

## Divine Mercy Sunday

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those parishioners who so generously and lovingly gave of their time and talent to beautify our church for the Sacred Triduum and Easter celebrations. I received many compliments from parishioners and visitors who expressed appreciation that such love and time would be expended to celebrate the holiest time in the Christian world.

Today the Church celebrates Divine Mercy Sunday. This day dedicated to the Divine Mercy was first promulgated by St. Pope John Paul II in the year 2000 following the canonization of St. Faustina Kowalska, a Polish Sister who was a member of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, and for whom the late Holy Father had a great devotion. A mystic, St. Faustina had visions of Our Lord who appeared to her as the “King of Divine Mercy.” At some point her spiritual director suggested she put into writing the conversations she had with Jesus during her apparitions. This became her book, Divine Mercy in My Soul. Many people practice the spiritual exercise of the Divine Mercy Chaplet. After a two-year illness, St. Faustina died in Krakow, Poland at the age of thirty-three. Her feast day is October 5<sup>th</sup> and she is the Patron Saint of Mercy. Her motto is: “Jesus, I trust in you!”

It is fitting that we celebrate God’s mercy in light of today’s readings. In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, a chronicle of the early Church, we see the disciples performing works of mercy for the sick and the dispossessed. The “signs and wonders,” the various acts of ministry performed by Peter and the disciples, reflected the spirit they had received as companions of Jesus. They were emboldened, despite their previous fragility, by their memory of Jesus commissioning them to continue his ministry to the sick, the poor and downcast. This ministry was the seed that was planted, and which helped to nurture and grow the Church. People came to believe ever more ardently in the Lord because they saw in a tangible and concrete way the healing that was taking place in their midst.

Mercy is also the foundational message in John’s Gospel proclaimed today. We find the disciples in the upper room, afraid and sensing danger that the Jewish authorities would hunt them down and persecute them. Despite all the betrayal and cowardice the disciples exhibited during Jesus’s passion, he comes to them in their suffering and re-assures them. Not once but three times he says to them, “Peace be with you!” Jesus does not come to punish or rebuke them. He comes to offer them hope and solidarity. They rejoiced when they realized the Lord was in their midst; yet, Jesus gave his disciples a task. “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” Jesus calls on his disciples to forgive others as they have been forgiven.

As we continue to celebrate this Easter Season, let us grow in faith, hope, and love. May we be steadfast in our faith and not grow weary in the midst of life’s difficulties and challenges. If there is someone we need to forgive or if we need forgiveness, let us not be afraid to make that happen. This will lighten our burden and bring a spirit of joy we celebrate this season!