

## **April 07 II Sunday of Easter (Sunday of Divine Mercy)**

The readings for this Sunday show us our need for God's Divine Mercy, which is offered to us through the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the forgiveness of our sins, and through each celebration of the Sacraments (all instituted to sanctify us), when we receive them in trusting Faith. The opening prayer addresses the Father as "God of everlasting Mercy". In first section of the Responsorial Psalm (Ps 118), we repeat three times, "His mercy endures forever!" God revealed His mercy, first and foremost, by sending His only begotten Son to become our Savior and Lord by His suffering, death, and Resurrection.

The first reading (Acts 2:42-47) tells us how the early Church grew every day because of the acts of mercy -- sharing, sacrificial agape love -- practiced by the early Christians. In the second reading (1 Pt 1:3-9), St. Peter glorifies God, the Father of Jesus Christ, for showing us His mercy by granting His Son Jesus Resurrection from the dead and a glorious Ascension into Heaven, thus giving us the assurance of our own resurrection.

Today's Gospel vividly reminds us of how Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a sacrament of Divine Mercy. The risen Lord gave his Apostles the power to forgive sins with the words, "Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain, they are retained" (Jn. 20:19-23). Presenting the doubting Thomas' famous profession of Faith, "My Lord and my God," the Gospel illustrates how Jesus showed his mercy to the doubting apostle and emphasizes the importance of Faith for everyone.

1) We need to accept God's invitation to celebrate and practice mercy. One way the Church celebrates God's mercy throughout the year is through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." So, we see that all of us are to be reconcilers and mediators, becoming channels to one another of the Risen Lord's peace and forgiveness. Finding time for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament or praying the "divine Mercy Chaplet" are good ways to receive Divine Mercy. The Gospel command, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful", requires that we show mercy to our fellow human beings always and everywhere. We radiate God's mercy to others by our corporal and spiritual works of mercy, by our kind and supportive words, and by our prayers for all our brothers and sisters.

2) We need to ask God for the Faith that culminates in self-surrender to Him and leads us to serve those we encounter with love. Living Faith enables us to see the risen Lord in everyone and gives us the willingness to render to each one our loving service. It was this Faith in the Lord and obedience to His missionary command that prompted St. Thomas to travel to India to preach the Gospel among the Hindus, to establish seven Christian communities (known later as “St. Thomas Christians”), and eventually to suffer martyrdom. The Fathers of the Church prescribe the following traditional means to grow in the living, dynamic Faith of St. Thomas the Apostle. a) We must come to know Jesus personally and intimately by our daily, meditative reading of the Bible. b) We must strengthen our Faith by the power of the Holy Spirit through our personal and communal prayer. c) We must share in the Divine life of Jesus by frequenting the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist

3) We need to meet the challenge for a transparent Christian life – “I will not believe unless I see”. This “seeing” is what others demand of us. They ask that we reflect Jesus, the risen Lord in our lives by our selfless love, unconditional forgiveness, and humble service. The integrity of our lives bears a fundamental witness to others who want to see the risen Lord alive and active, working in us. Christ’s mercy shines forth from us whenever we reach out to the poor, the needy and the marginalized, as St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) did. His mercy shines forth when we remain open to those who struggle in Faith, as did the Apostle Thomas in today’s Gospel. We should be able to appreciate the presence of Jesus, crucified and raised, in our own suffering and in the sufferings of our brothers and sisters, thus recognizing those same now- glorified wounds of the risen Lord in the suffering of those around us.

4) Like St. Thomas, let us use our skepticism to help us grow in Faith. It is our genuine doubts about the doctrines of our religion that encourage us to study these doctrines more closely and thus to grow in our Faith. This will naturally lead us to a personal encounter with Jesus through our prayer, study of the Word of God, and frequenting of the Sacraments. However, we must never forget the fact that our Faith is not our own doing but is a gift from God. Hence, we need to augment our Faith every day by prayer so that we may join St. Thomas in his proclamation: “My Lord and my God”.