

Divine Mercy Sunday

Our school auction night is in two weeks, you can still get tickets for this event, it's a great time. And whether you attend or not, you can purchase raffle tickets for some great prizes, those can be purchased after Mass. And this coming Saturday the Knights are serving a Pork Chili Supper at OLG from 5:15 to 7:00 with the proceeds benefiting Hope Women's Center.

+ Imagine your death and going before God for judgement. He lays out before you all the sins you committed while on earth, and you see clearly how horrible they truly were. When God asks why you should come to enjoy the splendor Heaven in light of all these sins...how would you respond? I think many Catholics would say something like, 'well I tried my best,' or 'I went to Mass every Sunday, or maybe 'I received the sacraments of the Church.' As true as those things may be, the subject in those responses prevent them from being the best response...I did this...I received that. Instead, the best or most convincing answer would have Christ as the subject.

The most faith filled response would sound something like this. Your Son shed his blood for me, suffered and died on a cross so that I may enjoy the divine presence of Heaven. It's by the merits of Christ that we are saved. And yes, we must respond by being faithful to the Lord, but we all fall short. The only thing that doesn't fall short, or have a limit, is the mercy Christ showed by dying and rising for us. And we call that to mind today in a special way as we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. Christ told St. Faustina in a vision, "tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and a shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open.

It is only by God's mercy that we're aren't struck down dead upon gravely sinning against Him...let alone offered eternal happiness. I was considering the nature of mercy and St. Thomas defines mercy as the compassion in our hearts for another person's misery, which drives us to do what we can to help them. He breaks this down in two ways, affective mercy...feeling

empathy for another's suffering. And secondly, effective mercy...acting to relieve their suffering. Jesus, being fully human, has perfect empathy for us...he knows and feels our sorrows. And being divine, he has the power to do something about it...that was demonstrated on Easter morning.

But I was trying to consider mercy beyond the definition, to really get at its heart. It seems mercy is most obvious...you know, when it moves our heart...it's when the other person is willing to suffer for you and with you. It's when they desire to be able to suffer in your place. Mercy is most compelling, or what makes it compelling is when you realize the other person is willing to suffer for you, more than you'd be willing to suffer for them. That's mercy. I can remember once as a young kid when I was sick and I must have been feeling really poorly, but mom said something to me like, I wish I could switch spots with you and you could feel better. I thought, gee whiz mom...that's awfully kind of you.

But that's a parent's love for a child, it elicits that degree of mercy. And that is merely approaching the mercy our Lord has for us, because His love for us is beyond reason. It's like how you can tell what a person really loves by identifying what they're willing to suffer for. For some it's sports, others it's money. But by our seeing and knowing how our Lord suffered for us...well that tells us what He loves...you and me. His words today give verbal confirmation of this.

He enters the locked room where the 10 of the Apostles were, and if it was me...I might have said something like, 'so much for being willing to die with me, where were you on Good Friday?' No, he says "Peace be with you." This is not a run of the mill greeting. It's so much more. Shalom, peace be with you in Hebrew, means to wish one well." And then he comes back a week later. The Apostles seemed to still lack faith because they were still locking the door, and

we know Thomas had lacked faith. But again, Jesus doesn't berate them..."Peace be with you." Our Lord makes it clear, despite our sins, even when our faith waivers, He has mercy on us because He loves us. And this is why our only recourse to salvation, the singular thing we can point to on judgement day, is the love and mercy Christ has shown us. That's why and who we must put our faith in.

He mentions belief a couple different times when addressing Thomas. And Peter mentioned the role of faith in our second reading. Faith and believing. But when we throw around the English word belief, it can have a very thin meaning. I believe pi is 3.14, but that's such a notional believing, I certainly don't understand it. However, the Greek word for believing is more profound. It means to put one's faith in what one believes. It can also be translated as trust. To believe in God's mercy is to put one's faith in Him. The faith that comes to us from God has us put our trust in Him. To entrust ourselves, and others, to the mercy of God. It's like when we say the Divine Mercy chaplet, it begins with "Jesus I trust in you."

As we consider our Lord's divine mercy today, may it be our consolation when despair is staring us in the face, when our faith is weak. It's a reminder to entrust our loved ones to the mercy of God in our prayers for them. And may it inspire us to love Christ more, being moved by the mercy He shows us.