

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER/DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY; 2023

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

This Sunday is known as Divine Mercy Sunday, which celebrates the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus. Among the World religions, Christianity is the only one that believes firmly in the *forgiveness and mercy of God*. It is not a hypothetical concept; rather we have sufficient proof for the same in the Sacred Scripture. In the entire Bible we meet a God of unconditional forgiveness and mercy. If we take the gospel of Matthew alone we find the word, **“Forgive or forgiveness” 47 times** in it. **The word mercy is used in the Bible more than 250 times.** On three occasions Jesus forgives the sins of the individuals before he healed them. At least through three parables he speaks emphatically about the merciful attitude of God towards sinners and what should be our attitude towards the people who offend us. Finally Jesus states, *in Mt. 26: 28, “This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins.”* In the Beatitude Jesus makes it very clear, *“Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.”*

In our own time Jesus himself has re-emphasized the Divine mercy and forgiveness through a simple nun called Sr. Maria Faustina from Poland. On the occasion of her canonization in 2000, based on the revelation in her spiritual diary, St. Pope John Paul II declared the Second Sunday of Easter to be celebrated as the **Divine Mercy Sunday**. He also promised the plenary indulgence to all those who participate in the celebration that day and receive the Eucharist in grace. **In the theological language, ‘Indulgence’ means partial or total remission of punishments due in purgatory or on earth for the sins that are already forgiven. The Indulgence can be partial or full. If it is full it is known as the Plenary Indulgence and the same is granted by Church on Divine Mercy Sunday.** This Sunday afternoon if you participate in the celebration and make confession and receive Holy Communion, you are entitled to receive the Plenary Indulgence. If you have made confession recently and you remain in grace, you don’t have to go for another confession at the celebration. You need only to receive the Communion.

First of all, Sr. Faustina explains in her Diary how the Lord appointed her to bring his mercy to mankind. Our Lord said to her, **“I am sending you with my mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish the aching mankind, but I desire to heal it, pressing it to my Merciful Heart. You are the ambassador of my mercy.”**

Our Lord appeared to Faustina on Feb. 22, 1931 the way we see Jesus in the image of the Divine Mercy picture. *She wrote in her Spiritual Diary, “In the evening when I*

was in my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand was raised in the gesture of blessing; the other was touching the garment at the chest. From beneath the garment, slightly drawn aside at the chest, there were emanating two large rays, one red, the other pale. After a while Jesus said to me, Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with signature: “Jesus, I trust in you.” I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and then throughout the world. I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish. I also promise victory over its enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death. I myself will defend it as my own glory. I want this image, which you will paint with a brush, to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter; that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy.” Sr. Faustina approached an artist and explained to him how Jesus looked in her vision and the artist did his best to paint the picture, though Faustina was not fully satisfied.

The Lord continued to say to Faustina, “I desire that priests proclaim this great mercy of mine towards souls of sinners. Tell my priests that hardened sinners will repent on hearing their words when they speak about my unfathomable mercy, about the compassion I have for them in my heart. To priests, who proclaim and extol my mercy, I will give wondrous power; I will anoint their words and touch the hearts of those to whom they speak.”

About the Divine Mercy celebration Jesus says to Faustina, “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 poor sinners. On that day the very depths of my tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon the souls who approach the Fount of My Mercy. On that day all the divine floodgates through which graces flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to me, even though its sins be as scarlet. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of my Mercy.”

In her Spiritual Diary Jesus says to Faustina about the Sacrament of Confession, **“When you approach the confessional, know this that I myself am waiting there for you. Were a soul like a decaying corpse, so that from a human standpoint, there would be no hope of restoration and everything would already be lost, it is not so with God. The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full at the confessional.** These are the words of our Lord.

About the chaplet Jesus says, “Encourage souls to say the Chaplet which I have given you. Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death. When they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just judge but as the Merciful savior.”