

HOM 2nd Sunday Easter B 2021 April 11

In the great creaturely contest between good and evil, divine mercy is the means and great standing invitation, open to all, to choose, accept, and live by what is good.

The ultimate creaturely good, of course, is oneness with God Himself who is all-good and the source of all that is good. In His goodness, God created everything beyond Himself good. In Book of Genesis, after God had created the heavens and the earth, He saw that it was good, and after creating all the living things on the earth, He saw that it was good, and finally after creating Man in His own image, we read: *“God looked at everything He had made, and He found it very good.”* (1: 31)

Indeed, creation was loaded with good things all pointing to the all-good Creator who is the Author of life itself, and the Author of love which is unifying and life-giving. He is the Giver of foods that are good-tasting and pleasurable to eat and life-sustaining. He is the Designer of beauty which lifts up one’s heart and spirit, and the Guarantor of truth which satisfies the intellect. He is the Cause of earthly happiness which is a mere foretaste of the Heavenly Bliss and Blessedness to which He invites us. For Man, created in the image and likeness of God, all of these good things create a longing for the ultimate Good – God Himself.

In extending life and love and goodness beyond Himself, God acts with perfect freedom. And like God, Man also has a free will. He is free to do good things or not, even to do evil. He is free to love or not, even to hate. He is free to live in oneness with God or not, even to rebel against Him forever. But if he chooses NOT to live in oneness with God, he loses out on the ultimate good, and that which He chose in place of God will be but ruins of what was good that he will ceaselessly detest.

To enable and help Man to choose what is good and to live oneness with His Maker, God gave him, from the beginning, the Holy Spirit and Commandments. Adam and Eve were endowed with the Holy Spirit and told to be fertile and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it and were given but one simple restrictive commandment not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Still, enticed to disobey with lies by the Angel who had definitively rejected God, they did not heed God’s command.

Their rebuff of God would have separated humanity from God forever, except for Divine Mercy that would be extended to men and women of all times through the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of God’s Son. With this mercy offered first to a people chosen to be peculiarly God’s own, the way was being prepared for the Son of God to become Son of Man through a Jewish Women, named Mary, who by Divine mercy, was endowed with the Holy Spirit from the first instant of her life, her Immaculate Conception. Her YES to God’s love and His will in His plan for the salvation of all the willing, enabled the implementation of God’s plan. At her consent, it began to unfold. Not only was the grace of the Holy Spirit to be restored to men and women through Baptism, but even losing that grace after Baptism could be remedied by turning back to God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

On this Divine Mercy Sunday, this is highlighted in today's Gospel reading. The Risen Jesus visits His apostles with a greeting of peace. He breathes on them, saying: "*Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven. Whose sins you retain are retained.*"

Indeed, Jesus instituted seven sacraments of Divine mercy that are the means and great standing invitation, open to all, to choose and accept and live by what is good and therefore in oneness with God. Participating in the sacraments, we not only avail ourselves of God's mercy, we also become mediators or communicators of God's mercy to others. Our oneness with God is thus strengthened and deepened. We are conformed to His Son in whose image we were made. We are by this prepared for eternal oneness with Him by which we will share in His divinity. Divine Mercy, if accepted, leads to divine glory.

This requires our partaking of the Most Blessed Sacrament. The Divine Mercy image has two streams emanating from the pierced Heart of Jesus, one white symbolizing the waters of Baptism – the first Sacrament – and one red symbolizing the Eucharistic Blood of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Baptism unites us to Jesus spiritually; Holy Communion unites us to Him in His human body, crucified and risen. It will take us with Him to the Cross of obedience and love for life of the world – the salvation of the willing – and then it will cause us to rise with Him to glorious new life in the Father's House.

God wants everyone to know about Divine Mercy. Between 1925 and 1938 Jesus appeared and spoke to a Polish nun, Sister Maria Faustina, explaining the importance of Divine Mercy and people's response to it. He gave her a special prayer to say and to promote: the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. He told her he wanted her to have a painting done of His image portraying the graces to humankind being poured out from His Heart. Jesus also requested that the Second Sunday of Easter be celebrated as the Feast of Divine Mercy or Divine Mercy Sunday. This became official with the decree issued by Pope John-Paul II titled *Merciful and Gracious is the Lord* on May 5, 2000.

Following this came the Church's granting of a Plenary Indulgence to those who, fulfilling the usual conditions of confession, Holy Communion, a prayer for the Pope's intentions, and without any attachment to sin, on this day, either participate in Divine Mercy devotions or individually in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament pray the Our Father and Creed a short prayer to the Merciful Jesus such as *Jesus I trust in you*.

This is the Church's official interpretation of what Our Lord had stated to Sister Faustina, that on this feast: "*The soul that will go to confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment.*"

Why the importance of this Feast of Divine Mercy? After all, the sacraments, which are the main ever-present, means for accepting the invitation to do good and to live in oneness with God, now and forever, have been around for 2000 years.

Perhaps the reason is that the time is short for people to respond to God's mercy. Recall, the various warnings of the past that God gave to all succeeding generations – for example the Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Great Flood. Even those who perished in these as a

sign of the eternal ruin that separation from God brings have been given the offer of Divine Mercy by the Crucified Jesus who descended to them inviting them to join Him in his obedience to the Father and in His Resurrection to the Father's House. We profess this in the Creed where we proclaim that upon His Death Jesus descended into hell and then on the third day rose from the dead.

But time and the opportunity to choose to live in oneness with God do have an end. For the angels, it was a single, clear sighted moment outside of time. And we do not know when our individual time and opportunity – or that of humanity collectively -- will expire. May we, then take advantage of this opportunity for Divine Mercy and do so to the hilt by relinquishing all attachment to sin as we participate in the Mass and other group or private Divine Mercy devotions. To relinquish all attachment to sin, join me in a Eucharistic Self-Offering today by praying these words silently and sincerely at Holy Communion: I AM ALL YOURS O MOST LOVING JESUS THROUGH MARY YOUR MOTHER...WITH THE HELP OF ST. JOSEPH.