



APRIL 16, 2023 | DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

HOLY FAMILY PARISH

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Tazewell, VA 24651

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160 Merrick Lane
Pocahontas, VA 24635

ST. MARY'S

1122 Farmer Street
Richlands, VA 24641

ST. JOSEPH'S

1007 Independence Rd.
Grundy, VA 24614

The door of mercy is still open

"GOODNESS and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." (Psalm 23:6)

From December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016 the Holy Roman Catholic Church observed the Year of Mercy which featured special prayers and gatherings in various places highlighting the profundity of God's mercy. During the closing gathering which also featured the ceremony of the closing of the Holy Door of Mercy, Pope Francis announced that the closing of the Holy Door does not entail the closing of the door of reconciliation and God's mercy. In other words, the door of divine mercy is still open to those who are ready and willing to make a spiritual entrance.

What is divine mercy? One could answer that it means God's compassion and withdrawal of the punishment we deserve from Him because of our sins. One could also ask why God is merciful? God

is merciful because He cannot help but be merciful; it is in His nature. Put in another way mercy is another name for God (Psalm 103:8). The letter to the Hebrews (4:16), tells us that the throne of God consists of grace and mercy. While calling on God after falling into sin, David referred to God as full of mercy and compassion (Psalm 51:1).

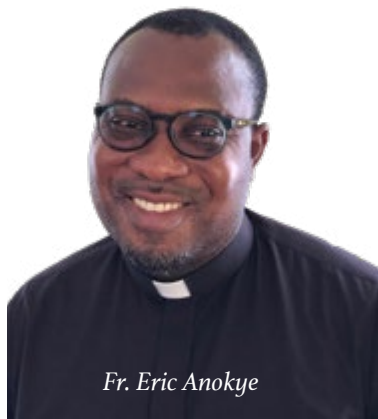
There is the need for us to differentiate between forgiveness and mercy before we can appreciate what divine mercy entails. To forgive is to overcome anger or resentment over someone's failing. Mercy, on the other hand, is more profound than forgiveness, and it means withdrawing all the punishment that is due to an offence. Have you wondered why our Lord Jesus Christ did not add mercy in the Lord's prayer but only forgiveness (Matt. 6:9-13)? Have you wondered why our Lord had to stop when the blind Bartimaeus called out saying "Jesus Son of David have MERCY on me" (Mark 10: 47). We can see the distinction as well as the connection between forgiveness and mercy while our Lord Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross. The account of Luke (23:34) tells us that our Lord said, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." If forgiveness were enough, then the death of our Lord would have been unnecessary.

Beyond forgiveness, humanity needed the mercy of God, and that was why at 3PM on that fateful Friday we know as "Good," our

Lord said. "It is finished" (John 19:30); and bowing his head, he died. That was the point when humanity received God's mercy, that means our debt was paid, and our punishment was taken away (Isaiah 53:5). Divine mercy means that though we deserve to receive punishment, our punishment is taken away by God through His Son. The sin was so intense, but God already forgave us (Psalm 86:5), however, the punishment due to our sin was still pending. One of the punishments was that the gate of heaven was shut against humanity and only the mercy of God through His Son could open the gate of heaven for us. John (3:13) tells us that nobody has gone to heaven except the one who came down from heaven and that is our Lord Jesus Christ, whom St. Paul refers to as the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18).

God is the Father of mercy (2 Cor. 1:3-4), and his mercy never ends (Lam. 3:22-23). He is still ready to grant you mercy when you approach His throne of mercy. God's mercy shows that he wants us to move forward to a better future (Jer. 29:11). The mercy of God indicates God's love for us (John 3:16). The mercy of God shows that God wants us to have peace as our Lord Jesus Christ indicated when he appeared to the apostles, "peace be unto you" (John 20:21). The mercy of God shows that God wants us back (Jeremiah 15:19).

When we receive God's mercy, He expects us to extend mercy to



Fr. Eric Anokye

others. The mercy of God comes to us and should flow through us. In the Book of Genesis (12:3) God said that He would bless Abraham so that he could be a blessing to others. If God, our Father, is merciful we should be merciful children of our Father. If we expect mercy from God, we should also be ready to grant mercy to others. In the beatitudes, our Lord Jesus Christ says, “Blessed are the merciful and they shall receive mercy” (Matt. 5:7).

As we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, let us use the opportunity Christ opened for us through his resurrection from the dead to open our heart for God’s mercy. It is also vital that we extend mercy to those who deserve our punishment in various ways just as we qualify to receive God’s punishment but, in lieu, receive His mercy.

Have a rewarding Divine Mercy Sunday.



PASTOR

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OFFICE MANAGER/ BOOKKEEPER

Lydia St. Peter

OFFICE HOURS

Mon–Fri 9:30AM – 2:30PM

Please call the parish office to make arrangements for the **Sacraments of Baptism, Anointing of the Sick or Holy Matrimony** as well as funerals. **Reconciliation** is available from 30 minutes before a scheduled Mass.

