



## Divine Mercy Sunday B, 2021

Acts 4:32-35

Jn 5:1-6

Jn 20:19-31

**W**ith the Second Sunday of Easter, we move into the Easter season proper, and you're going to notice right away that the readings are going to be different from the rest of the liturgical year. On most Sundays of the liturgical year, there is an Old Testament reading, then you'll have a psalm, then a New Testament reading, and then the gospel. During the season of Easter, however, that shifts a little because we don't read from the Old Testament. The first reading is going to be from the Book of Acts, because what the church is doing during the Easter season is recalling the birth of Christianity and the earliest days of the spread of the gospel after the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the First Century A.D.

In the gospel of today, we have St. Thomas' greatest confession of faith. He is often called doubting Thomas for wanting proof to believe in Jesus' resurrection. However, in the gospel we find him move from faithlessness to one of the greatest confessions of faith like the one of Peter in Mathew 16:16: "You are the Christ, son of the living God." By saying "My Lord and my God," Thomas accepted and acknowledged Jesus as his Lord and God. Then Jesus said, "You have believed because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen me and yet believe." It is like one of those beatitudes. Here Jesus is calling His followers to believe even when you cannot see the concrete evidence of His resurrection. We have not walked with Him, ate with Him, seen Him or listened to Him as did the apostles in the 1st Century. So Jesus pronounces a blessing on us: "Blessed are those who have not seen me yet believe." It is the first fruit of God's grace that we are able to believe even without having a first-hand experience like the disciples.

In the gospel of today, Jesus also gives His disciples the authority to forgive sins: "He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven, and whose sins you retain are retained." In the Book of Genesis, we find God breathing the breath of life into Adam. Here Jesus is making a new creation through the Sacrament of Confession. One of the first things that Jesus did after His resurrection was to give power to forgive sins so that His disciples could go out and begin the ministry of reconciliation; they could extend God's mercy to all who needed it.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Divine Mercy. The message and devotion to Jesus as the Divine Mercy is based on the writings of St. Faustina, an uneducated Polish nun. In obedience to her spiritual director, St. Faustina wrote a diary of 600 pages, recording the revelations she received from Jesus. The devotion to the Divine Mercy involves a total commitment to God as Mercy. It is a decision to trust completely in Him, to accept this mercy with thanksgiving, and to be merciful as He is merciful. A plenary indulgence is granted on this Sunday to all who go to Confession, receive Holy Communion, pray for the intentions of the Holy Father, and take part in the devotions held in honor of Divine Mercy.

The message of Divine Mercy is nothing new. It is deeply rooted in the Gospel message of our merciful Savior. It is a reminder of what the Church has always taught through scripture and tradition—that God is merciful and forgiving and that we, too, must show mercy and forgiveness. The message of Mercy is that God loves us, no matter how great our sins. His mercy is greater than our sins. We have to call upon Him with trust to receive His mercy and to become channels of His mercy for others. We can call to mind the message of Divine Mercy simply by remembering **ABC**. **A**—ask for His Mercy, **B**—be merciful, **C**—completely trust in Jesus.

It is not enough for us to hang the Divine Mercy image in our homes, pray the Chaplet, and receive Holy Communion. We also have to show mercy to our neighbors. Putting mercy into action is not an option of the Divine Mercy devotion—it's a requirement. Jesus told St. Faustina, "I demand deeds of mercy which are to arise out of love for me. You are to show mercy to your neighbors always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse yourself from it." This goes in line with what Jesus said as recorded in the Gospels: "Be merciful, just as your heavenly Father is merciful. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7).

When we approach God with trust, He fills us with such an abundance of graces that it cannot contain them within itself but radiates them to other souls. So let us **A**sk for his mercy, **B**e merciful, and **C**ompletely trust in Him.