

What is Divine Mercy?

Right here in front of the ambo, you can see an iconic representation of the Merciful Jesus and in the niche near the confessional in the main church sanctuary, there is a reliquary containing a first class relic of Polish Saint Faustina Kowalska.

Members of our parish – and parishes around the world – regularly pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet, a prayer encouraged by the visions of St. Faustina.

The late Pope John Paul II respected his countrywoman’s visions so much that on the Second Sunday of Easter of 2000 – the Jubilee Year – at St. Faustina’s canonization – he declared that henceforth and always the Second Sunday of Easter would be known as Divine Mercy Sunday.

Why? What **IS** Divine Mercy?

The Holy Father said in 1997, “There is nothing that man needs more than Divine Mercy” That’s a pretty strong endorsement! And in 2001 – on the anniversary of St. Faustina’s canonization – he quoted from St. Faustina’s diary: “Humanity will not have peace [...] until it turns with trust to Divine Mercy.”

“Divine Mercy!” he shouted. “**THIS** is the Easter gift that the Church receives from the risen Christ and offers to humanity at the dawn of the third millennium.”

Let us consider that for just a moment ...

Commemoration of the Divine Mercy is **NOT** new ... but as the Holy Father pointed out, it certainly **highlights** and **amplifies** the meaning of the day.

St. Augustine called the Easter Octave – that’s the eight days from Easter Sunday through today – “the days of **mercy** and **pardon**.”

Pardon. That’s at least part of what today is really about. That’s truly **one** representation of Divine Mercy!!!

And so are **each** and **every** one of the Seven Sacraments!

Today’s gospel from John recorded what Jesus told the disciples when he appeared to them in the Upper Room:

“As the Father has sent **ME**, so I send **YOU**.”

And, breathing on them, he added:

“Receive the Holy Spirit.

“Whose sins **you** forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”

Let’s review ...

God the Father sent Jesus. Jesus sent his disciples ... giving **them** the power to forgive sins!

Now **THAT** is a prime example of Divine Mercy!!!

As an apologist – that’s from the Greek word “apologia” meaning “explainer” – of the Catholic Faith, I find this passage from John **EXTREMELY** useful when defending the Sacrament of Reconciliation from those of our brothers and sisters who **deny** that it is Biblical.

Could Jesus have been **any** clearer?

Jesus truly – and **UNDENIABLY!** – told us that he was leaving the apostles – that is, the Church – with the **AUTHORITY** necessary to forgive sins.

And if he did that, then he certainly wasn’t leaving behind some nebulous group of loosely associated **individuals** or an association of **tens of thousands** of denominations. Remember what Paul said in the scripture passage from Acts? “The **community of believers** was of **one** heart and mind”!

He left a **single** real and true **community of believers** – that is – **THE CHURCH** with the **AUTHORITY** to carry on His mission of salvation after His ascension into Heaven.

And it could **not** have been the Lord’s intention just for the original apostles to forgive sins while **they** were alive. If that was the case, **why bother?**

Jesus certainly **knew** that we would **still** be sinning 2000 years later!!!

He **intended** for that power to be passed down through the Holy Spirit to the priests of **today**.

That's why **Confession** is such an uplifting experience.

We are actually receiving heavenly graces and the forgiveness of sins from the **Lord Himself!**

In St. Faustina's diary, she recorded that Jesus indicated that **He Himself** is there in the confessional! He told her, "When you approach the confessional, know this [...] that **I Myself** am waiting there for you."

Jesus knew that people would need to hear these words today, so He went on to say "Come with faith to the feet of **my representative** ... and make your confession before **me**. The person of the priest is [...] only a screen. Never analyze what sort of a priest that I am making use of; open your soul in confession as you would to me, and I will fill it with my light."

But many **still** feel that their sins are unforgivable.

Jesus said to Faustina – rather indelicately – “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. In the Tribunal of Mercy [that is, the Sacrament of Reconciliation] ... the greatest miracles take place and are incessantly repeated.”

It can be said with certainty that in the Sacrament of Reconciliation " ... the misery of the soul meets the God of mercy”!

Christ’s sacrifice on the cross most assuredly wasn’t just for show. Nor was His human body simply resuscitated and temporarily reanimated like that of His friend Lazarus. He was **RESURRECTED** in his **GLORIFIED** body, a body **so** changed that his own followers had trouble recognizing him.

And through Divine Mercy we, too, can not only **HOPE** but be **ASSURED** that we, too, will someday rise with Him in **OUR** glorified bodies.

And – just as surely – we can not only **HOPE** but be **CONFIDENT** of the forgiveness of our sins through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Have **YOU** been to Confession lately?

Or are your shoulders still **NEEDLESSLY** bowed down with shame and the weight of your sins?

Go. You'll be glad that you did.

Now ... are you **still** wondering **WHAT** Divine Mercy is?

If so, you're asking the **WRONG** question.

Divine Mercy is not a **WHAT** ... it's a **WHO** ...

Divine Mercy is none other than our **Lord and Savior ... Jesus the Christ!!!**

Let us join with Thomas in proclaiming:

“MY LORD AND MY GOD!”