

# Got Questions?

By Fr. George W. Kosicki, CSB, with David Came

## **Q. What is Divine Mercy Sunday?**

A. Divine Mercy Sunday is the title of the Second Sunday of the Easter season. It was named by Pope John Paul II at the canonization of St. Maria Faustina on April 30, 2000, and then officially decreed by the Vatican.

Pope John Paul II said of Divine Mercy Sunday, "In a special way, it is the Sunday of thanksgiving for all the goodness that God has shown us in the whole Easter mystery" (April 23, 1995).

Here, he underscored the Church's understanding that Divine Mercy Sunday as the Octave Day of Easter brings us the fullness of Christ's Resurrection - pointing back to the first day of our celebration on Easter Sunday and now to its fullness on the eighth day, the Octave.

Divine Mercy Sunday, then, can be seen as the convergence of all the mysteries and graces of both Holy Week and Easter Week. It is like a multiple-exposure photograph of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Easter Week. On Mercy Sunday, the Octave Day of Easter, we celebrate the great graces that are available to us through our risen Lord's victory over sin, death, and the Evil One.

In fact, our Lord revealed to St. Faustina, the great Apostle of Divine Mercy, that He desires on this day to pour out a flood of mercy on souls:

*My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the Fount of My Mercy (Diary of St. Faustina, 699).*

## **Q. What graces can I receive on the day?**

A. Our Lord revealed to St. Faustina His desire to flood us with His graces on that day. Reflect on each of the promises and desires that He expressed about Divine Mercy Sunday, which are recorded in entry 699 of the *Diary of St. Faustina* - the main passage about the Feast of Mercy:

- *On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open.*
- *I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon souls who approach the Fount of My Mercy [the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist].*
- *The soul that will go to Confession [beforehand] and receive Holy Communion [on that day] shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment.*
- *On that day all the divine floodgates through which graces flow are opened.*
- *Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet.*
- *My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout eternity.*
- *Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity.*
- *The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness.*
- *It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter.*
- *Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy.*

These promises and desires point to an amazing flood of graces that are available to us on Divine Mercy Sunday - including complete forgiveness of sins and punishment! The slate can be wiped clean, and we can be granted a completely fresh start in life.

**Q. What about the indulgences for Divine Mercy Sunday? How can I receive an indulgence for myself or for a soul in purgatory?**

A. First, we need to make one thing clear: The extraordinary graces mentioned in the last answer, which are based on private revelations contained in St. Faustina's *Diary*, are not replaced by the indulgences that the Church has granted for the feast day. Rather, the plenary and partial indulgences provide the faithful with another opportunity to receive graces on Divine Mercy Sunday - either for oneself or a soul in purgatory. And this opportunity for graces is officially sanctioned by the Church.

To understand these graces, we must understand what an indulgence is. When we sin, we not only offend God, but we also introduce disorder into our life and the lives of other people. It's true that in the Sacrament of Reconciliation we receive forgiveness from God through the ministry of the Church when we repent, confess our sins, and do penance with a firm intention to amend our lives. Even so, because of our sins, some disorder usually remains. There are also temporal consequences or punishments attached to that disorder. ("Temporal" simply means relating to our earthly existence.)

However, the good news is that Christ has given us His Church. As His Mystical Body, she has been granted the power to bind and loose in His name and to distribute graces from His superabundant treasury of merits - all flowing from His redemptive death. These treasures of redemption are available to all the faithful and can be used to remit or take away the temporal punishment due to sin for ourselves or the deceased. Further, they can be partial or plenary (complete).

In the case of Divine Mercy Sunday, Pope John Paul II in 2002 granted plenary and partial indulgences "motivated by an ardent desire to foster in Christians this devotion to Divine Mercy ... in the hope of offering great spiritual fruit to the faithful," according to the official decree.

To receive the plenary indulgence, the decree explained that the faithful must go to confession, receive the Eucharist, and offer prayers for the intentions of the Pope. One must also "with a soul totally detached from affection to any sin, even venial, participate in the pious practices undertaken in honor of Divine Mercy, or at least to recite in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament ... the Our Father, the Creed, and a pious invocation to the Merciful Lord Jesus."

A partial indulgence is granted to the faithful, who, at least with a contrite heart, pray to Jesus a legitimately approved invocation or prayer.

### **Q. Why should I go to confession beforehand?**

A. You should go beforehand so that you can receive the best possible Holy Communion on Divine Mercy Sunday. Sin is the obstacle to our fervent reception of Holy Communion, and our sins can be wiped away by the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Penance. This is the Sacrament of Mercy that our Lord in St. Faustina's *Diary* calls "the Tribunal of Mercy" (1448) and the "fountain of My mercy" (1602). We should receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to Divine Mercy Sunday for a couple of reasons. First, the purpose of Lent is to prepare us for Easter and Divine Mercy Sunday, so we shouldn't wait until the last moment. Second, going earlier shows pastoral sensitivity to the fact that there is usually a shortage of priests to hear everyone's confession on the day itself.

