

Homily: 28th Sunday: Cycle C: 2016: 2 Kgs 5: 14-17; Ps 98; 2 Tm 2: 8-13; Lk 17: 11-19

“The Gift of Divine Mercy”

When I first arrived here at St. Thomas Parish at the end of July, I said that I would be promoting this special devotion to God’s mercy during my time as pastor here. All of you should know that we now pray the Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet before all the Masses here which is wonderful. Please try to come a half hour before Mass when you are able to join in- make it a priority- since when we pray as a group it is more powerful and we receive more graces. So what does the Divine Mercy devotion involve? I want to explain this in this homily.

1. **First off I want to give you some personal background on this.** I didn’t know anything about the Divine Mercy devotion until I started seminary back in the mid 90’s and it was a fellow seminarian, Fr. Jim Holland from Pittsburgh, who I am still friends with who introduced me to it; and then I discovered more about it by watching EWTN, the Catholic network, where they pray it every day at 3 pm - which is the Hour of Divine Mercy since Jesus died on the Cross during the 3 o’clock hour according to Sacred Tradition – which is also why I do the Divine Mercy Eucharistic Holy Hour every Friday at 3 pm. Once I discovered the Divine Mercy chaplet, I starting praying it, but to be honest I didn’t really appreciate it fully until later, after I became a priest. The main reason for this is because of my late father, who’s name also was Richard. He read a pamphlet on it and then starting watching it on EWTN and starting praying along with them. It had a tremendous impact on his life. At the time, he was still working at a mailman in Johnstown and after getting into the Divine Mercy devotion he started going to daily Mass most days before he went to work down at St. John Gaulbert Cathedral in downtown Johnstown which was close to the Post Office; he also started visiting the perpetual adoration chapel at St. Patrick’s Church in Johnstown. The Divine Mercy devotion truly gives us a greater appreciation for the Mass and Jesus’s Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Then one day out of the blue he said to me that he wanted to go up to visit **the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Mass.** This was really out of the ordinary for my father who was not a traveler at all - he was never on an airplane and loved hanging out in Johnstown - so my mom checked into places up there, and my dad and I went up there for the first time in October of 2006. It made a huge impact on my family from day one, especially in that

my dad found out he had cancer at the end of our first time there, and really had an inner sense that God would be with him through it - even though it was still difficult to trust at times. Then my mom discovered her cancer while up there in October of 2012 and again we had the sense the Lord in His Mercy would accompany her through this heavy trial and in the end the Lord miraculously healed her in April of 2013. It is truly amazing the power of God's mercy and the intercession of his special saints of Divine Mercy, St. Faustina who Jesus revealed the devotion to back in the 1930's in Poland and St. John Paul II, the Polish Pope who made it known world-wide in his 27 years as Pope.

2. **So what does the Divine Mercy devotion consist of?** Well it is based on the revelations that Jesus gave to Sister, now Saint, Faustina in Poland back in the 1930's. He said that it is the last hope for the human race which is on the path to its own destruction - in that way similar to what our Blessed Mother told the 3 little children at Fatima in 1917. We shouldn't need too much convincing of this sad reality, *for over the past 100 years there has been much death and destruction in the world and in individual lives with war and conflict, the advent of the culture of death with the contraception, abortion and euthanasia mentality, the eventual legalization of all these evils, the breakdown of the family in many quarters with the sexual revolution and widespread divorce and illegitimacy, the acceptance of gay marriage, and just lots of selfishness and hardness of heart on all levels.* Jesus told St. Faustina that His Divine Mercy is the final hope for the human race. He also said ***His mercy or all-encompassing love for each human being is unlimited and available even to the greatest sinners - if only they turn to Him in trust.***
3. **How do we do this?** Ask for His mercy, God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly. **Be merciful.** God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. Completely trust in Jesus - God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent on our trust. We see this in **the image of Divine Mercy** which at the bottom has the statement: ***Jesus I trust in You.*** Jesus asked St. Faustina to make sure this was included when she got an artist to paint the image she saw of Jesus when He appeared to her. Along with the image is the actual prayers of **the Chaplet** which Jesus asks us to pray on a daily basis. You pray it on the Rosary beads and it is a short prayer - it takes

about 5 minutes to do a chaplet- which again is a gift that maybe Jesus foresaw for the modern age - which has such a short attention span! This chaplet is a very powerful prayer esp. for the conversion of hardened sinners, for the sick and for the dying. Jesus says we should pray it especially for someone right before death, so they accept the gift of salvation - it is their final chance, especially if they have been away from God for a long time. **The Feast of Divine Mercy** is the Second Sunday of Easter and was instituted by St. Pope John Paul II back in 2000. It is a day of special graces - as Jesus told St. Faustina, *“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”* (Diary, 699). **The Divine Mercy Novena:** it begins on Good Friday and ends on Divine Mercy Sunday. Each day a different group of people are prayed for. I will give all of you that when we get to that time next Lent. **The Hour of Great Mercy:** is 3 o’clock in the afternoon each day, particularly on Friday. We have the Friday Holy Hour at that time to pray for our parish and our personal intentions. As Jesus told St. Faustina, *“At three o’clock implore My mercy, especially for sinners; and, if only for a brief moment, immerse yourself in My Passion. This is the hour of great mercy. In this hour I will refuse nothing to the soul that makes a request of Me in virtue of My Passion”* (Diary, 1320). **The Sacraments of Mercy:** Jesus told St. Faustina that the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist are special fountains of mercy that should be received frequently with great trust and love (Diary 914, 1602). **Works of Mercy:** God expects us to let His mercy flow through us to others. Jesus told St. Faustina, *“I demand from you deeds of mercy, which arise out of love for Me. You are to show mercy to your neighbors always and everywhere”* (Diary, 742). The key to this is doing it out of love for God - since as we know at times it is hard to love others - but in a real way the true test of our love for God is how we deal with difficult people. That is the overview of the Divine Mercy devotion. I hope all of you will start praying the Chaplet each day. It will change your life, and hopefully the lives around you, over time - if you open yourself to the graces of Divine Mercy. If you need a Divine mercy card, they are in the back - take one. God bless you.

Recommended Reading: *Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul.* Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska. Marian Press. 2008. (It can be ordered at: 1-800-462-7426 or www.marian.org)