

This Sunday is a **busy** day. It is not only the Second Sunday of Easter but ... it is **also** ... most appropriately ... the Feast of Divine Mercy ... and Jesus' Divine Mercy is what stands out in today's Gospel. Jesus confronts fear and anxiety with divine love and mercy. He turns the disciples' fear into joy and hope. And just as the Father breathed life into man in the beginning the Son ... breathed into His disciples ... the new life of the Holy Spirit.

He had already given us the priesthood ... and through that priesthood ... Eucharist ... at the last supper: "Do this in memory of me." We hear now ... how in His great love and in His Divine Mercy ... through the commissioning of His Apostles ... He gave us that most precious gift of His Divine Mercy: the forgiveness of sins.

He bestows on us this very powerful gift ... and He tells us in detail just how forgiveness is to be granted ... thru His apostles ... thru their successors: "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." What a great gift of Divine Mercy! Yet some ask, "Why ... must we confess our sins to a priest? Can't we just talk to God. And of course we can ... but the answer is found in the words of Jesus Himself as He commissioned his apostles to forgive sins. He did not qualify this commission by saying: "Receive the Holy Spirit ... except those of you who doubted or except those of you who have sinned." Our God even allows his very human priests to forgive our sins in **His** name ... even though they too, like all of us are sinners. Keep His peace in your heart. We make use of this sacrament ... this gift ... to heal us and bring us to share in Jesus' Divine mercy.

On April 30, 2000, Pope John Paul II proclaimed the feast of Divine Mercy Sunday. During the dark days of the German occupation of Poland, a young Karol Wojtyla relied on that Divine Mercy as he faced

daily the terror of the Nazis. “The Message of Divine Mercy,” he would later explain, “has always been dear to me. It had sustained him through the tragic experiences of the Second World War.” So this Sunday we remember **the** martyrs and heroes of the holocaust ... of mercy **abandoned** ... an era of cruelty, hatred, vengeance ... and genocide. And long before Pope John XXIII initiated the historic Second Vatican Council ... as Papal Nuncio during the Second World War ... then **Archbishop Angelo Roncalli** ... through **overt** intervention ... and perilous **covert** activity ... including providing false baptismal certificates ... to Jewish refugees ... saved thousands ... from the Nazis. Nine years ago ... Pope Francis ... in choosing Divine Mercy Sunday for canonizing both **Saint John Paul II** and **Saint John XXIII** stated that it signified that a new “**Age of Mercy**” is needed ... in the Church ... and in the world. What better intercessors for mercy than these two saints ... whose lives **mirrored** Divine Mercy?

It is good ... that we are reminded ... from time to time ... what life **without** mercy was like ... that we might renew **our** resolve to **live** Christ’s teaching of mercy. So as we glory in Christ’s resurrection ... as we celebrate His Divine Mercy ... as we solemnly recall a time and place where there was no mercy ... let us now take stock of our **own** lives. Do we show mercy to those who have wronged us or ... do we harbor and nurture grudges? Do we show mercy to those we meet ... those who need our help ... or are they merely an annoyance ... to be grudgingly tolerated or ... **ignored**? Do we show mercy by supporting our parish relief efforts ... helping to meet the needs of the poor through Morning Glory Ministries?

... Our Lord spoke of this Divine Mercy ... when He said “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” ... outlining what He expected from those who would follow Him. That mercy He shows us ... He expects **us** to show others!