### **Q. What about receiving Holy Communion on the day itself?**

A. In receiving Holy Communion, we receive Jesus who is Mercy Incarnate. Receiving Him on Divine Mercy Sunday is extra special because He has promised to give us so many graces. Besides making a good confession, we should prepare through prayer, recollection, and expectation of the Lord's desire to show us His mercy.

Jesus told St. Faustina how much He desires to come to human hearts in the Holy Eucharist, but far too many of them are not well disposed to receive Him: "Know, My daughter, that when I come to a human heart in Holy Communion, My hands are full of all kinds of graces which I want to give to the soul. But souls do not even pay attention to Me" (*Diary*, 1385).

On Divine Mercy Sunday, we should strive to make the best Holy Communion of our lives - with the eyes of our soul fixed on Jesus.

### **Q. Why should the priest or deacon give his homily on Divine Mercy on that day?**

A. The priest or deacon is called to give his homily on the Scripture readings of the day, and the readings of all three cycles for that Sunday (A, B, and C) are on mercy. Pope John

Paul II emphasized this very point in his homily at St. Faustina's canonization when he established Divine Mercy Sunday for the whole Church.

The Responsorial Psalm 118 is a hymn to God's mercy. In John 20:19- 31, the Gospel of the day for all three cycles, Jesus institutes the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Also, in the same Gospel reading, St. Thomas professes "my Lord and my God!" This is Thomas's great act of trust in Divine Mercy Incarnate after the Merciful Savior shows him the wounds of mercy in His hands and in His side.

**Q. On Divine Mercy Sunday, should I venerate the image of Jesus, The Divine Mercy?**

A. Yes, the image of Jesus, The Divine Mercy, is to be venerated on Divine Mercy Sunday. It is to be given a place of honor in our churches and homes on this Sunday. Our Lord appeared to St. Faustina and then directed her to have this appearance of Himself as the Merciful Savior painted and then venerated publicly. He told her, "I want the image to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter, and I want it to be venerated publicly so that every soul may know about it" (*Diary*, 341).

In the image, our risen Savior has pale and red rays streaming from His side. These rays symbolize the Blood and Water that flowed from His side while He was on the cross. But, in His appearance to St. Faustina, they have been transformed into glorious rays, revealing a fount of healing graces for sinners who will turn to Him with trust. That is why the image always bears the inscription "Jesus, I trust in You!" In our churches and homes, we can venerate The Divine Mercy image by gazing upon the Merciful Savior in prayer and adoration. We can place candles and flowers before the image as signs of our love for Jesus.

**Q. What are some of the other aspects of preparing for and celebrating the day?**

A. There are a great many options.

*In preparation:* We begin to prepare in Lent for our celebration of Easter and Divine Mercy Sunday (its Octave Day). We especially focus on performing works of mercy, spending more time in prayer, as well as by doing penances and giving alms. Praying The Divine Mercy Chaplet and the Novena to The Divine Mercy can be particularly helpful in our preparations.

Many souls also benefit from doing more spiritual reading during Lent. Consider, for example, studying The Divine Mercy message and devotion through books, DVDs, and CDs.

*The celebration itself:* Divine Mercy Sunday, for many parishes, involves large numbers of people gathering to celebrate Holy Masses at which God's mercy is proclaimed by the priests or deacons. Holy Hours before the Blessed Sacrament can also be held at points throughout the weekend - perhaps starting before the Vigil Mass on Saturday. Additional priests may be present to hear the confessions of those parishioners who did not go before Mercy Sunday.

There are many ways to enhance your liturgical celebrations. When appropriate, The Divine Mercy Chaplet can be recited or even sung. Hymns of mercy and readings from Sacred Scripture, as well as readings from the *Diary of St. Faustina*, can be offered. A parish might show various DVDs or films. Organizers might provide a book table with a selection of Divine Mercy books, booklets, and pamphlets.

As we receive God's mercy, we are called to share it with others. So all participants should be encouraged to venerate an image of The Divine Mercy and to perform a work of mercy on the day itself out of love for Jesus. A solemn service to mark the Hour of Great Mercy could be at three in the afternoon. At this time, we recall the hour when the Merciful Savior died on the cross for our sins. This is a particularly appropriate time for praying The Divine Mercy Chaplet, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and Benediction.

At the end of your Divine Mercy Sunday celebration, the pastor or deacon could encourage participants to avail themselves of the extraordinary graces that they've just received. He could encourage them to realize that Divine Mercy is a whole way of life - not just for Mercy Sunday. That means trusting in Jesus and being merciful every day of our lives.

*This article is adapted from the booklet [Why Mercy Sunday?](#) by Fr. George W. Kosicki, CSB, with David Came. The late Fr. Kosicki was a well-known speaker, author, and authority on Divine Mercy. His many books include [John Paul II: The Great Mercy Pope](#) and [Mercy Minutes](#). David Came is the former executive editor of Marian Helper magazine.*