

A Short Reflection Divine Mercy Sunday - A

‘Peace be with you.’ Jesus says these four simple words three times in the Gospel for this Sunday. They are simple words and yet they reveal the profound compassion and mercy of God.

Jesus had been crucified and then taken down from the Cross and laid in a tomb before the Jewish Sabbath. The next day, when the tomb was found empty, the disciples were totally dismayed. Their leader, their teacher, the person in whom they had put all their faith had been killed in front of their eyes. And now his body had disappeared.

They were in fear that they would be persecuted in the same way as Jesus so they were in hiding in a locked room trying to make sense of it all. Their world was in turmoil.

But Jesus appeared to them and said ‘Peace be with you.’ He did not admonish them for having abandoned Him. He did not chastise them for being fearful and hiding away. He comforted them and reassured them by showing them His wounds. He proved to them that He had risen from the dead as He had foretold to them earlier. In doing so, He revealed the infinite compassion and mercy of God.

When Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples, Thomas was not present. And when the disciples told him that they had seen the risen Lord, he declared that he would not believe that Jesus had appeared until he could see Jesus for himself and touch His wounds. Later, when Thomas was present in the room, Jesus appeared again. Rather than admonishing Thomas for his unbelief, Jesus showed him His wounds and allowed him to touch them. Again, Jesus showed God’s compassion and mercy towards Thomas.

It is fitting that we reflect on the Gospel that reveals to us the mercy of God on this feast of the Divine Mercy; a feast that was instituted by St. John Paul II shortly after he canonized Sister Faustina Kowalska in April 2000.

St. Faustina was a humble, Polish nun who was born in 1905 and died in 1938. Her family was poor, so she had a very limited education. She entered the convent in 1920 and was assigned to various menial chores. However, from about 1930 until she died, St. Faustina experienced apparitions of Jesus and received private revelations from Him that she wrote down in several notebooks. After her death, these notebooks were published in a book called: *Divine Mercy in My Soul*.

Through this book, the world came to learn of the Divine Mercy painting, a copy of which hangs in our Blessed Sacrament chapel, the Divine Mercy prayer, and the chaplet of the Divine Mercy; instructions for which were given to St. Faustina during her private encounters with Jesus.

It is noteworthy that Jesus revealed the Divine Mercy to St. Faustina in the mid-1930s. This was a time when the Nazis were coming to power in Germany and Poland was about to be over-run by both Germany and Russia. Many people were about to be rounded up and sent to concentration camps and the Second World War was around the corner. If ever the mercy of God was needed, it was in Poland at that time.

But what does the Divine Mercy mean for us? Well, in this time of pandemic when we are hiding fearfully in our homes, do we not need the compassionate mercy of God? We seem powerless to stop the spread of the pandemic. We may be able to slow the progress of the virus but we do not yet have a reliable treatment method or a vaccine to stop the virus.

What we have is our faith in the infinite mercy of God. When everything else is stripped away, work, shopping, sports, parties, even going to church, we are left with our faith. St. Peter, in the Second Reading, put it this way: '...rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith – being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.'

Even though we are going through a time of trial and sacrifice, we know that we can place our lives in the hands of God with utmost faith in His Divine Mercy. Through St. Faustina, Jesus told us that we should never fear to say the words that appear under His Divine Mercy portrait:

Jesus, I trust in You.