

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today is **Divine Mercy Sunday**. Just a little background: in the 1930s, Jesus appeared to a Polish nun named Sr. Maria Faustina Kowalska. Her spiritual director told her to write down all that was happening in her soul. After she died, this was published as *Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul*. In 2000, Pope St. John Paul II canonized her – hence she is Saint Faustina. The primary message Jesus had for the world through St. Faustina was His infinite mercy for humanity. You may remember that the devotion to God’s Mercy can be remembered by the acronym **FINCH** – **Feast, Image, Novena, Chaplet, Hour**. This article will focus on the Feast of Divine Mercy.

Jesus asked that the Second Sunday of Easter (today) be celebrated as Divine Mercy Sunday. In 2000, St. John Paul, as he was canonizing St. Faustina, made this a universal feast for the Church. Jesus desires for us to celebrate His infinite mercy today. He wants this celebration so that everyone may come to know about and trust His infinite mercy. Jesus laments that too often we *run from God*, afraid that He will punish or chastise us. There are also times that we would rather seek our own pleasure than follow God. This is all because we do not trust His love enough, we don’t trust that He *really* loves us and wants our best. If we did, we would never put our will before His law, we would never say, “It is better to ask forgiveness than permission” (which, by the way, is the sin of presumption). Think about a little child who is playing with his ball in the street. His mother tells him not to play in the street – it is dangerous. All the child can see is that it is the easiest and largest place to play with his ball. He doesn’t see the danger could come when a car drives up the road. He thinks his mother is restricting him and doesn’t want him to have fun. So it is with us: we don’t see all of the implications of our choices, so God gives us the moral law (as revealed in the Bible, in the teachings of the Church, and the Natural Law). If we don’t trust God’s love, we think God is restricting us – keeping us from doing what we want to do. If we could see things from God’s perspective, we could see that when we reject His teaching, we are actually putting ourselves in danger and hurting our souls. The “restrictions” actually keep our souls safe, and so we are *really* able to enjoy the world.

So, the Feast of Mercy is about spreading trust in God, His love, and His mercy. But more than this, He wants to pour out His mercy in a special way on this holy day. In the *Diary*, Jesus says to St. Faustina:

**My daughter, tell the whole world about My Inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day all the divine floodgates through which grace flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. ... The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy.** (Paragraph 699, see also 300 and 1109)

Jesus makes it clear that He is pouring out His mercy in unprecedented ways on this holy day. And don’t we all need mercy?!!! I know I do! He says that if we go to Confession on Divine Mercy Sunday (or just beforehand, such that we are still in a state of grace) and receive Communion, we go back to our Baptismal innocence. Wow! No, I don’t think that quite did it... **WOW!!!** This is EVERYTHING! Just think – all the sins that we ever committed – gone! Maybe you’re full of shame over some sin (or habits of sin) you committed in youth; maybe you’re thinking about sins you still struggle with that you want no one to know – God says to come today and be set free! *Amazing!*

What’s the catch? The only catch is that we have to be sorry for our sins. No, really, that’s it. We don’t even have to have *perfect contrition* (sorrow because it hurts God; as opposed to *imperfect contrition* which is sorrow because of fear of punishment of hell or purgatory, or the shame that “I was not good enough, strong enough to do what was right”) ... we just have to be sorry, and with Confession and Communion, it’s all gone! Pope Francis makes the distinction between sinning over and over, and being sorry for it (and so able to receive mercy), and “corruption.” He says

**Corruption is the sin which, rather than being recognised as such and rendering us humble, is elevated to a system; it becomes a mental habit, a way of living. We no longer feel the need for forgiveness and mercy, but we justify ourselves and our behaviors. ... The repentant sinner, who sins again and again because of his weakness, will find forgiveness if he acknowledges his need for mercy. The corrupt man is the one who sins but does not repent.** (*The Name of God is Mercy*, p. 81)

Did you catch that? What keeps us from mercy is NOT sin, even sinning badly, many times over, but, rather, failure to repent, to be sorry for our sins. When we justify our sin, that is a rejection of mercy.

On this Divine Mercy Sunday, I invite you to enter into the Ocean of Mercy! Come to Confession and hear God’s words of love “I forgive you.” Let nothing hold you back from God’s mercy and love. If you have sins from your life that you feel are unforgiveable, bring them to the Lord – He WILL forgive *all!* Come to be washed clean, made new, like on the day of your Baptism!