

## **Homily for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)**

On October 5, 1938, a young nun named Sr. Maria Faustina Kowalska died in at a convent in Krakow, Poland. She was the third of ten children, who came from a very poor family that had struggled hard on their little farm during the terrible years of World War I. As a result she only had three years of a very simple education. After initial attempts to join the religious life, she was eventually accepted by the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, at the age of 20. At the convent, she was relegated to rather menial tasks, usually in the kitchen or the vegetable garden, or as a greeter at the front door.

But in February 1931, after being in the convent for less than five years, Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Sr. Faustina with rays of light radiating from His heart. He said to her, “Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature, ‘Jesus, I trust in You’. The Lord then went on to say, “I desire that this image be venerated first in your chapel, and throughout the world. “The two rays denote Blood and Water. The pale ray stands for the Water, which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood, which is the life of souls. These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized heart was opened by a lance on the Cross.”

In our second reading today, from the 1<sup>st</sup> Letter of John, we hear that Jesus was the one “who came through water and through blood...not by water alone, but by water and blood.” This statement sounds kind of confusing: What does it mean to come through water and blood? Well, biblical scholars tell us that “come by water” is a reference to baptism – that Jesus began His ministry being baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist. At the same time, “come by blood” refers to Jesus’ crucifixion, where He gave His very Body and Blood for our salvation.

Now, if we turn back the clock to Good Friday for a moment, we remember that after Jesus had died, one of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance. And we are told in the Gospel, “at once blood and water came out.” Out flowed blood and water – the red and pale rays from Jesus’ side as depicted in St. Faustina’s image. As this saintly nun wrote in her diary, which I also quoted from above, “These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy...” In other words, Jesus gave us the waters of baptism and His very Body and Blood in the Eucharist to continually share with us His unending mercy.

But, what is mercy? We say that word a lot at Mass. It was sung three times in the responsorial psalm. But, what exactly is it? The Catechism says that mercy is “the loving kindness, compassion, or forbearance shown to one who offends.” Basically, it’s giving someone something they really don’t deserve; but it’s given anyway, only because of love. Take the following story for example.

“A mother once approached the tyrannical emperor, Napoleon, seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death. "But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for mercy." "But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied. "Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it; mercy is all I ask for."

My friends, we didn't deserve that Jesus should come down and be born a man, only to suffer and die for our sins. We didn't deserve that He should give us the sacraments, by which we can receive God's love and very life. We don't deserve it because of sin. But God's mercy trumps the insult and offense of our sins. In His mercy He gives us what we really need, but don't really deserve. This is why our response has to be one of gratitude. We are thankful for God's love and mercy and we express this as Church, by faithfully sharing in the sacraments of His mercy.

To close, I leave you with the words of St. Faustina, which Jesus spoke to her: "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. 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". God bless you.