



### **REFLECTION**

The Gospels tell us about three occasions when Jesus called people back from the dead and restored them to their family and friends. He did this for the daughter of Jairus at Capernaum, for the widow's son at Naim, and for His friends Lazarus at Bethany.

Can you imagine the change of emotions that accompanied these miracles? The bystanders watch as Jesus goes into the room where the 12 year old girl's body lay in death. They see Him invite the parents and three apostles to join Him. From outside they hear the screams of ecstasy as that mother and father see their little girl sit up and hold out her arms to them. Can you imagine the scene at Naim where a funeral procession ceased to be a funeral procession – where the man who had been dead walked down the road and back to his own home with his widowed mother and their neighbors? The meal that was to be eaten in sorrow after a sad burial become the food for a wonderful home-coming celebration. Can you imagine the scene at Bethany when Lazarus who had spent three night as one of the dead in the cemetery walked again and talked and entered through his own front door to sleep in his own bed? In each

case to return to normal; but could anything really be “normal” after this type of experience for anyone who had been there?

These Gospel scenes can be tantalizing. We have all sat in a room at hospital or at home and looked at the lifeless corpse of someone we loved. No miracle worker, followed by a group of disciples, entered to take them by the hand and to restore life to their lifeless limbs. We have all followed the funerals of family and friends from the funeral home, to the church and from there to the graveyard. And there was no wonder worker to stop the hearse and send us home rejoicing. We have all gone into the cemetery four days later, four months later, four years later and there has only been silence.

In the three Gospel stories that I have refereed to, Jesus got three dead people breathing and moving again. The theologians say that ‘He revived them’. He put an end to the tears, the sorrow and the mourning but He only did to for a time. It was to be a temporary measure. All three had to face death again. The daughter of Jairus may have got several more decades but she died again and she is buried probably in Capernaum. The widow’s son of Naim will have been carried out for burial again some years later. Likewise, Lazarus did again. The place that is thought to be his burial place is in Bethany and is a popular place of pilgrimage.

There is one other miracle in the New Testament where death gives way to life – the miracle of Easter - the event that we celebrate today, which serves as a foundation of our Faith – and this is the greatest of all miracles. What happened on Easter Sunday morning when the Father called Jesus out of the tomb was something far gr eater than happened in the revivification miracles. On Easter Sunday morning Jesus was not called back to a further period of earthly existence. He was called forward to take His place beside the Father. His risen body was very different to the revived corpses. The risen Lord could suddenly appear and disappear. He could enter a room where the doors and windows had been shut without opening them. His glorified body escaped from death leaving the grave cloths behind unlike the revived body of Lazarus that had to be freed by others from its grave cloths.

Since that first Easter Sunday, Jesus stands not in this world calling the dead back for a temporary reprieve; He stands on the other side calling our dead forward to share eternal life. Hope that our dead live on with God can be a great help in time of bereavement but it does not remove all the pain. There is still the reality of the separation that exists between heaven and earth, between the living and the dead. We do not see their faces. We do not hear their voices. We cannot reach out and touch them. Heaven is not within the visible commuter belt of earth. Yet we can keep in contact by continuing to love them, to pray for them and especially by holding on to the hope of seeing them again. That hope is grounded in the resurrection, in the historical discovery of an empty tomb and in the appearances of the risen Lord to chosen witnesses who lived at a particular time in history. That Christian hope, firmly grounded in the past, has within it a wonderful future dimension. It looks forward to a time when we will again see those who have gone on ahead of us. It believes there will be a time when we will again experience their company and their love.

We al the Easter people; we are the Community of the Resurrection: as we celebrate this great Feast let Alleluia be our song.

## LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Christ is risen! He is truly risen!** With those words of the ancient Easter greeting we began and ended this year's Easter Masses. Rather odd celebrations with an empty church building and pared back liturgies, while woven through it all has been the awareness that we are celebrating as a community divided by distances and united in faith and prayer. But, despite the strategic distancing and wearing of face masks, the struggles getting the technology to work properly still the critical element, the central truth remains clear; that is the great event of the Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We have completed our forty days of Lent in preparation of the celebration of the Paschal Mystery, progressed through the three days of the Triduum, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday to Easter itself. Here we are at the peak of the Christian church year – Holy Week, Easter, the Octave of Easter and on into the Easter Season itself. The events at the heart of this time, the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are at the center of the saving faith and demonstrate the fullness of God's saving love. A transforming love and mercy that offer us the gift of New Life. All of Holy Week and the triduum, indeed all of Jesus' life points to His Resurrection from the dead! Not to His cross or to the empty tomb but to life. This time of the year is an opportunity to reflect on the fact that through all that was endured, the Risen and Transformed Christ wants to give us His eternal life today. Easter is the passage from death into new life.

