sense of Divine Mercy is what is needed to overcome such threats. It also means that in the Church and in its ministries, we must be equipped to minister in very personal and very merciful ways to individuals.

**11. The Works of Mercy:** Our topic suggests that we can take a fresh look at what the Church calls the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy (see CCC 2447 and all cross references and footnotes); a list of 14 ways to respond to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of others. They are:

The Corporal Works of Mercy	The Spiritual Works of Mercy
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Feed the hungry.</li> <li>2. Give drink to the thirsty.</li> <li>3. Clothe the naked.</li> <li>4. Shelter the homeless.</li> <li>5. Visit the imprisoned.</li> <li>6. Visit the sick.</li> <li>7. Bury the dead.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Admonish sinners.</li> <li>2. Instruct the ignorant.</li> <li>3. Counsel the doubtful.</li> <li>4. Comfort the sorrowful.</li> <li>5. Be patient with those in error.</li> <li>6. Forgive offenses.</li> <li>7. Pray for the living and the dead.</li> </ol>

**12. Why is not this offer of Divine Mercy just excessive, like a runaway welfare program?** This is because in order to receive Divine Mercy we must repent and place our faith in Jesus. It requires that we desire and intend to change, not in order to receive Mercy, but in response to God's initiative of Mercy. It is never mercy to allow someone to do evil out of misplaced compassion.

**13. How do we apply these to our community?** Through the work of our staff, in Bible studies, other growth studies, prayer groups, discipleship and service we are learning how to be prepared for ministry in our world. I think of two very important areas of application: first is that of marriage and family life; the second is our care of the poor and needy. We must implement the marriage enrichment program proposed by the St. Philip Institute as well as parenting resources. This is also why the St Vincent de Paul Society is essential to our fellowship. We need to be able to not just give to meet needs but we need to relate to people in order to be able to understand, guide and help. We need to be formed and trained in order to carry out both the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. If we do these well we will be a sign of the love and mercy of God in our community.

**14. Example of Deacon Greg Hall of Houston in the rescue of the Chilean miners in 2010.**

Guidelines for us: Pursue Chastity, Sobriety and Excellence. Importance of personal prayer and spiritual life in his family and in his business.

**15. Questions for discussion and reflection:**

1. Recognizing how busy our lives are, how can we carry out the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy?
2. Am I adequately prepared to carry out the Spiritual Acts of Mercy?
3. Are we as a family adequately free, spiritually, practically, or financially to do Corporal Acts of Mercy?
4. Which of the corporal acts of mercy could we do together as a family? Anyone special we could help?
5. Should we pray for the Holy Spirit to help us live this out? We can't do it on our strength alone.

1. What is the Divine Mercy Devotion? While the “Mercy of God” is an important theme running through both the Old and the New Testaments, Jesus, through his revelation to St. Faustina is focusing our attention again upon this needed attribute of God.
2. Faustina Kowalska was born in Poland, in 1905. She entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Warsaw, Poland, at the age of twenty. She was uneducated but underwent extensive mystical experiences. In 1934, one year after Hitler’s rise to power, she began to record her experience as directed by her superiors. She wrote a diary of about 600 pages recording the revelations she received about God's mercy. Even before her death in 1938, the devotion to The Divine Mercy had begun to spread.
3. Pope John Paul II beatified her in 1993 and canonized her on the Second Sunday of Easter in 2000
4. During her short life, the Lord Jesus assigned her three basic tasks: 1. to pray for souls, entrusting them to God’s incomprehensible Mercy; 2 to tell the world about God’s Generous Mercy; 3. to start a new movement in the Church focusing on God’s Mercy.
5. Note the picture of The Divine Mercy in the Sanctuary. The rays streaming from the heart of Jesus have symbolic meanings; red for the blood of Jesus which is the life of souls, and white for the water of baptism which justifies souls. The whole image is symbolic of the mercy, forgiveness and love of God.
6. Sign of international reconciliation. Note that Sr. Faustina died in 1938, the year before Hitler invaded Poland and started the Second World War. Note also the remarkable friendship between John Paul II (the Polish Pope) and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (archbishop of Munich Germany) which symbolized the postwar reconciliation between Germany and Poland.
7. Devotion to the Divine Mercy involves a total commitment to God as Mercy. It is a decision to trust completely in Him, to accept His mercy with thanksgiving, and to be merciful as He is merciful. The Gospel commands us, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). This also demands that we show mercy to our neighbors. How do we “radiate” God’s mercy to others? By our actions, our words, and our prayers.

