

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

This weekend we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. This always falls on the Sunday after Easter. On this Feast, we remember in a special way God's *merciful love*. Isn't this what we all need?! Mercy! We fall so easily into our sins and failings. It is so easy to reject God, and choose to follow our own way, seek our own pleasure, become our own "god". How many times have people said to me that "God must be sick of me already," or "I'm tired of confessing the same sins over and over." We need to know that even after our greatest sin, in which we freely choose to reject God, we can run into our Father's loving arms, and not be chastised, but embraced! God *never* grows weary of loving and forgiving us.

This Feast is especially important because we often think of the Christian life in the wrong way. We think that if we are to get into Heaven, our good deeds must outweigh our bad or evil deeds. This is not the case at all. In fact, even if we did all of the good deeds of Mother Teresa, and only sinned once in the smallest way, our good deeds would never outweigh our sin – for sin is an offense against God. Rather, the route to Heaven is not through our deeds, but through the mercy of God, as we throw ourselves with confidence onto His mercy, and recognize how Christ has done it all! While we *need* our good deeds in order for us to grow in the spiritual life – and our sins really do separate us from God – it is reliance on God's mercy that does it all. St. Therese says that our good deeds actually condemn us if we *rely* on them!

So where did this Feast of Divine Mercy come from? In the 1930s, a Polish nun by the name of Sister Maria Faustina Kowalska (aka St. Faustina) had visions of Christ. In these visions, Jesus told her to work to establish a Feast of Divine Mercy.

“On that day [Divine Mercy Sunday, the Sunday after Easter Sunday] the very depths of My tender mercy are opened. 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 floodgates through which graces flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet.” (*Divine Mercy in My Soul: Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska [Diary]*, 699, cf. 300)

Did you catch that? Jesus said that He pours out not a drip of His mercy, but an ocean of graces – *floodgates are opened!* – when we go to Confession (the “Fount of Mercy”) and receive Holy Communion on Divine Mercy Sunday. He longs to do this, to set us free from sin. This is the mystery of the Resurrection, after all, that God does not delight in the death of the sinner, but wants us to have *new life*.

The question is: do we recognize our need for mercy? I know I would rather justify my actions, than have to face them and say I need to change or apologize for my actions. How about you? Yet, this is the path to death, not life. Jesus wants us to come to Him so that we may have life; He wants us to trust His mercy; He wants us to give up our tiny idea that we have to be “perfect” (as the world understands perfection). He will not reject anyone who humbly comes to Him. He will never turn away anyone who is confident in His mercy. He has given to us this gift of Divine Mercy Sunday that we might know that we can run to Him and be made *new!*

Today (Divine Mercy Sunday), I will be available for Confessions from 1:30 until 2:45. During this time, you will have an opportunity to come into His Eucharistic Presence, as we have Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Adoration. At 3:00, we will sing the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and praise God's Mercy. I invite you to come and enter more deeply into God's infinite, unwearied, and fathomless Mercy!