

Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy) 2023

Many years ago I studied canon law. In one of our first classes we were given some direction by the professor. He asked us to turn to the last canon of the Latin code which states, in part, "The supreme law of the church is the salvation of souls". This was also the in the last canon of the 1917 Code. By now you are thinking: "Oh no, He is going to talk about church law today". I only mention this because our second reading tells us that the salvation of souls is the goal of our faith and the gift salvation is one thing we celebrate today.

It is with salvation in mind that we celebrate the Second Sunday of Easter as a Sunday of Divine Mercy. Today is the last day of the Easter Octave, the eighth day. The Easter Octave is mentioned at both ends in today's gospel. The eighth day, Sunday, is the day when the early Christians assembled and met to commemorate Our Lord's Resurrection. The importance of Sunday springs from the fact that it is the day when Our Lord resurrected from the dead, and as such, in Christianity, Sunday replaces the Old Testament Sabbath day.

During His first Sunday appearance to the Apostles, the Risen Lord sends them out into the world for the salvation of souls, as the Father sent him. He gives them the authority and power to make God's mercy present through the forgiveness of sins.

In proclaiming God's love and mercy for the salvation of souls, difficulties and sufferings arise. Just like when we start a new diet, or take on Lenten observances, it does not take long after baptism for challenges to Christian living to arise. Our faith is tested by fire and grows; it is through trials that one shares in Christ's redeeming task in suffering for the salvation of souls, for Christ's Resurrection is the basis of the Christian hope during the adversities of this present life.

At the same time, with Jesus' words, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Our Lord also sends, not only the Apostles, but all of the baptized Christians to be His instruments of God's mercy and love. How? Not only by performing works of mercy, but imitating God the Father Himself, who is merciful, living it in all its aspects: being forgiving, compassionate, patient, kind to all, even to those who do us harm.

It is the words Jesus uses when he sends out his Church that we can understand why today is also called Divine Mercy Sunday. Not only do we have the mercy of God made known to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, but we have the mission given to bring this news to the world. In some respect we have returned to Holy Thursday. Now that the paschal mystery is completed, it is time to go and wash feet. It is now time to take the love and mercy of God we have experienced and share it with others, something which can be as messy as washing feet.

What we do on Sunday matters for the Christian. St. John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*, Keeping the Lord's Day Holy, expressed three hopes in the introduction of this document.

That this document would help to recover the deep doctrinal foundations of the Church's precepts so that the abiding value of Sunday in Christian life will be clear to all the faithful.

That the age-old tradition and teaching of the Church would be renewed so that Christian believers should come together to hear God's Word and share in the Eucharist.

That Sunday would again be at the heart of Christian life so that we may live the demands of faith

to the full and respond concretely to the deepest human longing.

Sunday is the “very heart of Christian life,” therefore the celebration of the Eucharist is the very heart of Sunday. The Eucharist is the celebration of the living presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of his own people. The Eucharist is the “fountainhead” of the Church; it feeds and forms the Church. The Lord’s Day is Easter which returns week by week.

According to St. Jerome: “Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, it is the day of Christians, it is our day” .

May Christ and his boundless and inexhaustible love always be the basis of our hope. May we live with joy, optimism and serenity, especially during moments of suffering. May we be God’s instruments of mercy and love to those around us. May we be truly grateful to God not only through words and feelings, but also through deeds, in particular, giving more importance to the Sunday Mass where we celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.