



## Theology Corner

Theological Reflections by Paul Chutikorn - Director of Faith Formation

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### “What is Divine Mercy Sunday?”

The answer to this question is somewhat obvious (the celebration of God’s mercy!), but its background is not as obvious. Divine Mercy Sunday is the octave day of Easter which means that it concludes the 8-day celebration of Easter. This does not mean the Easter season has concluded (since it continues until Pentecost), but that the special celebration (i.e, the party!) from Easter Sunday is prolonged until the eighth day of the octave. This means that the second Sunday of Easter has always been a special time of celebration which centers on the theme of mercy and forgiveness.

But in the 1930’s, Jesus had revealed his will through visitations to the Polish St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, expressing his desires for an official Feast of Mercy to be celebrated (among other things) and seeking to lead the whole world to union with him through confession and Holy Communion. Essentially, this Feast of Mercy is about running into the arms of our merciful Father who wants nothing more than for us to be in friendship with him. Christ told St. Faustina that on the Feast of Mercy, “I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of my mercy.”

Per St. Faustina’s diary (entry 299), Christ himself expressed his desire that the first Sunday after Easter be set as the Feast of Mercy. John Paul II did just that, as he named the Second Sunday of Easter Divine Mercy Sunday at the canonization of St. Faustina on April 30, 2000. This places a particular focus on the great gift of mercy and love that was

given through Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection. What a great way to close the 8-day major Easter celebration than to call to mind the unfathomable love of God being made manifest in the Person of Jesus Christ whose clemency led him to the Cross for sake of the redemption of the whole world! Christ accomplished this mission and defeated sin and death by his Resurrection which we celebrate in the Easter season. He is Risen!

The Resurrection of Christ is the greatest Gospel to the world, but the recognition of the call to his Divine Mercy is vitally important because souls who are drowning in sin and in despair must find consolation in the unfathomable mercy of God who is ever seeking to reconcile us to himself in the Sacrament of Confession.

Not only does this day focus on the Divine Mercy of Christ for us, but it also calls us to imitate this mercy so as to extend this same mercy to others! In other words, just as we are commanded to love others as Christ loves us, so too are we called to forgive others who have offended us. It is when we are able to do this that we are able to fully experience the peace that Christ offers.

Another request of Jesus is that the Divine Mercy be venerated on this feast day. You will notice this image placed in focus in the church for all to see as we celebrate this feast this weekend. The picture has the words, “Jesus, I trust in You.” This trust is necessary in order to obtain mercy because trust entails faith, hope, love, and humility. By trusting in Him, we open the door of our hearts and minds to his work in us, so that we can receive the “whole ocean of graces” that he offers us most especially on this feast day. You will also notice two rays coming forth from his heart — one red and the other pale. The red ray represents blood which is the life of souls. It also refers to the Eucharist which is the bread of life! The pale ray represents water which makes souls righteous. This points to the waters of baptism which washes us of our sin and gives us the life of God.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us!