With the renewal of our Baptismal vows we have been invited to enter more fully into the life of grace that has been given to us through the reception of that sacrament. As St. Paul reminds us, "We were indeed buried with Him through Baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with Him through a death like His, we shall also be united with Him in the resurrection". (Ro. 6:4-5)

For the 50 days leading up to the celebration of Pentecost the Church celebrates the Easter event and we are asked to renew our efforts to live the life Jesus has won for us through His Suffering and Death on the Cross. Jesus asks us to allow Him to live in us and, through our participation in His resurrected life to build up His Kingdom in our world today.

The joy that we celebrate in the resurrection of Jesus challenges us to actively incorporate it in our own lives, allowing it to be ever more evident in the way we practice our faith not just during this Easter season but throughout the intervening days that carry us on to the next Easter, whether we are speaking of Easter 2021 or the mini-Easters that are celebrated each Sunday that we gather together to enter into the Eucharist as a the faith community of St. Stephen, Martyr. May we be motivated to follow the Lord more closely by the joy of knowing that our eternal destiny has been secured by Christ. May we not be afraid to give a defense to those who ask about the joy we have in knowing Jesus and allow that joy to permeate our daily activities. It is critical at this time that the world be made aware of the face of Jesus in our

communal and individual lives. It is, after all as we have celebrated, the risen and transformed Lord who desires to be present to this broken and bruised world through ourselves. The Christian life that we share gives witness that Christ is alive and at work in the world today. By living the Gospel values that the Lord teaches and by allowing His love to permeate all our actions, that we can join our voices with those of that hand full of disciples in Jerusalem who came to be able to acclaim. "The Lord is risen! He is truly risen!"

Before closing this letter; I would like to take another opportunity to thank you for your financial support during this time of closures, space limitations, etc. Your continues support, really in so many ways enables us to continue to try and serve your needs. With my deepest appreciation, Thank You and may you and your families have a blessed, peace filled and satisfying Easter Season.

Your's in the Trinity

Fr. Brian

## **OCTAVE OF EASTER**

*Each year during the Christmas and Easter seasons we hear references to "Octave Days." We know, of course, that the term octave means "eight," but just what exactly are Octave Days, and why are they part of the Church's liturgical calendar?*

The Church long ago realized that we need more than just a day to contemplate the sublime mysteries celebrated in the chief feasts of our faith, mysteries such as the Virgin Birth and the empty tomb. We must have time to reflect on and experience in our hearts what God is revealing on these holy days.

As a result, centuries ago the Church began the custom of prolonging the celebration of certain major feasts, including Easter and Christmas, across eight days. The feast day itself is the first day of the octave, and the eighth day is called the Octave Day. The term octave can thus refer both to the eighth day alone and to the entire period of eight days taken as a whole.

The first seven days of the Easter Octave include no other commemorations or feast days; all our attention is focused on the resurrected Lord. In fact, each of the days within the Octave of Easter is itself a solemnity, a "mini-Easter."

During the Octave Days of Easter the Mass readings tell us the beautiful Resurrection story so that we can take time to ponder the reality that Calvary was not the end. Each of us can relate to the sadness, confusion and then elation of the disciples on the Emmaus road. Like Mary Magdalene we can encounter the risen Lord in the garden. In our hearts we can race with Peter and John to see the empty tomb.

The eighth and last day of the Octave of Easter was for centuries called "Low Sunday" to contrast it with the awesomeness of Easter Sunday. In April 2000, however, Pope John Paul II designated Low Sunday as Divine Mercy Sunday, in response to the private revelations received by St. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938).

Though we no longer celebrate the many octaves once observed throughout the Church, the remaining octaves of Christmas and Easter provide us an unparalleled opportunity for

celebration and reflection. By extending over eight days the observance of these two sacred solemnities, the Church calls us to enter more deeply into the two great mysteries that stand at the beginning and end of Our Lord's earthly life.

