



Mercy

The Word that Describes God's Heart

The Church celebrates the Feast of Divine Mercy, the Sunday after Easter, on the 27th of April. 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 caused by personal sin. The "Good News" is that Jesus is the Divine Physician who came to heal the sickness of sin. As we receive His forgiveness, we are compelled by this love to **trust** Jesus 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 is the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine to go after the one lost sheep. He is grieved – heartsick – until He finds this sheep, and then lifts it upon His shoulders and carries it home. This describes Jesus' personal love for each 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 place to begin in our desire to trust Jesus.

The merciful love of God is the central theme of the Bible and it is prevalent in the readings for Mass. The Psalm prayed 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 trust Him, especially 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, 300,1485)

The greatest attribute of God is His mercy. 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)

Set aside time for you and your family to receive the immense healing grace of making a good confession and receiving forgiveness. The Lord will bless you with *His* peace.

The simple **Chaplet of Divine Mercy** can be prayed anytime, but it is especially encouraged at the Hour of Mercy, which is 3:00PM - the hour of Jesus' death - or when someone is near death. The **Novena to Divine Mercy begins on Good Friday**. Find directions and the brief prayers for the Novena at the parish or visit thedinemercy.org.

By Ann Lankford