

SUNDAY, APRIL 8, 2018

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER/DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

This Sunday, the eighth day of the octave of Easter and the Second Sunday of Easter, is Divine Mercy Sunday. It is a relatively new feast day on our Church's calendar, officially established by Pope John Paul II just 18 years ago. As a new feast, it is understandable that there are well intentioned Christians who find it disconcerting that it falls not only during Easter, but especially on this Sunday immediately following the Resurrection. They find it to be out of sync, even to clash with the celebration of Easter. Easter, they insist, is a time devoted to the joy of the Resurrection, not a time for sorrow for sin. Furthermore, they argue, it is from a private revelation to Sr. Faustina. The teachings of private revelation are never required beliefs of our faith. This is true. The required beliefs of our faith are dogmas. They come from Sacred Scripture and/or Sacred Tradition. However, we have other feasts we celebrate that come from private revelation. The feasts of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Corpus Christi are but two examples.

Divine Mercy is more than a revelation of our Lord to Sr. Faustina. It is at the very core of Scripture. When Adam & Eve sinned, God in his infinite love and divine mercy promised a Savior. Genesis 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike at your head while you strike at his heel" is the first promise of a Redeemer for fallen mankind. This promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him (John 3:16-17). Following the temptation of Jesus in the desert, Matthew writes, "From that time on Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Mt 4:17). Jesus came to heal the rift between God and Man caused by our sin. He came to reconcile us with God. When Jesus spoke of his Passion, Death and Resurrection, Peter "...took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, 'God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you!'" (Mt16:22). We know well our Lord's response.

Our Lord's death was not just something that happened. He achieved that for which he was sent. In his passion, death and resurrection, Jesus won for us the gift of salvation and he pleads with us to come to him. Having suffered so much to prove his love and mercy, Jesus desires to cleanse us: "...Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them white as snow" (Is1:18). As our Protestant brothers and sisters are so fond of saying, we are washed in his blood. "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt11:28). Our Lord desires to free us from the burden of sin and death. Over and over he kept telling his disciples to be not afraid. "All you who are thirsty come to the water! You who have no money, come,...without paying and without cost" (Is55:1). "On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and exclaimed, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture says 'Rivers of living water will flow from within him'" (Jn7:37-38).

The message of divine mercy is that none should be afraid, that all can come without cost, for Jesus has paid the cost. He who suffered so much for us desires that we be not afraid, but come to receive his mercy and love. To be freed of the burden of sin and death, to be washed clean and to share with him eternal life. That is what Easter is all about. That is the divine mercy and love of our Savior.

God bless you!

Fr. Tom