We celebrate the eight days of Easter this week. We keep celebrating so that we might continue to enter into the meaning of the resurrection. In the early Church, the newly baptized would be at each liturgy this week, wearing their white garments. We go through our everyday lives this week conscious of the "white garments" we all wear. We are renewed as a priestly people, committed with Jesus to give our lives for others.

The resurrection stories, which we read this week, come from communities that are proclaiming the good news. The tomb is empty – Jesus' tomb and every tomb that tries to claim us in death. These are not believers who, in their deep desire just made up the resurrection. These are people who can hardly believe what they are seeing and experiencing. They, like us now, had trouble recognizing His presence with them.

We let the prayers of this Easter week draw us into the joy. Jesus is with us. He is not dead, but alive. And, that makes all the difference in the world in how much hope and courage we have, before any struggle, any possible fear of death.

## **EASTER PRAYER**

### **Draw Us Forth**

Draw us forth, God of all creation.

Draw us forward and away from limited certainty  
into the immense world of your love.

Give us the capacity to even for a moment  
taste the richness of the feast you give us.

Give us the peace to live with uncertainty,  
with questions,  
with doubts.

Help us to experience the resurrection anew  
with open wonder and an increasing ability  
to see you in the people of Easter.

*- Author Unknown*

**SCHEDULE**  
**OCTAVE OF EASTER**

**Tuesday – Saturday 13-18 April**

**Weekday Mass 8:30 a.m. (Private) Live-streamed**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Easter Divine Mercy Sunday 19 April**

**Mass 8:30 a.m. (Private) Live-streamed**

**Divine Mercy Devotion 3:00 p.m. (Private) Live-streamed**



### SUNDAY REFLECTION

From Easter to Pentecost we celebrate the presence of the risen Christ in the early Church. In our Sunday liturgy during this time, the first reading is always from the Acts of the Apostles where we see the Spirit at work, and the second from 1 Peter, as it was thought that this Letter was connected to teaching about Baptism. Although today scholars are doubtful about this, 1 Peter does call on Christians to recognize their dignity as *“a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart”*.

The book of Acts forms a bridge between the gospels and the epistles, providing the only narrative we have of the steps by which the Christian message moved from the rural world of Jesus and Palestinian Judaism to the largely urban world of Paul – and later to the Greek cities of the Roman empire. Our reading today from Acts demonstrates distinctive “marks” of the early Church that should continue to define the Church through the centuries, down to our own day: it is a community (*“ekklesia”*), called forth by the Spirit, whose characteristics are communion/fellowship (*“koinonia”*), devotion to *“the teaching of the apostles”* (*“didache”*), to *“the breaking of bread, and to the prayers”*. As we reflect on the nature of the Church today, this reading helps us understand what it should be: a communion of friends, gathered in fidelity to the apostolic teaching and the breaking of bread and care for those in need. As a local

community of believers, we are called to be creative as we find ways of making this a concrete reality.

The author of 1 Peter is intent on encouraging the community of believers to stand firm, *“even though you may for a short time have to bear being plagued by all sorts of trials”*. They must look beyond present sufferings and difficulties, *“so that, when Jesus Christ is revealed, your faith will have been tested and proved like gold”*. Likewise, the psalmist in Psalm 117 who has also been in grave difficulties, expresses his joy at having been delivered from his enemies by God: *“The Lord is at my side; I do not fear.”* Entering the temple gates and now standing within the courts of the splendid building, he compares himself in his former abject state to a stone at first considered unfit by the builders but then made the chief cornerstone of a grand edifice. It is understandable how this psalm came to be regarded as messianic by the early Christians and is quoted often in the New Testament.