MASS TIMES

SATURDAY

4PM – St. Joseph’s

6PM – St. Mary’s

SUNDAY

9AM – St. Elizabeth’s

11:30AM – St. Theresa’s

TUESDAY & FRIDAY

10AM – St. Theresa’s

Cover image:

Peter Paul Rubens, *The Incredulity of St. Thomas*, 1614

Divine Mercy Sunday

By Lydia Borja, *simplycatholic.com*

Since the year 2000, the universal Church has concluded the Octave of Easter by celebrating Divine Mercy Sunday. This great solemnity calls the faithful to rejoice in the merciful love of God as it is most profoundly manifested in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ.

But what exactly is the Divine Mercy? Where did this devotion to the Divine Mercy begin? Is this a new feast day in the Church?

A History of Mercy: In his 1980 encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* (“Rich in Mercy”), Pope John Paul II writes, “Believing in [God’s] love means believing in mercy. For mercy is an indispensable dimension of love; it is as it were love’s second name and, at the same time, the specific manner in which love is revealed” (No. 7).

Salvation history is rich with evidence of this truth. From the beginning, the Covenant that the Lord established with the people of Israel reflected the nature of His love. As He gives the Ten Commandments to Moses, He promises to show “mercy to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments” (Ex 20:6, RSV).

Later, again to Moses, God gives this description of himself: “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy and faithfulness, keeping merciful love for thousands” (Ex 34:6-7, RSV).

As the Old Testament narratives continue, we see the people of Israel habitually turning to God in their sin and misery as a child turns to his father, trusting in his merciful forgiveness.

King David sings of the Lord who is “merciful and gracious,” “slow to anger and abounding in mercy” and who does not deal with us according to our sins (see Psalms 103, 145). Even the prophets, who preach a message of destruction to Israel for its infidelity, speak also of the mercy that the Lord wishes to lavish upon it if only the people will return to Him (see Jer 3:12; Hos 14:3).

Although the reality of God’s great compassion is unmistakably established and confirmed in the history of the Old Testament, it is the coming of His Son that gives the world the actual incarnation of this love and

mercy. Pope John Paul’s encyclical observes:

“Christ confers on the whole of the Old Testament tradition about God’s mercy a definitive meaning. Not only does he speak of it ... but above all he himself makes it incarnate and personifies it. He himself, in a certain sense, is mercy” (No. 2).

Christ’s entire life can be seen as a testimony to the mercy of God.

At His conception, Our Lady sang her great hymn of thanksgiving: “His mercy is from age to age to those who fear Him” (Lk 1:50).

At the start of Christ’s public ministry, He proclaimed, “release to the captives” (Lk 4:18, RSV), and later, “blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Mt 5:7).

In the words of His last agony, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them” (Lk 23:34). Indeed, the presence of Jesus Christ in the world reveals to us the face of God, who is the “Father of mercies” (2 Cor 1:3, RSV).

Jesus, I Trust in You: Simply speaking, then, the “Divine Mercy” is another name for the revelation of this magnificent love of God, which culminates in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Christians have long known and praised this abundant mercy. In this sense, devotion to the Divine Mercy is not new.

Less than a century ago, however, Christians were challenged by God himself to a renewed awareness and trust in His mercy, which has begun to fan the old flame of devotion into a more ardent veneration. Our Lord spoke to a young Polish nun, giving her a timeless reminder for all of humanity:

“Mankind will not have peace,” He said, “until it turns with trust to My mercy. ... Proclaim that mercy is the greatest attribute of God.”

Sister Mary Faustina Kowalska, born in 1905, was a cloistered nun of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Poland. On Feb. 22, 1931, Jesus first appeared to Sister Faustina.

He was clothed in a white robe, with two rays of light emanating from His heart — one red and one white, representing the blood and water that came forth from His pierced side at His crucifixion. He requested that this image be painted with the signature,

“Jesus, I trust in You,” and promised that even the most hardened sinners who would revere this image would be saved. Our Lord told Faustina of His great desire that the first Sunday after Easter be dedicated as the “Feast of Mercy,” and that this image of His mercy be known and venerated by the whole world.

Our Lord appeared to Sister Faustina — whom He called His “apostle of mercy” — many other times over the course of several years, each time speaking of His great mercy for all souls. At the direction of her confessor, Faustina documented all of her dialogues with Christ in what she called her “Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul” (which received ecclesiastical approval from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1979).

Within these pages we read the repeated and urgent plea of Our Lord’s love and the purpose of His conversations with Faustina: “My Heart overflows with great mercy for souls. . . . If only they could understand that I am the best of Fathers to them and that it is for them that the Blood and Water flowed from My Heart as from a fount overflowing with mercy” (Diary, p. 165).

The Feast of Mercy: Sister Faustina’s encounters with Jesus are considered private revelation — that is, a revelation outside of the deposit of faith, and one which the faithful are not obligated to believe. However, these messages have been officially approved by the Church as containing nothing contrary to faith or morals.

