

Sunday, April 23, 2017

Second Sunday of Easter

Divine Mercy Sunday

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 2:42-47

2nd Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Responsorial: Psalm 118: 2-4, 13-15, 22-24

Gospel: John 20: 19-31

Rejoicing in God's Divine Mercy and Great Love

Rejoice. (1 Peter 1:8)

Today is Divine Mercy Sunday. It's a special day for us to reflect on and rejoice in the merciful love God has for us. It's an opportunity for us to celebrate the eternal inheritance Jesus has won for us, an inheritance that is "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (1 Peter 1:4).

We all know what mercy looks like. It's the judge who knows you are guilty but pardons you anyway. It's the mother who has caught you in a lie but forgives you. It's Jesus saying, "Your sins are forgiven. . . . Go in peace" (Luke 7:48, 50). It's the mercy that brings you "an indescribable and glorious joy" (1 Peter 1:8).

The Old Testament tells us about God's merciful love. When God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, he promised to show mercy to everyone who loves him and obeys his word (Exodus 20:6). King David sang about the Lord who "pardons," "heals," and "redeems" us because he is "merciful and gracious" (Psalm 103:3, 4, 8). Even the prophets, who regularly spoke about doom and destruction for the "rebel Israel," also recalled God's desire to pour his merciful love on his people (Isaiah 63:9; Jeremiah 3:12; Hosea 14:3; Micah 7:18).

The teaching of God's merciful love shines even brighter in the Gospels. It runs through every one of Jesus' parables, miracles, and teachings, until it reaches its climax on the cross, when he prays, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34).

Pause for a moment and picture God's merciful love flowing into you. See yourself as the imperfect, sinful person you know you are. Now, see Jesus washing you clean and embracing you.

If we were to forget about God's mercy, the guilt and shame of our sins could weigh heavily on us. If we were to forget that we are sinners in need of mercy, we would risk being blinded by our sins and unable to enjoy God's wonderful fountain of merciful love. May we never forget! May we always rejoice!

"Jesus, I rejoice in your mercy! Help me become an instrument of your mercy to the people around me."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission. For more information on how to subscribe to their devotional magazine, go to www.wau.org).

Sunday, April 16, 2017

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. In the first reading from Acts, we see the vibrancy of the early church: “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles... Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people.” As a result of this vibrancy, “every day the Lord added to their numbers those who were being saved.”
 - How would you describe the characteristics of the early church that caused it to attract so many people?
 - Which ones would really benefit the Church today, and what steps can you take to help make them a greater reality in your parish?
2. The responsorial psalm, like the first reading, speaks of God’s great love and mercy. The response to the psalm is “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love is everlasting” and the opening refrain is, “His mercy endures forever.” The message of the psalm is also one of hope and trust in the Lord, especially in times of trouble.
 - Why do you believe the psalmist was so filled with joy and confidence that he could exclaim, “This is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it”?
 - What can you do to make this your disposition each morning when you first wake up?
3. The second reading from 1 Peter also speaks of joy in the midst of trials and suffering, and the basis of this joy: “In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ ... as you attain the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”
 - How would you describe the basis of the joy we have as Christians?
 - How often do you reflect on these in your times of prayer or during the day?
 - If you were to increase these times of reflection, what impact do you think it would have on how you lived out your day? What simple steps can you take to cause this to happen?
4. The Gospel contrasts the joy of the disciples when they “saw the Lord” with the doubts of the apostle Thomas. After appearing to Thomas, he is able to proclaim, “My Lord and my God.” Jesus then responds to Thomas with these words, “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and believe”.
 - What message was Jesus conveying by saying, “Blessed are those who have not seen and believe”?
 - In what way has the risen Lord revealed the truth of who he is to you so that you are also able to say, “My Lord and my God”?
5. The meditation begins with these words: “Today is Divine Mercy Sunday. It’s a special day for us to reflect on and rejoice in the merciful love God has for us. It’s an opportunity for us to celebrate the eternal inheritance Jesus has won for us, an inheritance that is ‘imperishable, undefiled, and unfading’ (1 Peter 1:4).” It goes on to describe many examples of God’s merciful love from both the Old and New Testament.
 - What do you believe God is trying to reveal to you about his merciful love through the Scriptures?
 - How do they apply to your life?
6. The meditation ends with these words: “Pause for a moment and picture God’s merciful love flowing into you. See yourself as the imperfect, sinful person you know you are. Now, see Jesus washing you clean and embracing you. If we were to forget about God’s mercy, the guilt and shame of our sins could weigh heavily on us. If we were to forget that we are sinners in need of mercy, we would risk being blinded by our sins and unable to enjoy God’s wonderful fountain of merciful love. May we never forget! May we always rejoice!”
 - What steps can you take to open yourself in a greater way to “God’s merciful love”?
7. Take some time now to pray that you would experience more deeply God’s “Divine Mercy” and be used as an instrument of this mercy to others. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Jesus, I rejoice in your mercy! Help me become an instrument of your mercy to the people around me.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the **National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal** (<http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org/>) and a member of the board of

As posted on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal National Service Committee’s website: www.nsc-chariscenter.org

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