

Have Mercy on Us and On the Whole World

Acts 4: 32-35; 1 Jn. 5: 1-6; Jn. 20: 19-31

As we complete the Octave of Easter, we continue to celebrate the joy of our Christian faith. The First Reading for this Sunday paints an idyllic picture of Christian communal living among the first disciples. All assets were held in common in the community. No one was in need; no one was richer than another.

But this community sharing did not extend to unity in thinking. Jesus appeared to the disciples and bestowed the Holy Spirit on them. But, since Thomas was not there, he did not believe that they had seen Jesus. He told them that he would only believe that they had met the resurrected Christ if he actually saw the wounds in Christ's body; he took the 'I'll believe it when I see it' approach.

When Jesus appeared to Thomas, He did not chastise him for his skepticism. Instead, He patiently, lovingly and mercifully allowed him to touch the wounds so he could come to believe. And Thomas said simply: *'My Lord and my God!'*

In the Penitential Rite and the Gloria, we ask for God's mercy, a totally unmerited gift. Mercy is given by God to all of us, even to Thomas in his unbelief. Why? Because, as the psalmist says: *'The Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever.'*

This Sunday, we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, a feast that was instituted by St. John Paul II shortly after he canonized St. Faustina Kowalska on April 30, 2000. St. Faustina was a humble Polish nun who was born in 1905 and died in 1938. She entered the convent in 1920 and, from about 1930 until she died, she began to have apparitions of Jesus and to receive private revelations from Him.

In an apparition that she experienced in 1931, St. Faustina received instructions from Jesus to paint a picture of Him like the one that hangs in our Blessed Sacrament chapel. It shows Jesus pointing to His sacred heart from which stream rays of red and white, symbolizing the blood and water that was released when Jesus' heart was pierced when He was on the cross. Under the picture are the words: *'Jesus, I Trust in You.'*

St. Faustina said that Jesus wants all of us to avail ourselves of the Divine Mercy; the mercy of God. Since the time of Adam and Eve, we have always needed God's mercy because of the way we have acted and, out of His love for us, God wants to show us His mercy. We need only trust and approach Him humbly to receive this divine gift.

Over many centuries, the Jewish people, needed God's mercy and God always gave it freely, eventually intervening in a radical way by sacrificing His Son. It is two thousand years later and are we any different? Now, more than ever, we are in need of God's mercy to save us from ourselves. We have caused wars, terrorism, genocides, abortions, euthanasia, natural disasters, climate change, social injustice, and on and on. There is no question that we continue to need God's merciful intervention.

Heavenly Father, help us to be aware of our need for your mercy. Help us to trust in Jesus always and to open ourselves up to receiving your mercy. Help us to ask for the grace to move beyond our doubts so that, even though we are not able to touch Jesus' wounds, we too may be granted the faith to say: *'My Lord and my God!'* For the sake of His sorrowful passion have mercy on each of us and on the whole world.