

Second Sunday of Easter – Sunday of Divine Mercy
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Holy Family Catholic Church
Kirkland, Washington
08 April 2018

Acts 4:32-35
Psalm 118
1 John 5:1-6
(John 20:29) John 20:19-31

Jesus Wants to Experience Your Mercy

Today is the Second Sunday of Easter, the eighth and final day of our celebration of the Easter Octave – though our celebration of the Easter Season will continue for six more weeks, until Pentecost Sunday. On this same Sunday – the Second Sunday of Easter – April 30, 2000, Pope John Paul II canonized Sister Maria Faustina Kowalska as a saint for her role as the Messenger and Apostle of Divine Mercy for our times.

Saint Faustina was a young nun in Poland when, in 1931, she received a vision of Jesus and His Divine Mercy – the image of Jesus with rays of red and white projecting toward us from His Sacred Heart. Thereafter, until her death in 1938, Saint Faustina received regular revelations from Jesus, which are recorded in her *Diary*. The purpose of these revelations was so that the world would become more aware of and trusting in God’s Divine Mercy that is always available and offered to all of us and to all people.

In his homily for her canonization, John Paul II declared that “from now on throughout the Church [the Second Sunday of Easter would] be called ‘Divine Mercy Sunday’.”¹ The establishment of this day as Divine Mercy Sunday fulfilled the request that Jesus made to Saint Faustina on several occasions: that He wanted us as a Church to celebrate a Feast of Divine Mercy on the Second Sunday of Easter.² Furthermore, as Pope John Paul II wrote in his homily, this day is particularly appropriate because today’s readings show us “the path of mercy.” The path of mercy is a path of reestablishing relationships – both our relationship with God, and our relationship to other people.

In the Gospel, we see what reestablishing a relationship with God looks like. It is always God Who comes to us. God never stops seeking us. Even when we, like the Apostles, abandon God or turn away from God – whether it's out of fear, misunderstanding, shame, or doubt. Whatever sin causes us to abandon or turn away from God – God never abandons us. He always seeks us out and keeps open the possibility of reestablishing relationship with each of us. We see that many times as Jesus appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection. Whether surprising them at His Tomb³; walking with them on the Road⁴; meeting them at the Seashore⁵; or, like today, passing through locked doors to meet them.⁶ Jesus was seeking them out where they were, to reestablish their relationship. Jesus is still seeking each one of us out where we are, to reestablish our relationship with Him.

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When Jesus appeared to His disciples, He said to them, “Peace be with you,” and showed them His wounds.⁷ In this situation, after the Resurrection, Jesus' wounds were no longer a sign of their abandonment of Him. They were no longer a sign of their sins – of our sins – that led to His Crucifixion. From then on – and still to this day – Jesus' wounds are a sign of His Divine Mercy.⁸ Jesus' wounds brought peace to the disciples, brought joy to the disciples, and – most importantly – brought forgiveness to the disciples.

Thomas was not there and simply hearing about Jesus' wounds, His peace, His forgiveness was not sufficient for him – and it's not sufficient for us. Like Thomas, we must have a personal *experience* of God's mercy for it to have an effect on our life. Like Thomas, we must touch God's Divine Mercy for ourselves.⁹ Otherwise it remains an abstract idea that can be helpful – but is not life-changing. The path of mercy – the path of reestablishing a relationship with God – means touching His wounds – touching His Mercy.

Jesus has given all of us a place to touch His Mercy today – that is the Confessional. He is always there, waiting for us. Not to shame us or show us how our sins have hurt Him or hurt others. Jesus is there to show us His Mercy; to give us His Peace and forgiveness. We all need that.¹⁰

We offer Confession here at Holy Family Monday through Saturday. You can also get in touch with any of priests to make an appointment for Confession. And on Friday, May 4th, we will have our second Mercy Night here at Holy Family where Confessions will be offered for two hours. Please respond to Jesus' call for each of us to touch His Mercy.

When we touch God's Divine Mercy, we not only experience mercy for ourselves, but we learn how to give that mercy to others. We learn that mercy is not a gift to be kept to ourselves. Mercy is something that we all can give. The path of mercy is how we reestablish our relationship with God – and it is how we reestablish our relationship with others.

