

Second Sunday of Easter – Divine Mercy Sunday (A)
April 23, 2017.

'Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe'... 'My Lord and my God!' (Jn. 20:18)).

Today is Divine Mercy Sunday, and as we celebrate the end of the Easter Octave, we contemplate the wounded side of our Saviour, the Church's source of life. You recall that on Good Friday as we commemorated the Passion, we heard that as Our Lord hung in death upon the Cross, *one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and at once there came out blood and water (Jn. 19:34)*. These living streams which continue to flow from the Sacred Heart of Our Risen Lord are the saving waters of Baptism by which we are born again and become a new creation, and the Precious Blood of the Eucharist which nourishes this life. St. John Chrysostom explains: *As God took a rib from Adam's side to fashion a woman, so Christ has given us blood and water from his side to fashion the Church. God took the rib when Adam was in a deep sleep, and in the same way Christ gave us the blood and water after his own death.... As a woman nourishes her child with her own blood and milk, so does Christ unceasingly nourish with His own blood those to whom He Himself has given life (The Liturgy of the Hours, Vol. II, p. 275)*. Last Sunday, we renewed our Baptismal promises and resolved to live this life that is ours through grace to its fullness; by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

We know that each time we participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass the fullness of Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost is conveyed to us. Each time we participate in the sacred mysteries, the *Pascha Domini (the Passover of the Lord)*, we die with Christ, we rise with Him and receive from Him the Spirit of Promise who transforms us and unites us to the Father in and through Christ (Fr. M. Louis Merton, *Seasons of Celebration*). The Mass is the Paschal Mystery. So we always celebrate the Mass, every Mass *with the unleavened bread of purity and truth*; that is to say, with faith and devotion, reverence, gratitude and love. The understanding of this truth is what we should seek to *grasp and rightly understand* (Collect, Second Sunday of Easter; *The Roman Missal*). This is the grace that we especially implore on this beautiful Feast.

The water that flows from the Heart of Our Saviour is no less the *water of wisdom (Sir. 15)*; for with St. Paul we *count all things as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus [Our] Lord (Phil. 3:8)*. This is true wisdom for in knowing Christ, we know also ourselves. This is the nature of knowledge; that as we arrive at the knowledge of one truth we are led to another. In this sense, we never cease to learn. Eastertide is a privileged time of instruction or particular catechesis known as *mystagogy*; that is, instruction in the mysteries: when we proceed from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the *sacraments* to the *mysteries (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1075)*. Its aim is to lead us ever more deeply into the Mystery of Christ. *'Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe'*. So we contemplate the wounded side of Christ and we enter into the Mystery of Our Lord's Sacred Heart whose love and mercy we receive and share with the world. This form of liturgical catechesis rightly presupposes a commitment to prayer, personal prayer that is reflective, silent and meaningful; and a serious effort to become mature in the practice of our faith. Because the ultimate

Mystery is God Himself, we can easily understand why in the contemplation of this Mystery we are always beginners, always in need of initiation; and because we grow and change and our lives change, the reality of this Mystery must be brought to bear on the different stages of our lives. So we celebrate Easter anew this year and never exhaust the treasures of knowledge and wisdom that Our Saviour communicates to us through grace.

In our age God revealed the immeasurable riches of His grace through the witness of St. Faustina, a messenger of the Merciful Heart of Jesus. To her Our Lord entrusted the message of Divine Mercy and specifically the devotional prayer which we know as the *Chaplet of Divine Mercy*. The chaplet is in essence, an extension of the Mass, the perfect prayer given to us by Our Lord. The Mass is Calvary and in the Mass Our Lord provides everyone who loves Him with an opportunity to be with Him on Calvary, where, for the world's salvation He offered the Sacrifice of His Life. The prayers of the chaplet extend this offering: *Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; In atonement for our sins and those who the whole world. For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, Have mercy on us and on the whole world.* These prayers echo the Solemn Intercessions of Good Friday which embrace the whole world and its needs.

The Church lives from the Sacrifice of her Lord, the Sacrifice of Calvary. This Sacrifice is what sustains us and gives us hope. Many in our day are deprived of this Sacrifice either because of persecution or because of heresy; but we by God's mercy are not so deprived. In His infinite goodness Our Lord has revealed to us a prayer that enables us wherever we are, to unite ourselves with His Sacrifice and offer to the eternal Father *the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; In atonement for our sins and those who the whole world.*

On this Divine Mercy Sunday as we rejoice in the peace and glory of the resurrection and all the marvels that are wrought by the thread of God's mercy that binds us all together, we affirm our belief that *everything comes from love, all is ordained for the salvation of man, God does nothing without this goal in mind* (St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue on Providence*, Ch. IV, 138). I invite all of you to join us for the celebration of the *Hour of Mercy* this afternoon beginning at 2:00 with Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament. In the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar Our Lord remains in our midst and He teaches us by means of His loving presence to adore the Father *in spirit and in truth*; and to imitate His own Sacrificial love, so that we too like St. Faustina may become apostles of His Divine Mercy.