



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Father Chris Comerford
April 8, 2018 Second Sunday of Easter (Sunday of Divine Mercy)

Reading I Acts 4:32-35

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

Reading II I John 5:1-6

Gospel John 20:19-31

Homily

Easter Sunday night, the apostles are afraid. The doors are locked. They think that they too, will be put to death in the same way that Jesus was. And all of a sudden he is there. "Peace be with you," he says. I don't think there was a lot of peace in that room when Jesus suddenly just appears out of nowhere. That is why he says it again, "Peace be with you." It is hard to imagine what is going through the minds of the apostles. They had heard stories that people had seen Jesus risen and had appeared throughout the day. They knew the tomb was empty and now Jesus had important words for them. Probably some of the most important words ever spoken because these were the words he said to them when he rose from the dead. "As the father has sent me, so I send you." The apostles were being sent out. He breathes on them and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit," and the fullness has come in Pentecost.

He continues, "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven, and whose sins you retain are retained." I thought only God could forgive sins. He gives that authority to the apostles. God can transfer that authority to others. And thus, Jesus does so offering what — mercy and forgiveness. Just as Jesus forgave sins, he wants the apostles to offer that forgiveness of sins through the church. And thus that continues today. It is very important. But you know what that connects us to now — confession. You are thinking, "Father, you are not going to talk about confession, are you?" I know many of you think about confession the way many of us think about going to the dentist. We don't really want to go, do we? It is going to be painful, we think. But we still go to the dentist and it good that we do. And there is good about going to confession because it gives us hope, and we need that hope for our soul. It is something to think about, especially if you have not been to confession for a year, or two years, or five years, or ten years, or thirty years. We need that. We need that. We need His grace to receive His mercy. And I think even more to help us to show mercy and that was what the first reading was about. They received that love of God and they wanted to share it with one another.

There was a difference between today and those in the early church. One person among the early apostles and followers would contribute to their group ten dollars. Another would contribute a thousand dollars. They put it in the same pot to be able to help

those in need. It is a great example for us today, the example that was given to us by those in the early church. It is not easy to live that way, but we need that mercy of God.

I mention that this is Divine Mercy Sunday. In the middle of the last century there was a cloistered Polish nun by the name Faustina Kowalska in Krakow, Poland. And she dedicated her life to prayer and God, and Jesus appeared to her and gave her a message that was to be given through her to the world. The first message that he gave Saint Faustina was to have an image painted, the image of his divine mercy. This is the image, a print of it that Jesus wanted painted. In it you see Jesus reaching out to people and we see the rays of red and white coming from it, reaching out like blood and water that flowed from his heart, these rivers of mercy that he wants to give to people. At the bottom of the painting are the words, "Jesus, I trust in you." It is a striking image.

Last night during the Eucharistic prayer, the sun came through the windows directly on the painting. Someone said to me later, "Father, you planned that didn't you. You knew when the sun was going to come through the window." And I said, "No, I didn't plan it. I didn't know when the sun would be coming through that night." The painting just glowed with the love and mercy of Jesus.

So Jesus wanted this image to be spread throughout the world. The next thing Jesus wanted Saint Faustina to do was to ask those in the church to have the Sunday after Easter dedicated as Divine Mercy Sunday throughout the world. He said this to a cloistered Polish nun. That could never happen, could it? There's no way. To have a cloistered Polish nun hear a message from Jesus to have a feast for the universal church. It happened. How did it happen? When Saint Faustina was in her convent in Poland, there was a young priest in Poland who would stop by the convent where she was living and prayed. His name was Karol Wojtyla. And you know that Karol Wojtyla became the first pope from Poland, John Paul II. It is amazing what God can do. In the year 2,000, John Paul II canonized Faustina as a saint. And on that same day, the Sunday after Easter, he declared the Divine Mercy Sunday would be the feast day of the church every year on that Sunday after Easter, just as Jesus had asked. Amazing. And thus we celebrate the great mercy of Jesus on this Sunday every year.

The devotion of the Divine Mercy is beautiful. One of the key elements is praying a chaplet, and a chaplet can be prayed on the beads of the rosary. The chaplet of the Divine Mercy has two main prayers. The first one is prayed on the Our Father beads. It is, "Eternal Father. I offer you body and blood, soul and divinity of your dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and of the whole world." Then on the Hail Mary beads, "For the sake of his sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world." It is a powerful chaplet to pray. It doesn't take very long, less than 10 minutes and shorter than the rosary to focus on the mercy of Jesus and to ask for that mercy.

It is encouraging to pray this chaplet. I have been praying it for over 20 years, almost 30 years. I learned the devotion of the Divine Mercy in 1990 at a Polish convent in Wisconsin, and I have wanted to promote that devotion ever since. This Divine Mercy Sunday, God grants mercy more than on any other day of the year. Trust me, it happens. If you need to receive the divine mercy of Jesus, pray for it today. If you show to show the mercy of Jesus, do so in a special way today. Pray for that grace to be merciful and forgiving.

When I was praying this morning I had a sense that God was speaking to my heart to share with you that — if you are struggling to forgive someone, pray the chaplet of Divine Mercy. Pray the chaplet. Today, you will find as you go out, Holy Cards that have this image, and on the back is how to pray the chaplet. You can take one with you. It is powerful to do so. Jesus asked that this prayer especially be prayed at 3 o'clock, the hour he died on the cross, the hour of Devine Mercy. Amazing things can happen. Divine Mercy has changed my life. There is no doubt that it has allowed me to bring about God's mercy to this world.

We need faith in the world today. It is tough to believe and we can relate to Thomas, can't we? Where was Thomas? Have you ever wondered, where was Thomas? He had to get away and had this fear, and he misses seeing Jesus the first time. He says, "I am not going to believe unless I can touch the wounds." It is a shame we call him "doubting Thomas" because it wasn't the end of the story. Jesus appears again and he let's Thomas do what he requested. "Put your hand is my nail marks, and in my side. Do not persist in your unbelief, but believe." What does Thomas do? He touches the wounds, and makes the greatest act of faith ever made in saying, "My Lord, and My God."

When I was a little boy I was told that every time the priest holds up the host and the chalice to say, "My Lord, and My God." I still do that today as I hold up the host and the chalice. Jesus promises us, "Blessed are those who have not seen, but still believe." What a gift to know that we can trust in faith in Jesus. This is the Sunday of great mercy. John Paul II, when he died, he died on Saturday April 9, on the eve of Divine Mercy Sunday. That wasn't a coincidence, I am sure. He was received in the arms of his merciful Savior on the feast day that he gave to the Universal Church. Today we have him, John Paul II, as a Saint to pray to in Heaven. Let's pray to receive the mercy of Jesus, and let's pray to show the mercy of Jesus to others.

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