There are three particular motifs in Jesus’ appearance to Thomas in our Gospel reading from John: the greeting of peace, which is the risen Christ’s gift, casting out fear; the presence of the Holy Spirit, shown in the power to forgive sin; and the need for a faith that grows even without the tangible presence of Christ. We should draw great courage from Christ’s final beatitude: *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”* There are several echoes in this passage to John’s Last Supper Discourse. Christ’s gift of peace here is the fulfilment of his promise at the Last Supper: *“Peace’ is my farewell to you. My ‘peace’ is my gift to you, and I do not give it to you as the world gives it.”* This peace is related to his promise that he would return to them, for in the Holy Spirit they have the enduring presence of Jesus. Likewise, their joy is the fulfilment of Jesus’ promise at the Last Supper: *“You are sad now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will rejoice with a joy that no one can take from you”*. In Jewish thought, peace and joy are marks of the period at the end of time when God will bring about harmony in human life and in the world. Based on this gift of peace, Jesus gives the missionary command to the apostles: *“As the Father has sent me, so do I send you”* - the paradigm of their mission is to be Jesus’ relation to his Father, recalling his words at the Last Supper, *“As you sent me into the world, so I send them into the world.”* A high calling indeed, but one rooted in and sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ’s enduring gift to us.

**STEWARDSHIP:** The Christian community described in Acts understood and practiced *total* stewardship. St. Paul reports that the believers did not claim anything as their own, but held everything in common, and distributed to each whatever was needed.

## **READINGS FOR SECOND SUNDAY**

**Acts 2:43-47:** All the followers of Jesus, not just the apostles, were so enthusiastic about this “new way” of life that they lived in communities in order to share everything, both material and spiritual. This way, they could help in nourishing and sharing their newly found spiritual life in Christ with each other. Because of this joy, many others came to believe and “the Lord added to their number.”

**1 Pt. 1:3-9:** This portion of Peter's letter is a brief summary of the Christian life then and now. We should not think of Christ's Resurrection as something that happened 2000 plus years ago, but rather, as something that happens daily in every Mass— not just those we attend, but all Masses. They are the greatest prayers of Thanksgiving that one could offer for this sublime act of love.

**Jn. 20:19-31:** Place yourself into this scene: It is the night of the Resurrection and Jesus appears in all His divine Glory before the apostles. Can you image the joy after the shock subsides? They must have been bouncing all over the room. Then Thomas, who was not present at the first appearance of Jesus, throws cold water on that event by his refusing to believe that Christ was resurrected. It takes another appearance of Christ to convince Thomas who then utters that great phrase of humility, "My Lord and my God!"

## **CAN'T GO TO CONFESSION DURING COVID-19? CONSIDER AN 'ACT OF PERFECT CONTRITION'**

Country-wide lockdowns and stay-at-home orders mean that Catholics around the world are finding it difficult to seek God's forgiveness in the confessional.

So when Catholics can't seek God's mercy in confession, in the usual manner, the Church teaches that it is possible to repent in another way: through an "act of perfect contrition."

### **What is an act of perfect contrition?**

Fr. Pius Pietrzyk, OP, chair of pastoral studies at St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, California, in an interview told Catholic News Agency that "perfect contrition" is for one's sins based upon love for God, which includes the firm resolution not to commit them anymore.

When contrition arises from "a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called 'perfect,'" the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches.

The catechism explains that perfect contrition "remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible." The same requirement applies to those times in an extreme emergency when General Absolution" is offered. When the emergency situation has passed the faithful Catholic must take advantage of the Sacrament in the usual manner.

Imperfect contrition, also known as attrition – sorrow for one's sins based upon fear of the punishment of Hell – is sufficient for a priest to absolve you in the confessional, but not enough to obtain the forgiveness of mortal sin without sacramental confession to a priest, the catechism explains.

### **How is an act of perfect contrition done?**

Practically, there are two things a Catholic must do.

The first is to pray an act of contrition "out of love for God,"

Being sorry out of love for God has often been described as having a desire to be reunited to God because of who He is – because of God's perfect love for us, and because of sorrow for having offended God by sin. It means wanting to live in unity with God, and put aside the sins that stand in the way.

There is no set formula for making an act of contrition, but a common one reads as follows:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against You, whom I should love above all things.

I firmly intend, with Your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Amen

Second, a Catholic must make a firm commitment to go to confession when that becomes possible.

An act of perfect contrition is not a replacement for the sacrament of penance – far from it. “Even perfect contrition is never separated from the sacrament, at least in intention...if one makes a perfect act of contrition, it’s not ‘Oh, I don’t have to go to confession anymore.’ Quite the opposite,” Fr. Pietrzyk said.

“The person who says: ‘I have perfect contrition, but I’m not going to the sacrament’ does not in fact have perfect contrition,” he said.

