

Homily: Divine Mercy Sunday: 2nd Sunday of Easter 2016: Cycle C: Acts 5: 12-16; Ps 118; Rev 1: 9-11, 12-13, 17-19; Jn 20: 19-31

“The Resurrection as the Sign of God’s Mercy and How We are Called to Respond”

Today we celebrate the close of the Easter Octave: the 2nd Sunday of Easter or “**Divine Mercy Sunday**” during this Jubilee Year of Mercy. God’s mercy or all encompassing love and kindness toward the human race is brought to its culmination in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus: His passion, death and Resurrection. Jesus took on our sins and nailed them to the Cross on Good Friday; in His Resurrection, we now have **the opportunity** for New Easter Life in Him - if we embrace the vows of our **Baptism** on daily basis.

1. The wonder of Jesus’ Bodily Resurrection should truly amaze us! The post-Resurrection accounts are **so realistic** on a human level, which is one of the great arguments for their Truth when defending our Faith to unbelievers (Apologetics). Mentally put yourself in the apostles’ shoes. When seeing Jesus after the Resurrection, the **apostles** thought at first Jesus was a ghost, **so would we**, until He showed them the marks of His passion in His body and ate a piece of fish in front of them. Ghosts can’t do such things as this! Then today **Thomas**, who was not present for the first post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus for some reason, says he won’t believe unless “*he sees the mark of the nails in his hands, and puts his finger into the nailmarks, and puts his hand into his side.*” So the Lord today gives Him that very chance to do so, in His kindness! And Thomas’s response is one of amazement: “*My Lord and my God.*” **Jesus then says something about you and me** and all people who will live after He ascends back to the right hand of the Father in Heaven, “*Thomas, have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.*” What an amazing reality! Here is a **very helpful spiritual exercise** to do over the next few weeks: read and meditate on the post-Resurrection accounts in the 4 Gospels as part of your prayer life: look at one of the Gospel accounts each week over the next four weeks- you will be truly amazed as you go through the **Four Gospels** and when you finish that spiritual exercise, then go on to the **Acts of the Apostles** for the last two weeks of the Easter season. As St. John tells us today, the post-

Resurrection accounts of Jesus “are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in His name.” The wonder of the Resurrection is: new life, new creation, and the new start for the human race. Thank you Jesus so much!

2. Jesus also gives us today in the Gospel **the gift** to help us with our struggles, doubts and weaknesses in this earthly life; namely, **the Sacrament of Confession/ Reconciliation or the Sacrament of His Divine Mercy as St. Faustina calls it.** This truly is the fountain of God’s mercy. Jesus tells the Apostles today “*Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.*” Jesus’s own power as God to forgive sin is given to the Apostles as the first bishops and priests of the Church, and that gift has been given to every bishop and priest who followed in their footsteps down to our present day. What an amazing reality! **Do you believe that truth? To be a good Catholic you must!** Please take advantage of this Sacrament of Divine Mercy and healing frequently as many of us did during Lent, so that all of us can share more fully in Jesus’s Resurrected life, and pray for the priests of the Church that we will be holy instruments of God’s mercy and reconciliation in this powerful Sacrament of God’s healing and forgiveness.
3. Finally today’s Gospel teaches us something else about God’s mercy. Jesus was **SO PATIENT** in dealing with **Thomas** in his doubts, with **Peter** in his triple denial of knowing Jesus the night of the Last Supper as well as the other times of Peter’s weakness in the Gospel, with **Mary Magdalene** in getting her to turn away from her former life of serious sin. **THIS SHOULD GIVE SO MUCH HOPE TO ALL OF US!** *Have we doubted the Lord’s presence in our lives at times? Have we doubted the truth of our Catholic Faith? Have we at times clung to sins and dysfunctional patterns of life, of which we know in our heart of hearts are hurting us and others, and that we need to take the difficult, but necessary, steps to turn away from, including going to the Sacrament of Confession, but are afraid to do so on some level? Why are we afraid to go and confess our sins to the priest who is here to help us, to change our lives for the better?* Please don’t be

afraid. Jesus is here today to help us, just as He helped Thomas, Peter and Mary Magdalene, who by the way are all **saints** of the Church now! If Jesus could help them, He can help us - but only if we also turn to His merciful Heart with **TRUST!** As we conclude the special novena to Divine Mercy this weekend, it should remind us that **praying the chaplet of Divine Mercy on a daily basis** is a huge help for growing in this **TRUST / CONFIDENCE** in God's Mercy, which heals and transforms us more and more into the image of Christ on a daily basis, in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father (see Romans 12:1-2). Please make a resolution today to learn more about the Divine Mercy devotion and to incorporate it into your personal life. **For as much as we accept God's mercy into our lives, it will then flow out into our relations with others: to treat others with mercy and kindness instead of harshness and anger.**

Remember what I said earlier in Lent, God will only forgive us our trespasses as much as we forgive those who trespass against us. But if we strive to do that: to live the life of Divine Mercy, then we will be living the New Life of the Resurrection, by becoming a new creation in Christ and fulfilling more and more **the Great Commandment: to love God with our whole heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love our neighbor as our self.** Easter joy will then fill our hearts, and we will be walking on the narrow path that leads to the Heavenly Kingdom. Let's pray all people in the world experience God's tender mercy which transforms us and takes away sin, despair and death – truly the meaning of Easter as we close out the Easter Octave. God bless you in a special way on this Divine Mercy Sunday

Recommended Reading:

Divine Mercy in My Soul: The Diary of Sister M. Faustina Kowalska. Marian Press, Stockbridge, Mass. 1987. It can be ordered at: 1-800-462-7426 or www.divinemercurygiftshop.org.

The Life of Faustina Kowalska. *The Authorized Biography.* Sister Sophia Michalenko. Servant Books. 1999.