



Celebrating Mercy During Easter

By Mary McClusky

Easter is a time of great joy, hope, and celebration, so why does the Church emphasize our sinfulness and great need for mercy on the Second Sunday of Easter, “Divine Mercy Sunday”? The Gospel reading on that day and Jesus’s words to St. Faustina Kowalska make it clear that the connection is quite fitting and always appropriate: Jesus suffered and died for our sins so that we might receive His mercy and the joy of eternal life.

The destruction of life through abortion, assisted suicide, and euthanasia are among the gravest of sins. Yet Jesus says that even those who have committed great sins can not only be forgiven but have priority. St. Faustina, a Polish nun canonized by St. John Paul II in 2000, recorded the words of Jesus in her journal: “Let the greatest sinners place their trust in my mercy. They have the right before others to trust in the abyss of My mercy... I cannot punish even the greatest sinner if he makes an appeal to my compassion, but on the contrary, I justify him in my unfathomable and inscrutable mercy” (Diary of St. Faustina, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, 1146).

As related in John’s Gospel (Jn 20:19-31) proclaimed on the Second Sunday of Easter, the resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples. They had been gripped by fear but rejoiced when they saw him and received the Holy Spirit, peace, and the power to forgive sins. God invites us, like the disciples, to be moved from fear into great joy. Despite our great sinfulness, we can receive forgiveness, grace, and healing in the sacrament of reconciliation and be inspired to show mercy to others.

Now is the perfect time to consider how we can receive God’s mercy and extend mercy to others. One option is to pray the Divine Mercy novena from Good Friday to Divine Mercy Sunday. Jesus himself asked St. Faustina to pray the novena during this

time. Also, the Church grants a plenary indulgence for celebrating Divine Mercy Sunday. All who do so, according to the usual conditions, receive the Holy Spirit and “foster a growing love for God and for their neighbor, and after they have obtained God’s pardon, they in turn might be persuaded to show a prompt pardon to their brothers and sisters” (*Decree of Indulgence*, Apostolic Penitentiary, 2002). By receiving mercy, we can be more merciful towards others.

Pope Francis reflected on the challenge of finding joy despite the experience of sin in his description of the women who entered Jesus’ tomb that Easter morning. They came face to face with Christ’s death and of their own existence as sinners in need of God’s forgiveness. At the same time, they encountered His love, which is greater than the greatest of sins. The power of the Resurrection gives us the courage to face our sins, confess our mistakes, and then humbly receive God’s forgiveness and accept the joy that comes with new life in Christ.

On Good Friday, in our celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday, throughout the Easter season, and beyond, may each of us be inspired to repent of our sins, receive forgiveness through the sacrament of reconciliation, and be empowered by Christ to be merciful towards others. Let us pray fervently that many will seek and receive God’s infinite gift of Divine Mercy.

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