

Christ is risen - Alleluia. I was planning to write about a Papal Encyclical helping us to understand the importance of living out our faith in all aspects of our lives. But because the audio was not working for the Mass streamed at 10:30am Sunday - my Divine Mercy Homily summary will take its place.

I focused on Sunday's Gospel: John 20:19-31.

Place yourself with the Apostles in the upper room. Consider the emotions present in these men's hearts. They are in the very place where Jesus gave them the Eucharist and ordained them priests. The place also where each of them promised to be faithful to Him even to death. An incredible sadness and shame perhaps now fills their hearts. They had neglected His gifts and failed Him.

Then on Easter Sunday, they heard about the empty tomb. Peter and John had run to it, returned, and reported it empty. It's not immediately obvious that this is good news for them. If Jesus is alive, how will He come to them? With forgiveness and mercy, or to judge and condemn them to shame?"

Thus, It is fitting the first words uttered by Jesus were: "Peace be with you." And it is fitting that the second Sunday of Easter, was decreed in 2000 by Pope John Paul as "Divine Mercy Sunday;" In the Gospel the Risen Jesus gives His Church the Sacrament of Penance/Confession, and then on the second visit He shows St. Thomas His scars and wounds.

Jesus desires to give us Mercy. As Jesus shared His wounds with St. Thomas: perhaps He says to us - Share with me your wounds and I will give you mercy.

Divine Mercy is God's refusal to leave us in our fallen condition: Jesus enters the "locked doors" of our hearts, banishing fear, sin and vice saying, "Peace be with you." "He showed them his hands and his side": Jesus shows us his wounds so that we will not be afraid to show him ours. Let us do so in our own evening Examination of Conscience, and in the Confessional, which leads to forgiveness, mercy, freedom and peace.

When we are in the upper room out of fear and shame / No matter our trials / Will we place our trust in Him by giving Him our wounds?

The message of Divine Mercy is: NOW IS THE TIME TO SEEK MERCY AND FORGIVENESS / IN THIS LIFE WE HAVE THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE MERCY OR TO REJECT MERCY / TO BE JUDGED AT OUR HOUR OF DEATH, OR TO RECEIVE HIS MERCY / JESUS DESIRES MERCY / WHAT WILL WE CHOOSE?

I then shared two stories:

A young man named Anthony walked into my office one day with a very heavy heart, and with many sins in his past. He wanted a future and thought the Catholic Church was his answer. After a few conversations he entered RCIA. A

few weeks later Anthony comes into the office (very animated and excited) asking if I knew about St. Faustina and the message of Divine Mercy. He said: "Father, we have to spread this message. It has given me hope, peace, and a future." I said to him: Father Pedro and I love, and do spread the message of our Lord's Mercy for those open to receive it." One of the promises of this message is "A Happy Death". Little did we know that months later Anthony was admitted to ICU and was close to death. I was called and had the honor to Baptize, Confirm, give First Communion (Viaticum) and the Prayers for the Dying (Last Rites). That evening Anthony received Divine Mercy, and certainly a Happy Death as he was given, and then was received into the Kingdom of our Lord. Prior to the hospital, I also remember that in preparation for the Sacraments at Easter - Anthony did experience the Mercy of Jesus in Confession.

My second story happened while I was in seminary. My family called and said: "mother is dying." I returned to her bedside with my sisters. As she was taking her last breaths, I was given the honor to be on my knees reciting the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, on my Rosary Beads, and finished right around her last breath, which sounded like a gasp. To this day I believe when my mother crossed the veil, the gasp was due to what she saw. As for the promise of the Chaplet, my mother, who has a heart for Jesus; saw Jesus standing between her and our Heavenly Father.

"When they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as a just Judge but as a merciful Savior."

DIARY, 1541

For Anthony and Helen Gournas: What a way to go!
Jesus, I trust in You!