

Divine Mercy Sunday – 2nd Sunday of Easter - April 19, 2020

"Blood and water!" "Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water." (see John 19:34).

Today is 2nd Sunday of Easter – the Divine Mercy Sunday. It speaks about the unfathomable and unconditional love and mercy of God to humanity and to the whole world. In the crucifixion, when one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water, that soldier gave testimony that truly He is the Son of God [Jesus is the Son of God].

Sister Maria Faustina Kowalska of Poland became a humble instrument of God's love and mercy when she received extraordinary revelations or messages from Our Lord Jesus. Jesus asked Sr. Faustina *to record* these experiences, which she compiled in her *Diary*, which contained God's loving message of Divine Mercy. ***The image of Divine Mercy has two significant rays; red represents blood, white represents water.*** The blood recalls the sacrifice of the cross and the gift of the Eucharist, and the water, in Johannine symbolism, represents not only baptism but also the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5; 4:14; 7:37-39).

First, ***Jesus the Divine Mercy offers peace – true, lasting and inner peace that only comes from God.*** In the Gospel, when Jesus enters the room of the disciples, his first words are **"Peace be with you."** He repeats these words one more time, then he tells them, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." Then he breathes on them and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of anyone, they are retained." **These words show us the heart of Jesus.** He speaks most clearly of mercy, His Divine mercy – His peace to all.

Second, ***Jesus the Divine Mercy offers true forgiveness.*** An extremely important element of today's Gospel **focuses attention on the result of forgiveness.** Jesus is filled with peace. It is the kind of peace that has been won through the most terrible suffering imaginable.

But even more than the physical suffering (beyond physical suffering), there is the peace in Jesus' heart that has been won as a result of forgiving one's enemies. Because he totally forgives those who crucified him, he is at peace.

Jesus wants Thomas to acknowledge this very thing. He tells him to touch his wounded hands with his finger, and to put his hand into his side. Jesus wants Thomas to touch his wounds. ***By doing this, Thomas realized not only that it is Jesus himself who stands before him, but the Jesus who suffered terribly on the cross.*** He wants Thomas to understand that even though **one may suffer, this should not be a cause of disbelief, or a reason to abandon one's faith.** [I invite you to close your eyes for a moment.] Think about those affected by this global COVID-19 pandemic – those who are sick and those who have died.

Healing, forgiveness, and peace are three important things one can receive from Jesus, the Divine Mercy.

True, deep, lasting peace is often the result of suffering with Jesus. One must go through painful experiences before this kind of peace is won. One must overcome the natural tendency to hurt others for the way they may offend or hurt us. This is what Jesus tries to teach us in the Gospel story today. ***Hate, grudges and violence – these will only prolong the suffering.*** It is when we are willing to show mercy and forgiveness that our hearts turn from hurt and anger towards peace and acceptance. Peace & acceptance.

As I end my homily today, I invite you again to close your eyes again – sit down, relax, put down the things you are doing right now and close your eyes – and imagine Jesus standing – He is looking at you with compassion and love – and he began to say to you: **“Peace be with you.”** Through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, may we find the strength to show mercy and forgiveness, and in forgiving, to live with a heart that is filled with peace and able to pass on the peace to others.

This very greeting of peace Jesus is a forceful command for the disciples, encouraging them back to life, to hope, to be available to him and the world again. His greeting of peace and revelation of his wounds call us not to run, not to hide, not to fear anymore, not to do a disappearing act; but rather to face the world with courage and spread the Good News. [We are encouraged to bounce back to life – to hope – to be available to him always.]

An anonymous writer once said, ***“Why do we close our eyes – when we pray? When we cry? When we kiss?*** It is because the most beautiful things are those unseen by the eyes but felt by the heart.” ***Happy are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.*** Amen!

God bless you all. Please stay safe and healthy!

- Father Michael