

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER [DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY]

THEME: GOD'S MERCY IS AS ABUNDANT AS THE OCEAN

Today we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. The mercy of God is to be proclaimed, acknowledged, embraced, celebrated and shared with joy and gratitude. What else is Easter about if not our restoration in Christ through God's mercy?

Easter is the victory celebration of the mercy of God. It is our living hope. It puts an end to our fears, timidity, guilt, and sense of hopelessness. It restores our dignity as sons and daughters of God. Our Gospel passage shows the initial wretched condition of the apostles: "the doors were locked, where the apostles were, for fear of the Jews". They lived in fears, anxiety, blame, guilt feelings, and unforgiveness. Jesus came, forgave, strengthened and reassured them: He "stood in their midst and said to them, 'peace be with you.'" He didn't even accuse them for their past failings.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we always remain precious in God's sight. However crumbled, broken and dirty we may be, our fundamental value in the eyes of God remains. He remains generous with his mercy, unless we reject it.

So, whatever is the situation of our lives, we should not despair. Rather, we should readily turn to God for his mercy. This is what the Divine Mercy devotion is all about. It will be good to point out here that having recourse to God's Divine mercy is not exclusive to our age. The people of the Old Testament period always turned to God for mercy as we can see from our Responsorial psalm. However, the New Testament period is unique; it is the fulfillment of God's mercy in the context of the Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. The "image in the Divine Mercy Picture", inspired through St. Faustina, is the Crucified and resurrected Christ. The rays represent blood and water from his pierced side, the fountain of rebirth and the cleansing from sin and guilt.

God's mercy is portrayed as abundant as the ocean. But we know it is trillion and trillion of times greater. It is infinite. See how Jesus exemplifies His Father's infinite mercy and compassion. To the apostles who denied him and fled during his trials, he not only forgave, but also gave them power to forgive sins: "Receive the Holy spirit. Those whose sins you forgive are forgiven, and those whose sin you retain are retained." What! Was that a reward for their unfaithfulness? Was that justice? What a lesson for us today!

St. Paul declares clearly, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2Cor. 5: 18). Yes! Always go to confession; be not deceived, that is the only profound way of claiming and appreciating God's Divine Mercy. The Sacrament of reconciliation is from God, not from Satan. How privileged Catholics are, as they only possess this legacy.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we are also called to be ambassadors and ministers of mercy. Many of us are easily entangled with false notions of justice today. Some people think they have right to be angry; to remain angry and unforgiving over past hurts. The most common words on their lips are, “justice must be served! Justice is served” But what justice are they speaking about? Is it not vengeance?

My brothers and sisters in Christ, have you been hurt by anyone? Turn it over to Jesus in the ocean of his mercy and you will find peace. Take a closer look at the crucifix: Has anyone been more terribly hurt than Jesus in all history? Yet, he was able to say, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing”. He invites you now to do the same.

As we go on with the celebration of Christ’ Resurrection, may God’s mercy suffice for us through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**