

Homily
Divine Mercy Sunday
April 7, 2024

Happy Easter! Today is the Second Sunday of Easter, also known as the Octave Sunday of Easter, also known as, since April 30, 2000, when St. Faustina was canonized, Divine Mercy Sunday. The Easter Season, not to be outdone by the Season of Lent which lasts 40 days, goes through the Solemnity of Pentecost, the 50 days of Easter.

Divine Mercy Sunday holds a special place in our liturgical calendar. It commemorates the completion of the Octave of Easter, eight days to celebrate Easter Day, a day to full of joy to be confined to a single day. Why eight days? For the Jews, seven days was the number for perfection, but in time and space, symbolic of our faith journey, our pilgrimage on this earth. Then Jesus entered the equation. Jesus, fully human and fully divine, fulfilled the seven days and carried the eighth day as divine, meaning eternal, infinite.

Sister Faustina was a young, uneducated nun in a convent of the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Poland during the 1930s. She received extraordinary revelations – or messages – from our Lord Jesus. Jesus asked Sr. Faustina to record these experiences, which she compiled into notebooks. These notebooks are known today as the Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, and the words contained within are God's loving message of Divine Mercy:

“My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy.” Do we know about the mercy of our Lord and Savior? Yes, we hear about this often, but maybe not often enough.

“I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners.” Who falls into that category of poor sinners? I know I do! I know I need a refuge and shelter!

“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.” Do we approach His Fount of mercy? What’s holding us back?

“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.” Jesus gave us the Sacraments. We are called to draw towards them. They are here for us, as often as we are able. Do we take advantage of this? If not, what is getting in the way?

“It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy. — St. Faustina, Diary, no. 699

To receive these graces, the only condition is to receive Holy Communion worthily on Divine Mercy Sunday (or the Vigil celebration) by making a good confession beforehand and staying in the state of grace and trusting in His Divine Mercy.

By these conditions, our Lord is emphasizing the value of confession and Holy Communion as miracles of mercy. Through the words of absolution, we are truly forgiven of all sin that we are sorry for. The Eucharist is Jesus, Himself, the Living God, longing to pour Himself as Mercy into our hearts.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1457, states that we must confess serious sins at least once a year. Keep in mind that if we are conscious of serious sin, we must abstain from communion until we have gone to confession. Why do you think Fr. Jason is here before Mass each Saturday? It's no coincidence.

The Code of Canon Law, canon 921 section 1-2, states that Catholics are obliged to receive the Eucharist at least once a year. But with the graces that accompany these Sacraments, why would we wait? If we truly align our will to His Will, our vices stand out and we cringe at them. When our will is His Will, we want to embrace virtues, replacing those old habits with new, good habits. And through the frequent reception of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, we are strengthened and made whole.

But today is a special day, a day of Divine Mercy, a day of many graces through the reception of Mercy and our own acts of mercy. Our Lord says through St. Faustina that we are to perform acts of mercy: "Yes, the first Sunday after Easter is the Feast of Mercy, but there must also be acts of mercy" (742). This you must decide for yourself, but it must be in alignment with what God wants through the gifts He has given us.

"The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive" (1578). My favorite prayer is, "Jesus, I trust in you." When I approach the tabernacle or expose and repose Jesus during Holy Hour and Adoration, this is my go-to prayer.

The worthy reception of the Eucharist on Divine Mercy Sunday is sufficient to obtain the extraordinary graces promised by Jesus. A plenary indulgence, obtained by fulfilling the usual conditions, is also available. So how do we properly gain a plenary indulgence? It's not a magic pill or some incantation, but simply living out our faith, embracing the Sacraments and trusting in our Lord and His mercy.

The usual conditions are as follows: sacramental confession [if you go weekly or at least monthly, you're covered], Eucharistic communion [assuming you are properly disposed, meaning in a state of grace; that's why confession is part of this formula], and prayer for the intentions of [our Holy Father, Pope Francis]. The specific conditions for this indulgence on Divine Mercy Sunday are: 'in any church or chapel, in a spirit that is completely detached from the affection for a sin, even a venial sin, take part in the prayers and devotions held in honor of Divine Mercy, or, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed or reserved in the tabernacle, recite the Our Father and the Creed, adding a devout prayer to the merciful Lord Jesus (e.g. Merciful Jesus, I trust in you!)"'

Remember that complete detachment from sin, even venial or non-serious sin is very difficult, because we all, especially me, are attached to so many earthly habits. You've all heard me talk

about my attachment to judging other drivers. You've heard of my impatience, mostly with myself, but also with others. But this is where trust in the Lord comes in. We must trust in our Lord. Trust is paramount. And if we are weak in our trust, we ask Jesus to help in our distrust. Ask Mary, our Blessed Mother, to intercede for us to Jesus for an increase in trust.

All this week, including in today's Gospel, we hear of Jesus appearing to His disciples, but they initially cannot see Him. Thomas, especially, did not trust those who said that they had seen Him. He wanted proof. He said, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail-marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." He did not trust, even though Jesus told him what would happen, even though his brothers told him what they saw.

Do we believe? Do we trust? Jesus is here with us today just as present as He was two thousand years ago in that locked room. So many people struggle with trust. Even though they can see with their eyes, they cannot see. Brothers and sisters, open your hearts, open your minds and open your eyes to the real presence of our Lord and Savior, in His Sacrament and in His Divine Mercy. Jesus, I trust in You!