

Homily by Fr. Robert Matter

## Divine Mercy Sunday

April 11, 2010

This is the second Sunday after Easter, called Mercy Sunday. It is good that the Church sets one Sunday aside to celebrate the Mercy of God. This particular Sunday is very appropriate for such a celebration for it follows upon God's greatest merciful act upon all of humankind, the Resurrection of His Son, whereby Jesus passed from death to life. This showed all peoples that there is a life after death, giving meaning to our earthbound life. Jesus' passion and death have reconciled us to God making it possible for us to enter into God's own way of life. For what good would life have been for us, had Christ not come as our Redeemer? All of this is due to God's Mercy. Someone has written, "How shall we thank Thee enough for Thy mercy, which comes down to the lowest part of our needs, to give us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and for the spirit of heaviness a garment of praise?" How we should bless and magnify God for showing us such mercy through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

It has been observed that both the Old and New Testament proclaim the Mercy of God and that the Old has more than four times as much to say about it as the New. Now is it true that justice and judgment characterize the God of the Old Testament, while mercy and grace belong to the New Testament? Actually, there is no difference between the two dispensations of the Old and New Testament. In the New Testament, there is a fuller development of redemptive truth, but one God speaks in both dispensations and what he speaks agrees with what He is. He speaks of mercy because He is merciful.

God's mercy is the goodness of God confronting human suffering. Or to put it another way it is human misery and sin that calls forth divine mercy. We see this clearly in the life of Jesus. Whenever Jesus was face to face with human misery, such as blindness, deafness, dumbness, leprosy or demonic possession, his heart reached out to cure the person afflicted. One of the most moving incidents in the New Testament that brings out Jesus' mercy and compassion was the bringing back to life the only son of a widowed mother. Jesus meets the funeral procession and his heart goes out to the grieving mother and restores her son to her. What joy and happiness filled that mother's heart. So too when Jesus is face to face with sin, it calls forth His mercy. This is clearly seen in the story of the adulterous woman who was brought before Jesus. After disposing of the scribes and Pharisees who brought her to Him, He simply asked, "Has no one condemned you?" She answered, "No Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go and do not sin again." Jesus is merciful but not indulgent, He tells her "Not to sin again." To my mind, the greatest manifestation of the mercy of Jesus when confronted by sinners was when He was crucified and hanging from the cross with the hostile crowd around him. Jesus was not

filled with bitterness but said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Jesus even finds an excuse for them: "they know not what they do. Can we forgive like that? We need to, or at least be working toward it, if we call ourselves a follower of Christ-a Christian.

In recent times, the great propagator of divine mercy was St. Faustina. In past centuries St. Benedict understood the importance of mercy in our life. In his Chapter of Good Works in his Rule he lists 72 good works, the last of them being "New despair of God's mercy." A good Scriptural example of this is Peter and Judas. Peter after his denial of Jesus went out, wept bitterly, and remained true to Jesus. Judas betrayed the Lord and afterwards was filled with remorse and hung himself. He despaired of the Mercy of Jesus.

God's mercy is boundless, free and through Jesus is available to us now in our present situation. So I leave you with a question: Could our failure to capture the pure joy of mercy consciously experienced be the result of our unbelief, our ignorance or both? Or perhaps the question does not apply to you. If so, you are truly blessed and will sing forever the goodness of the Lord and proclaim his faithfulness and mercifulness now and forever and ever.