The sacrament of penance remains the sole, ordinary means for the forgiveness of mortal sins after baptism, Fr. Pietrzyk said. Contrition is about conversion, he said, which means turning away from attachment to sin, and turning toward the sacraments.

## DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

### WHAT IS DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

In a series of revelations to St. Maria Faustina Kowalska in the 1930s, our Lord called for a special feast day to be celebrated on the Sunday after Easter. Today, we know that feast as Divine Mercy Sunday, named by Pope St. John Paul II at the canonization of St. Faustina on April 30, 2000.

The Lord expressed His will with regard to this feast in His very first revelation to St. Faustina. The most comprehensive revelation can be found in her *Diary* entry 699:

**My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and a shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day are opened all the divine floodgates through which graces flow. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity. Everything that exists has come from the very depths of My most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My mercy.**

In all, St. Faustina recorded 14 revelations from Jesus concerning His desire for this feast.

Nevertheless, Divine Mercy Sunday is NOT a feast based solely on St. Faustina's revelations. Indeed, it is not primarily about St. Faustina — nor is it altogether a new feast. The Second

Sunday of Easter was already a solemnity as the Octave Day of Easter. The title "Divine Mercy Sunday" does, however, highlight the meaning of the day.

### **THEOLOGY OF THE FEAST OF THE DIVINE MERCY**

This is a relatively new feast on the Church's calendar only being established during the reign of Pope St. John Paul II. When established it caused a stir in the faith community with those strongly disapproving while others fully endorsed it,

Curious about its background, the theological underpinnings. then read on.

The establishment of the Feast of The Divine mercy on the Second Sunday of Easter fulfilled the purpose of the restoration of the greater prominence liturgical year, allowing "the faithful through their faith, hope and love to share more deeply in the whole mystery of Christ as it unfolds throughout the year" (*Moto Proprio* of Pope St. Paul VI, 1969, on the Liturgical Year and Roman Calendar, quoting Vatican II on the *Liturgy*, 102). It ensures even to the Paschal Mystery of Christ, so that the faithful more effectively "lays

Hold of the mysteries of Christ and are filled with His saving grace"

It achieves these purposes in a number of ways:

The Feast of mercy has its roots deeply planted in the Old and New Testament and in the early

Church Tradition.

It is a feast with three distinct dimensions each emphasizing an aspect of the Paschal Mystery that

needs to be brought out more clearly and appropriated by the faithful: merciful love, atonement,

and covenant.

#### **The Feast of Mercy is a Celebration and a Summation of God's Merciful Love**

The Triduum of Holy Week, along with the entire Easter Season, focuses on various aspects of the Paschal Mystery. Holy Thursday celebrates the Mass of the Chrism and the evening Mass of the Mandatum the washing of the feet of the disciples, ordination to the priesthood, the institution of the Eucharist, and the last discourse of Our Lord promising the sending of the Holy Spirit. Good Friday commemorates the passion and death of Jesus on the cross. The Easter Vigil, the pinnacle of the Paschal Mystery, celebrates the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Redeemer who is our light and salvation, bringing us new life by water and the Holy Spirit. The Easter Season continues this celebration, leading to the Ascension of the Lord and to Pentecost – the fulfillment of the promise to send the Holy Spirit.

The Feast of Mercy focuses on God's mercy as an event! It focuses on God's continuing action of mercy throughout salvation history as we see it recorded in the letter to the Romans, chapters 9, 10, 11 culminating in His loving plan to have mercy on all! (Rom. 11:32). This Feast is a summation of the event to His mercy active in our lives now. It is because of His mercy that we have forgiveness of sin and new life as children of God. This needs to be celebrated!

#### **The Feast of Mercy is a Day of Atonement**

The Feast of Mercy is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Day of Atonement (Lv. 16, Lv. 23:26-32, Sir. 50). It is a day of forgiveness of sins for those who approach the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is an annual celebration like the Day of Atonement – all sins and

punishment are washed away in His infinite mercy. The focus of this paschal event is on God's mercy for us sinners and His free gift to those who turn to Him with trust.

Interestingly enough, the texts of the liturgy for that Sunday (Second Sunday of Easter) already focus on the forgiveness of sins and mercy. The gospel is of Jesus appearing in the upper room and bestowing the authority to forgive sins (Jn. 20:19-51), and the other readings are about the blood and water and the proclamation of mercy.