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Some of you might have been here ten days ago for Mass on Holy Thursday. On that night, I included in my homily an account of mercy that Saint Faustina recorded in her *Diary*. It was an account of her encounter with a poor young man at the gate of her convent in Poland. It was a cold and rainy day, and the young man was emaciated, barefoot, and wearing tattered clothes. She went to the kitchen, heated some soup and bread, and brought it back to the poor young man. After he ate and handed her back the bowl, the man told her simply that He was the Lord of Heaven and Earth. In that moment, she saw Him – Jesus Christ – as He truly was. Then He vanished from her sight.

Later, while praying, she heard Jesus say these words in her soul: “My daughter, the blessings of [all] the [many] poor who [have received your mercy at] this gate have reached My ears. ...this is why I came down from My throne – to [experience] your mercy [for Myself].”¹¹

This is something important for each of us to contemplate. Not simply the miraculous story of Jesus appearing to one of His modern day disciples. Rather, it’s important for each of us to contemplate the *reason* why Jesus appeared to her: Jesus Christ, the King of Mercy, came down from His throne to *experience* Saint Faustina’s mercy. Jesus had heard the prayers of thanksgiving from so many people who had come to Saint Faustina’s gate and had received her mercy, that He had to come down and experience it *for Himself*.

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So, what about each of us? Would Jesus come down from Heaven to experience our mercy for Himself? Maybe you’re thinking, “Fr. Chad, it makes some sense that Jesus would come down to experience mercy of a nun and a saint like Faustina. But I can’t give mercy like she could. Jesus wouldn’t be impressed with my mercy.” Think of it like this. I receive artwork from many precious children: my nieces and nephews, our parish schoolchildren, and from kids who draw on the pew art cards during Mass. When I receive them, I put them up on my bulletin board in my office. And I treasure them. Do I treasure them for their technique and their materials? I treasure them for the love that pours forth out of them.

The same applies with acts of mercy. Jesus did not come down to experience Saint Faustina’s acts of mercy because she was greatly skilled at mercy. No one – not even the greatest saint in Heaven – can compare to the mercy that God Himself shows to all human beings – to all of us. Saint Faustina’s acts of mercy were like children’s art in comparison to the King of Mercy.

Regardless, Jesus wanted to experience her mercy for Himself. Jesus wants to experience *your* mercy for *Himself*. Just like you want to receive a treasured piece of art from your child, or your nephew or niece, or a kid from your neighborhood. Even if you don't think you're very good at it – Jesus wants you to try. And He wants you to start trying by first touching His mercy in the Confessional. The Mercy that He gives us – that is the mercy that we are then able to give back to Him and give to others.

¹ John Paul II, *Homily of the Holy Father from Mass in St. Peter's Square for the Canonization of Sr Maria Faustina Kowalska*, 30 April 2000, Paragraph No. 4.

² Saint Faustina Kowalska, *Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul* 742. See also: 300, 341, 420, 699, 1109.

³ John 20:14ff

⁴ Luke 24:15ff

⁵ John 21:1ff

⁶ John 20:19, 26

⁷ John 20:19-20

⁸ See Francis, *Homily for Second Sunday of Easter (or Divine Mercy Sunday)*, Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican, 12 April 2015: "To us also, on this Sunday which Saint John Paul II wished to dedicate to Divine Mercy, the Lord shows us, through the Gospel, his wounds. They are *wounds of mercy*. It is true: the wounds of Jesus are wounds of mercy. 'With his stripes we are healed' (Isaiah 53:5)."

⁹ See Francis: "On the eighth day Jesus came once again into the Upper Room and showed his wounds to Thomas, so that he could touch them as he had wished to, in order to believe and thus become himself a witness to the Resurrection."

And: "Jesus invites us to behold these wounds, to touch them as Thomas did, to heal our lack of belief. Above all, he invites us to enter into the mystery of these wounds, which is the mystery of his merciful love."

¹⁰ See Francis, *Homily for Second Sunday of Easter (or Divine Mercy Sunday)*, Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican, 8 April 2018: "But when we make our confession, something unheard-of happens: we discover that the very sin that kept us apart from the Lord becomes the place where we encounter him. There the God who is wounded by love comes to meet our wounds. He makes our wretched wounds like his own glorious wounds. There is a transformation: my wretched wounds resemble his glorious wounds. Because he is mercy and works wonders in our wretchedness. Let us today, like Thomas, implore the grace to acknowledge our God: to find in his forgiveness our joy, and to find in his mercy our hope."

¹¹ Saint Faustina Kowalska, *Diary* 1312