

2nd SUNDAY OF EASTER

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

HOMILY BY REV. FR. LEO SIMON ITABARI MWENDA, OP.

Acts 4: 32-35, Ps 118, 1John 5: 1-7, John 20: 19-31

My brothers and sisters, today being the second Sunday of Easter, it is also called the Divine Mercy Sunday. In 1930's Jesus made a series of appearances and revelations to St. Faustina Kowalska, where He made clear His intention to have the Church institute a solemnity of Divine Mercy, which should happen on the Sunday after Easter. On this Sunday, Jesus told Sr. Faustina that He wants the world to know; "I am the King of Mercy [on] that [day], the first Sunday after Easter. ... Through the incarnate word, I make known the bottomless depth of my mercy"¹. Jesus wanted us human beings to turn to His bottomless mercy so that we can be saved. In the year 2000 during the canonization of Sr. Faustina, Pope John Paul II declared the 2nd Sunday of Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday.

From our readings today, I want to isolate one point from the psalm, and another point from the gospel, so as to explain the mercy of God. From the response to the psalm we read; "Give praise to the Lord for he is good; His mercy endures forever". In the gospel, when Jesus appears to the apostles in the upper room, he breathed on them and said; "receive the Holy Spirit, if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained". Mercy of its very nature, targets and seeks to mitigate the misery of another. As human beings, our greatest misery is not material poverty; no, our greatest misery is spiritual – by being slaves to sin and the devil. Divine Mercy therefore specifically targets the sinful condition of our souls and the mercy of God seeks to spiritually cleanse us.

If you look at the prayer of absolution that the priest says during the sacrament of confession, you will see clearly that the name of God is Mercy, and it is by God's mercy that our sins are forgiven. The prayer begins thus; "God the Father of mercies through the death and resurrection and His son has reconciled the world to Himself and sent the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins" In the bible, the Word Mercy and its variants occur over 300 times². When Moses asked to see God at Mount Sinai, the Lord granted the wish of Moses halfway by passing before Moses and pronouncing His name;

"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the

¹ See the diary of Sr. Faustina Kowalska, entry 88; tr by Marians, <http://www.thedivinemercy.org/celebrate/greatgrace/words.php> [Accessed on 1 Mar 2018]

²Alice M. Sinnott, RSM, "Mercy in the bible", 2018.

iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." (Ex 34:5-9)

The first attribute God mentions of Himself is Mercy and graciousness, which is directly connected with his readiness to forgive sins and to excuse faults, without neglecting the demands of Justice. Pope St John Paul II would teach; that the divine attribute the OT calls "mercy", gets personified in the incarnate Word – Jesus Christ (Cf. *Dives Misericordia*, 1980, #2). Jesus therefore being the Mercy of the Father becomes the cure for your sins. When Jesus was appearing to Sr. Faustina, Faustina asked Jesus; "what can I give you", and Jesus answered the holy nun "my daughter, give me your faults and weaknesses – give me your sins". That is what Jesus wants from us on this divine mercy Sunday to bring Him our sins, so that he can cure us.

But how can we bring our sins to Jesus if we do not own these sins? There are those who hold false teachings like believing that they are incapable of sinning. Such cannot benefit from the mercy of God because they do not think they need it. Another horrible habit in our world today is lacking the sense of sin. There are those who blame their every fault and societal failures on others, but they never interrogate themselves. Others have rejected the Christian morality, and have substituted it with their own value system that favors them and never questions them. So it is not unheard of in our world today to hear people who support and promote disorders like homosexuality, people who have no qualms terminating lives of unborn children, people who find nothing wrong with insulting and defaming others on social media platforms in the name of freedom of speech, people who do not hesitate to exploit the poor and the weak to enrich themselves, people who sexually exploit vulnerable women and even children, and so on.

These sins among others, are symptoms of a malignant disease of the soul called brokenness due to sin. The Mercy of God address itself particularly to this disease, and only Jesus can make you whole, and set you free from this slavery from sin and evil. Today I would like to invite you to re-examine your life and face your faults, weaknesses and sins honestly before God. Bring these issues to Jesus for healing. If you are a Catholic, you know the way; the efficacy of divine mercy is realized in the sacrament of confession. If you are not a Catholic, at least begin the journey by examining your conscience, and addressing a prayer of repentance and forgiveness to the Divine Mercy – Our Lord Jesus Christ. He is your Lord whose Mercy is earnestly waiting for you. Amen!