In addition, Pope John Paul II recognized in Sister Faustina’s writings a message that was truly from Christ, and relevant to all mankind in every day and age. On April 30, 2000, the first Sunday following Easter, Pope John Paul both canonized Sister Faustina Kowalska and declared in his homily of that day his own desire that the “Second Sunday of Easter . . . from now on throughout the world will be called ‘Divine Mercy Sunday.’”

In conjunction with the Pope’s wishes, on May 5, 2000, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a decree officially establishing the Second Sunday of Easter as “Divine Mercy Sunday.”

It is important to understand that this is not a new feast day in the Church. As explained in the congregation’s document, Divine Mercy Sunday gives an addi-

tional name — a new “appellation” — to the day that is already a solemnity of the liturgical year — that is, the Second Sunday of Easter. With regards to that day’s liturgy, nothing is to be changed in either the texts of the Divine Office or the Missal. In fact, the previously established liturgical readings for the day fit in perfectly with the theme of mercy. In the Gospel, the Lord imparts to the apostles His authority to bind and release the sins of men, thereby instituting the Sacrament of Penance.

The feast of Divine Mercy, then, is a continuation of the celebration of Easter; it is, as Pope John Paul once said, Christ’s “Easter gift” to the world.

“From the Heart of Christ Crucified”: The feast of Divine Mercy is not only a beautiful reminder of the love of God, but also a challenge to a deeper understanding of who He is, and who we are in relation to Him. St. Faustina recognized this truth and responded in her weakness to the power of Christ’s mercy.

At the Mass for Faustina’s canonization, Pope John Paul prayed for her intercession. We should join him in this prayer:

“Divine Mercy reaches human beings from the Heart of Christ crucified. . . . Today, fixing our gaze with you on the face of the Risen Christ, let us make our own your prayer of trusting abandonment and say with firm hope: ‘Jesus, I trust in You!’”

The Chaplet of Divine Mercy: Our Lord gave St. Faustina a set of prayers to invoke His mercy, called the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. On standard rosary beads, pray the following prayers:

First, on the crucifix, one Our Father, Hail Mary and the Apostles’ Creed.

On each Our Father bead, pray: “Eternal Father, I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins, and those of the whole world.”

On each Hail Mary bead, pray: “For the sake of His sorrowful passion, have mercy on us, and on the whole world.”

Repeat for five decades. To conclude, pray three times: “Holy God, holy mighty One, holy immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.”

mass intentions

Date **Intention**

4/15 SATURDAY

4PM

6PM

4/16 SUNDAY

9AM Mike Rochetti ☩ by Troy & Linda Smith

11:30AM Jim St. Peter ☩ by Lydia St. Peter

stewardship of treasure

Donations Received as of April 9 (Week 41)		
CHURCH	ATTENDANCE	OFFERINGS
St. Joseph's	16	\$440
St. Elizabeth's	43	\$611
St. Mary's	19	\$690
St. Theresa's	70	\$1,197
Total	148	\$2,938
Outside Donations		
Year to Date Received		\$120,948
Goal		\$110,385
Ahead/Behind Goal		+ \$10,563

please pray for

Louise Serreno*
Gerry Hankins
Clarence Moore
Lexi Cox
Sarah Wall
Tammy Bennett
Margaret Wasilewski
Nic Ulate
Frannie & Rayburn Minton
Sue Bailey
Christian Lambert
Shane Neal
Archbishop John Kwofie
Pete Belcher
Lucas Boyd
Ralph Heldreth
Chris Jessie
Leo Brown
Carolina Ferrare
Junior Aiken
Jeanne Hash
Lara Marshall
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Glenn Harrison
Donna Petro
Christian Marshall
Tina Rocchetti
Alice Godin
Randy Snyder
Bryan Gunter
Michael Beavers
Natalie Dodge

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Dreama Ritter
Marco Warner
Chris Lambert
Virginia Dy
Mary Muncy
Cindy Lambert
Jean St. Clair
Helen Petro
Clinard Coleman
Joan Harrison
Joe & Yvonne Blevins
Kyle Brown
Bobby Cole
Jeffrey Parkhurst
Fr. Dan Brady
Sarah Walters
Everly Duns
Amelia Proffit
Maurice Law
Zac Carter
Dennis & Frances Savage
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Seth Waddell
Doug Vance
Russ Hatfield
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parish news & events

Holy Family Parish's Spring Mass and picnic will be held on **May 21 at Fincastle Country Club** and is hosted by St. Elizabeth's. Sign up sheets are available at each church and need to be turned in by May 7.

“You believe in me, Thomas, because you have seen me, says the Lord;
blessed are they who have not seen me, but still believe!”
- Jn 20:29

birthdays & anniversaries:

16: Corey White | **19:** Andrew Satmary
20: Vince Shumate, Donnie & Lisa Neal (anniversary) | **22:** Tonya Hylton



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