Our Easter liturgy had fulfilled the major feasts of the Old Testament –Passover and Pentecost – and was only missing the Day of Atonement. This Feast of Mercy now completes the needed fulfillment of Old Testament feasts.

### **The Feast of Mercy is the Covenant of Mercy**

The octave day has its roots in the Old Testament and New Testament as the Day of Covenant.

On the eighth day after His birth, a male child was circumcised as a sign of the covenant and given His name (Gen. 17:12-14; see also Lk. 2:21 for the circumcision of Jesus).

In the early church the newly baptized, newly born in Christ, wore white robes until the Sunday in White (Dominica Albis) the octave of Easter, symbolizing their innocence. The Feast of Mercy once again celebrates the white innocence we receive by the Covenant of Mercy.

St. Augustine calls these days “days of mercy and pardon” and the Sunday “the compendium of the days of mercy.” And then, referring to the setting aside of the white robes, he warns, “Let not our interior purity be lessened as we set aside its exterior symbols.” #156, Dominica in Albis).

Like the covenant of Sinai we, too, prepare for the Feast by purification from our sins and by the sprinkling of blood and proclaiming of the law (Ex. 19:14-15; Ex. 24:6-8) – but this time we are cleansed by the precious blood of the Lord and the Proclamation of His mercy.

On the octave day of Easter we, too, ratify the Covenant of Mercy, reaffirming not only our Baptism, already renewed at the Easter Vigil, but also the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist.

Interestingly enough, all the elements of creation are structured in units of eight (as seen in the periodic table), and musical chords resonate with the octave.

The Feast of Mercy is the octave day of the Resurrection, which strikes the resonant chord of Easter, developing the meaning and richness of the paschal mystery and applying it in a new and deeper way. It resonates with all of nature, sounding anew the grace of the resurrection, alleluia!

### **The Feast of Mercy – the Desire of the Lord**

As we have seen, the reasons for establishing the Feast of Mercy are strong and clear in themselves. The Feast is rooted in the Old Testament, and an earlier form of the Feast was celebrated from the fourth century as Dominica in Albis. But, in our times, there is an additional reason that makes the need for the Feast of Mercy ever more urgent, and that strengthens the meaning and effectiveness of such a feast for the faithful. In a series of reported revelations to St. Faustina Kowalska, Our Lord specifically and repeatedly asked that the Feast of Mercy be established on the octave day of Easter.

One day, as St. Faustina was offering all her prayers and sufferings so that this feast would be established, as Our Lord desired, she said to Him: “They tell me that there is already such a feast and so why should I talk about it?” Jesus answered: “And who knows anything about this feast? No one! Even those who should be proclaiming My mercy and teaching people about it

often do not know about it themselves. That is why I want the image to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter, and I want it to be venerated publicly so that every soul may know about it." (Diary 341)

The idea of this special celebration of God's mercy on the Sunday after Easter is not a new or radical idea stemming simply from private revelation. Our Lord, through St. Faustina, is simply reemphasizing what was strongly urged by St. Thomas the Apostle in the earliest liturgical document in existence, the "Apostolic Constitutions." There we read: "After eight days (following the feast of Easter) let there be another feast observed with honor, the eighth day itself on which He gave me, Thomas, who was hard of belief, full assurance, by showing me the print of the nails, and the wound made in His side by the spear."

This feast had been celebrated in the early Church.

One of the greatest Doctors of the Church, St. Gregory of Nazianzen, also supports this Feast, declaring that the Octave day of Easter is even a greater Feast than Easter though it takes nothing whatever away from the greatness of the Day of the Resurrection itself. Easter Sunday is the boundary between death and life (a creation). But its eighth day, the Octave, is the fulfillment of what Easter is all about – perfect life in eternity (a second creation, more admirable and more sublime than the first).

Easter Sunday represents our creation in the life of Grace through faith in the Risen Savior. The Octave Sunday of Easter represents the fulfillment of that "creation in grace." Thus it is, as St. Augustine says, "The most privileged octave-day" and certainly merits the title "Feast of The Divine Mercy."

