



The best word to describe God's Compassionate Heart

Mercy

The Church celebrates the Feast of Divine Mercy the Sunday after Easter. This is a fitting time to focus on God's forgiving love, the mercy poured out through the suffering, death and resurrection of His Son, including the mercy He shows each one of us in ways too numerous to count.

Mercy means God's Heart desiring to alleviate our misery. Personal sin causes misery. The "Good News" is that Jesus is the Divine Physician who came to heal the sickness of sin. As we receive the forgiveness He offers, we are compelled by this love to trust in Him and avoid sin in the future. The word trust is significant as it is a key aspect of the Divine Mercy message from Jesus. Trust is not blind, wishful thinking but **hope** based upon the Person who gave His life for us. Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine to go after the one, lost sheep. He is grieved – heartsick – until He finds this one sheep, and then lifts it upon His shoulders and carries it home. This describes Jesus' deep, personal love for *each* one of us.

Trust starts small and grows through experience. We practice and live trust on a daily basis "by praising and thanking God in all things." (Consoling the Heart of Jesus, Fr. Michael Gaitley, p. 95) This is the most practical place to start in our desire to trust Jesus in everyday circumstances. Watch for

the effect it will have!

The merciful love of God is the central theme of the Bible and it is prevalent in the readings for Mass. The Psalm after the First Reading for Divine Mercy Sunday puts words around the Lord's merciful love and what it means to trust Him. "I was hard pressed and was falling, but the LORD helped me. My strength and my courage is the LORD, and He has been my Savior" (Psalm 118:13-15). We can ask Jesus to help us grow in our trust of Him, above all when we are "hard pressed" and "falling".

The Gospel describes the Risen Christ instituting the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a "Sacrament of Mercy," as He breathes on the Apostles and says to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (John 20; 22-23).

Jesus gave to Sr. Faustina, a Polish nun, messages about God's mercy and how much we need it. "Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to My mercy." "My mercy is greater than your sins, and those of the entire world. I let My Sacred Heart be pierced with a lance, thus opening wide the source of mercy for you. Come then with trust to draw graces from this fountain." (Diary of St. Faustina, 300, 1485)

The greatest attribute of God is His mercy. "The mercy of Christ is not a

cheap grace; it does not presume a trivialization of evil. Christ carries in His body and in His soul all the weight of evil, and all its destructive force. He burns and transforms evil through suffering, in the fire of His suffering love." (Benedict XVI, Pope Emeritus) This is most evidently seen as we gaze upon the Crucifix, where Jesus takes upon Himself our sins that we might be freed from them and know His peace and joy.

This fountain of mercy is most especially received in the Sacrament of Reconciliation where we experience forgiveness and healing in a tangible way. Jesus said, "When you go to confession, know this, that I Myself am waiting there for you. I am only hidden by the priest, but I Myself act in your soul. Here the misery of the soul meets the God of mercy.... and I fill it with My light." (1602, 1725)

God has given us a great gift with this Sacrament of Mercy. Set aside time for you and your family to receive the immense freeing and healing grace of making a good confession and receiving forgiveness. The Lord provides a release of guilt, shame, and other burdens of personal sin, and most especially, He gives *His* peace that cannot be taken away from us, a peace that is beyond our understanding.

By Ann Lankford

