

Homily: 5th Sunday of Lent: Cycle B: 2015: Jer 31: 31-34; Ps. 51; Heb 5: 7-9; Jn 12: 20-33

“For God will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more”

As we move into the last two weeks of Lent, it is a time to ask God to give us a clean heart, as the psalm says today, and to trust more in His Divine Mercy.

1. **Remember God loves everyone so much that He wants us to be with Him forever, and even in this life to give us the grace to live a life of goodness and holiness in intimate friendship with Him.** He wants no one to perish, but all to be saved- but we must cooperate! His love is always reaching out to us - which is the message of the traditional Sacred Heart devotion over the last few centuries and also of the newer Divine Mercy devotion which was so near and dear to the heart of our late great Holy Father St. John Paul II, who in fact died on the vigil of the Feast of Divine mercy on Easter Saturday of 2005, and now to Pope Francis who this past week declared a **“Jubilee Year of Divine Mercy”** starting in December of this 2015. We should all have a great devotion to Divine Mercy. The reality is: we all have difficulties to face in our lives: *maybe our marriage is not the greatest or even awful on some level; maybe we have problems with certain family members or with a certain child; maybe some of the people we love refuse to go to Mass; maybe we struggle to make God and our faith the number one priority in our lives, to pray and live our Catholic faith on a daily basis; maybe we hate our job; maybe we struggle with addictions of various sorts which vary in their degree of sinfulness: watching too much television or listening to too much music or playing too many videogames(the key word is **too much**), overeating, shopping and buying things we don't need with money we could use to help others, watching bad things on television, or reading things we shouldn't read, abusing alcohol or drugs, be it legal or illegal, engaging in immoral sexual activity or looking at pornography - which is a spiritual cancer afflicting so many in our society and seriously harming or even destroying so many relationships and marriages, etc.* Whatever addiction, sin or struggles we are facing the Lord's Mercy: His love and concern for us is the answer to all human problems. But it may seem overly simplistic or “too good to be true.” **Do we think that?**

2. **How do we tap into this Fountain of God’s mercy: the source of all that is good?** Mysteriously it is by uniting everything we experience with Jesus on the **Cross**. To develop the habit of **uniting** all our struggles and difficulties with Him throughout the day, and to make a conscious effort to turn away from sin. *Do we doubt his love for us? Do we think we have gotten a raw deal in life? Are we mad at God for having taken a loved one or friend away in death?* **Look at the Crucifix and realize how much God loves each of one of us!** He died for your salvation! What a price He paid for our sins! Jesus says in the Gospel today: *“When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.”* **The Cross is THE source of God’s mercy.** It is the sign of His infinite love for us. This is why in **The Chaplet of Divine Mercy** - which is rooted in the mystery Jesus’s offering of His life on the Cross for our sins - we unite ourselves with Him and pray: *Eternal Father, I offer to You, the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world. And for the sake of His sorrowful passion have mercy on us and on the whole world.* But have we been running from the Cross, hoping we could accept the Christian way but without the suffering, without the dying to self, without the forgiveness of ourselves and others, without the call to conversion from a worldly way of life to the standards of God and our Catholic Faith?
3. **What does sin really mean in this context?** Just breaking the rules of God and the Church or rather the damage or destruction of our love for God and others and even ourselves? Remember Adam and Eve after they sinned? They hid from God, as we tend to do when we sin. Remember Cain after he murdered His brother Abel? He tried to cop-out and say he wasn’t his brother’s keeper. Remember Judas going out into the darkness after he betrayed Jesus? **Which are we? Are we children of the light or of the darkness? Are we willing to die to self in order to live fully for God and others?** Are we striving to conform our lives to God’s standards and the teachings of the Catholic Church in all areas, or are we

conforming our lives to our own wills and to the standards of the world and the culture, while paying lip service to God and the Catholic Faith? **Do we want to be in the light or darkness?** The Divine Physician is waiting to help us with His remedy of mercy. And the place we most receive that gift is in **the Sacrament of Mercy: Confession**. *Do we seek Him out there frequently? Or is it just once in a while? Or maybe never? We will have the opportunity on Monday night to be set free from our sins by God working through His priests - are we willing to do that, to trust when we are speaking to the priest in Confession that we are speaking to Jesus Himself as Jesus told St. Faustina - or don't we believe that?* **Are we running from the Cross - the only path to salvation?** We have to die like a grain of wheat Jesus says in order to bear spiritual fruit. Remember the Catholic faith is a high standard to live by, it's not always easy, so don't be afraid ask Jesus daily to help you embrace it - we all have difficulties to face, and sometimes we may feel we are at the end of our strength - ready to break. But remember "for those who love God all things work out for our good" as St. Paul says in the 8th chapter of Romans, which you might want to meditate on this week. The **only way** we discover this truth is by beseeching God for the gift of His mercy: *in daily prayer, especially in the powerful chaplet of Divine Mercy - which only takes a few minutes to say, in the frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, by receiving Holy Communion in the state of grace and with great faith in His Real Presence, and in daily embracing our Cross, which are all the difficulties of our lives, in union with Christ Crucified, offering it in reparation for our sins, for the conversion of others (especially for those we know who are not coming to Mass and living the Catholic faith at present, and for all those in the world in danger of losing their souls forever if they don't change their lives in God), and to grow in our love for God and neighbor.* May God bless us with the gift of His mercy each day to live this, and may we respond in turn with faith and love, gratitude and perseverance by living well the way Jesus has shown us. Remember as Jesus says in the Gospel today, "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me." Jesus please have mercy on us, and help us to be merciful to others. God bless you.