

Divine Mercy Sunday – Agents of Mercy

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Today the Church celebrates **Divine Mercy Sunday**! It is the conclusion of the Easter Octave and a great devotion for the Church as a whole. You might find yourself in one of the following three categories, *you might have a great devotion to Divine Mercy, or you might have heard of it, are aware of Divine Mercy but wonder what's the big deal or you might be unaware, haven't heard of Divine Mercy and wonder what is it?*

What is it? Divine Mercy has always been with us, from the beginning Divine Mercy has been present because God is Divine Mercy, but the devotion which is what most associate with Divine Mercy was revealed to Saint Faustina in the late 1930s. What the devotion states is that if we are in a state of grace, repent of our sins and receive communion, we receive complete forgiveness of our sins and are released from their punishments. It is a clean slate, a completely new start.

So, what's the big deal? In the Old Testament, the people of Israel had a huge celebration called "The Jubilee Year", it took place every 49 years, so the 50th year was the year of the Jubilee. In the year of the Jubilee, debts were forgiven, slaves were freed, property was returned to owners, it **was a year of liberation and consolation**. The year of the Jubilee was a year of great celebration and anticipation because it represented forgiveness and freedom, but it only took place every 50 years, and its immediate impact was temporal or physical. Now think about Divine Mercy Sunday, which takes place every year, equally provides liberation and consolation but not in a temporal way rather in an eternal way. The implications or impact that Divine Mercy Sunday can have on your life can be eternal, that is why it is a big deal.

Now if you are in the category of those who have a great devotion to Divine Mercy, follow all the prescriptions, pray the chaplet, accept and seek mercy, our Lord has a challenge for you... Mercy can be define or described in many ways, **being empathetic, compassionate, forgiving** are all ways to describe mercy, but I would argue that they fall short of Divine Mercy. Divine Mercy is a mystery, a mystery not because it is scary but because it comes from God. Since God is infinite and we are finite, we will not get to grasp or comprehend it completely hence we call it a mystery. One way that I heard mercy described and resonates with me is from its Latin roots. Mercy in Latin is **misericordia**, which comprises two words, misery (miseri) and from the heart (cordia), so misericordia is really **misery from the heart**. In other words, it is to feel the misery of others in your heart, **it is when your heart is burning to enter and partake in someone else's misery**.

Jesus did that, he entered our misery, he became one of us, to partake of our misery, to carry the burden of our misery, to alleviate our misery, our sufferings, when it was not his misery, when it wasn't his suffering. Mercy is not simply forgiving, it is entering into the misery of the other but entering their misery with a purpose, **a purpose of aiding, helping, alleviating... loving.** A term that is becoming more and more popular is mercy killing, but that is completely different than Divine Mercy. Mercy killing is me eliminating someone so that they do not suffer, it is removing the person to remove the suffering. Divine Mercy is the opposite, it is entering into the suffering with the person, it is not removing the person so that "I" don't see them suffering, but it is me suffering with them, alleviating their suffering even if it means that the sufferings fall on me. Jesus took on our sins and our misery not to eliminate us but to give us life.

The second reading today from the first letter of Peter best describes this divine mercy when it tells us that Jesus great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope, from the dead he gave us life. Divine Mercy is an endless ocean of God's love, **but we need to accept it.** If we accept this mercy, the psalm tells us that "His mercy endures forever" **why? Because God is mercy.** One way in which we accept his mercy is by partaking of the mass. At the mass, we allow his mercy to cover us, to take our suffering, to take our misery, to take our sin and to leave it at the cross. The mass is the perfect sacrifice, it is our LORD showing us how much he loves us, how much mercy he has for us. The effect of this mercy is an indescribable peace. "Jesus said to St. Faustina one day: "Humanity will never find peace until it turns with trust to Divine Mercy"." **His mercy gives us peace.**

In the gospel Jesus stood in the midst of the disciples, disciples who were behind locked doors, they were afraid, they were in misery. Jesus stood in their midst, he entered their misery, he showed mercy, and he gave them peace. He shared his peace in the passage not once but twice, **why? Because** when you enter in the misery of someone the result for them is "peace". Not only is Jesus giving the disciples peace, but he is empowering them to go out and share the same peace with others. In other words, he is asking them to have mercy, to have misericordia, to enter in other's misery, alleviate the misery and grant them peace. This mercy is not just compassion, it is not just empathy or forgiveness, it is divine because it comes from God, it is God's grace that allows us to have mercy and requires us to act on it.

Our challenge this divine mercy Sunday is not to be spectators, it is to truly participate in the sacrifice of the mass, to allow Jesus to enter into our misery, to take our sins away and grant us peace... only so that in turn as the Father sent him... he is sending us to share that peace and to become **agents of peace... agents of mercy... Are you up to the challenge?**