The "most privileged octave-day" did not even appear under that title in the revised Roman Missal – it was called that only in the "Ordo" – the book that regulates the celebration of the liturgy. Our Lord surely knew what He was saying to St. Faustina: "And who knows anything about this feast? No one! Even those who should be proclaiming My mercy and teaching people about it often do not know about it themselves." (Diary 341)

We now have the key to understanding the Image of The Divine Mercy with its rays signifying the Blood and Water that flowed from Christ's pierced side with the inscription (Jesus, I Trust in You), and to Our Lord's insistence that this image be specially venerated on the first Sunday after Easter, which is to be celebrated as the FEAST OF MERCY (Divine Mercy Sunday).

We can also see these rays as simultaneously symbolizing the Holy Spirit, whom Christ breathed into the Disciples during the same Octave-day appearance. On the strength of that Holy Breath all sins are forgiven and "at-ONE-ment" with the Father is accomplished. Here, God in Christ is reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:18). And here the Church, the newly-born Body of Christ, is commissioned to be the instrument of reconciliation down through the ages.

This is Christ's GREAT PROMISE of complete pardon of sin and punishment on the Feast of Mercy through the reception of the Sacraments (which is a participation of Christ's death to sin and rising to divine life).

### **All the elements of the message and devotion to The Divine Mercy focus on the Feast of Mercy**

In preparing for the Feast of Mercy we are to make a novena of Chaplets to the Divine Mercy (beginning on Good Friday), and to be purified by the sacrament of Reconciliation. Priests are to proclaim the mercy of God. The Image of Jesus, the Merciful Savior, is to be blessed and

venerated as a reminder to trust in Jesus and do works of mercy. And we are to renew, ratify and seal the covenant of mercy by receiving Holy Communion.

The day of the Feast is celebrated by using the normal liturgy for that day (Second Sunday of Easter), as per decree dated May 5, 2000 for Divine Mercy Sunday, which are all focused on mercy, and a homily on god's mercy. Our Lord is asking for a Feast of His mercy to bring attention to the outpouring of the ocean of graces, and to His promise of the complete forgiveness of sins and punishment, to the souls that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion.

**The desired fulfillment: a deeper sharing**

Those who have been celebrating the octave of Easter I this way, as the Feast of Mercy, have experienced the desired effect of the Second Vatican Council for the liturgical year renewal – a deeper share in the mystery of Christ.

## **PRAYERS**

### **Three O'clock Divine Mercy Prayer**

You expired, O Jesus,  
but the source of life gushed forth for souls  
and an ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world.  
O Fount of Life,  
unfathomable Divine Mercy,  
envelop the whole world  
and empty Yourself out upon us.  
O Blood and Water,  
which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus  
as a fount of mercy for us,  
I trust in You.  
Amen.

## **SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK OF 19 – 25 APRIL 2020**

**19 Apr Second Sunday of Easter Divine Mercy Sunday**

**Mass (private) 8:30 a.m. Live-streamed**

**Divine Mercy veneration & Benediction**

**3:00 p.m. Live-streamed**

**20 -25 Apr Monday – Saturday**

**Mass (private) 8:30 a.m. Live-streamed**

**22 Apr Wednesday**

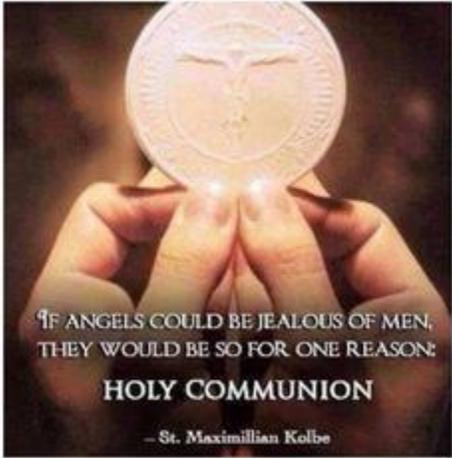
**Stations of Light (Stations of the Resurrection)**

**7:00 p.m. Live-Streamed**

**24 Apr Friday**

**Benediction Vigil of St. Mark's Feast Day**

7:00 p.m. Live-Streamed



'Inspect every piece of pseudoscience and you will find a security blanket, a thumb to suck, a skirt to hold. What does the scientist have to offer in exchange? Uncertainty! Insecurity!' ~ Isaac Asimov (1920 - 1992) .