Sister Faustina Kowalska: “This feast emerged from the depths of my mercy... Every soul believing and trusting in my mercy will obtain it... No soul that has called upon my mercy has been disappointed or brought to shame... My daughter, tell the whole world about my inconceivable mercy. I desire that the feast of mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of my tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of my mercy. The soul that will go to confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. Let no soul fear to draw near to me, even though its sins be as scarlet.”

**Recursos para la Homilía\_ Domingo 19/4/2009**  
**Segundo domingo de PASCUA**

Primera: Hch 4,32-35; Segunda: 1 Jn 5, 1-6; Evangelio: Jn 20, 19-31

**Nexo entre las lecturas:** Hoy celebramos la Divina Misericordia. Venimos a celebrar esta en La Semana Santa por el sufrimiento, la muerte, y la resurrección de nuestro Señor Jesucristo. Ahora reflexionemos un poco de su importancia y lo que quiere decir esta Divina Misericordia en nuestras vidas. Los textos nos proponen tres ideas: la del comportamiento de la primera comunidad cristiana en compartir todo entre todos, como tratar la duda de Tomás, y como administrar el sacramento de la Reconciliación que Jesús les ha delegado.

1. ¿Qué es esta Devoción a la Divina Misericordia? Es un compromiso total a Dios como Dios de la Misericordia. Tenemos que confiarnos completamente en El. Tenemos que ser misericordiosos como es compasivo el Padre de nosotros.

Obras Espirituales de Misericordia	Obras Corporales de Misericordia
<b>1. Dar buen consejo al que lo necesita</b> <b>2. Enseñar a los ignorantes</b> <b>3. Corregir al que se equivoca</b> <b>4. Consolar a los afligidos</b> <b>5. Perdonar las ofensas</b> <b>6. Sufrir con paciencia los defectos del prójimo</b> <b>7. Rezar a Dios por los vivos y los muertos</b>	<b>1. Dar de comer al hambriento</b> <b>2. Dar de beber al sediento</b> <b>3. Vestir al desnudo</b> <b>4. Dar posada al forastero</b> <b>5. Visitar a los enfermos</b> <b>6. Visitar a los Encarcelados</b> <b>7. Enterrar a los muertos</b>

**2. La primera lectura nos puede inspirar a compartir nuestros bienes.**

La multitud de los fieles tenía un solo corazón y una sola alma. Nadie consideraba como propios sus bienes, sino que todo lo tenían en común. Los apóstoles daban testimonio de la resurrección... Entre ellos ninguno sufría necesidad, pues los que poseían campos o casas los vendían, traían el dinero y lo depositaban a los pies de los apóstoles, que lo repartían según las necesidades de cada uno.”

Aquí podemos ver un espíritu muy generoso. A lo largo, esto no servía bien a la comunidad porque los pecados de la comunidad fueron tan fuertes. Así tenemos las obras Espirituales y Corporales de Misericordia que son voluntarias pero necesarias para las comunidades de cristianos de hoy. Tenemos que proteger también el principio de la propiedad privada y el trabajo que puede beneficiar el trabajador.

**3. La Segunda Lectura nos indica cuando amamos los hijos de Dios.** “Cuando amamos a Dios y cumplimos sus mandatos, con toda certeza sabemos que amamos a los hijos de Dios.”

**4. Dos temas en el Evangelio.** 1º ¿Qué hacemos cuando tenemos preguntas de quien es Jesús? Tomás no podía o no quisiera creer. Jesús le mostró sus llagas. Tomás creó. Jesús dijo, “¿Crees porque me has visto? ¡Felices los que no han visto, pero creen!”

**5. La Segunda Tema del Evangelio: El Perdón de los Pecados.** El perdón de los pecados es esencial a la Divina Misericordia. En El Evangelio de hoy, vv. 22-23 indica que Jesús ha delegado el poder de perdonar a los pecados a sus Apóstoles y a sus sucesores, los obispos. ¿Cuántos de nuestros hermanos protestantes no se dan cuenta de esto? Está mencionado tres veces en el Nuevo Testamento: Juan 20, 22-23; Mt 16,19; y Mt 18, 18. Este sacramento es muy poderoso en La Divina Misericordia.

**6. La Divina Misericordia también requiere que nosotros seamos “compasivos como es compasivo el Padre de ustedes”** (Lc 6, 36). A ver también: Mt 6, 14-15 y 18, 23-35.

**Para discusión y reflexión:**

1. Leer las citas en # 6. ¿Cuánto importante por el cristiano es el perdón y la misericordia hacia los demás?
2. En nuestras vidas, tan ocupadas, ¿Cómo podemos cumplir con estas Obras de la Misericordia?
3. ¿Cuáles son los cambios que El Señor quiere en mi vida para ser mas misericordioso hacia los demás?
4. ¿Voy a participar regularmente en el Sacramento de la Reconciliación?