

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER IN YEAR B (DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY)

Acts 4:32-35; Psalm 117:2-4, 13-15, 22-24 (R.1); 1 John 5:1-7; John 20:29; John 20:19-31

MISSIONARIES OF DIVINE MERCY

God prefers mercy to sacrifice.” - St. Vincent de Paul, VII: 66

Mary Faustina Kowalska was born on 25 August 1905 in Glogowiec, Poland, to a poor, religious family of peasants, the third of 10 children. The mission of Sr. Mary Faustina consists of three tasks: reminding the world of the truth of our faith revealed in the Holy Scripture about the merciful love of God towards every human being; entreating God's mercy for the whole world, and particularly for sinners, and initiating the apostolic movement of the Divine Mercy, whose task is to proclaim and entreat God's mercy for the world.

My dear brothers and sisters, today we celebrate the Divine Mercy Sunday. On May 5, 2000, five days after the Canonisation of St. Faustina, the second Sunday of Easter was officially designated as Divine Mercy Sunday by Pope John Paul II. Being celebrated aptly when Christ accomplished his mission of mercy on the cross, Divine Mercy is the Easter gift the Church receives from the risen Christ and offers to humanity.

God, our heavenly Father is the author of all mercies who, in his compassionate love for his children sent his only begotten son to sacrifice his life for our redemption. Having accomplished this onerous task, in the gospel pericope, he ensured the continuity of the mission of mercy to humanity by empowering his Apostles with the capacity to forgive sins. Hence, we have the sacrament of reconciliation (v. 23).

On the other hand, one of his apostles, Thomas, in his absence, missed the blessing that goes with community moments and doubted that Christ was resurrected. What you miss whenever you miss community moments cannot be overemphasized. However, having seen Jesus on his next appearance to them, he was convinced. But Jesus said, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” (v. 29)

Who were those Jesus referred to? It could be you and I who weren't born when he was in the world physically. Beyond that, it's for those who believe in him. Now, belief is not just professed in words, it must also be in deeds. So those who are blessed are those who are merciful which proves their belief in Christ. That's why Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” (Mt. 5:7)

Now, the phrase, ‘the first day’ (v.19) refers to the beginning of a new era, the ‘era of mercy.’ In retrospect to the creation when God breathed his spirit into man (Gen.2:7), Jesus breathed on his disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit (v.22) and the power to forgive sins (v.23). No wonder he greeted them, “peace be with you.” “Shalom” (v.21); which means, “May God give you every good thing.” They were given every good thing to be missionaries of mercy.

When there is mercy there is forgiveness, and this fosters community life. Since it is the will of God for all his children to live a community life, mercy is an essential requirement (a sine qua non indeed) and proof of its authenticity. Consequently, the early Christians that we heard in the first reading remain exemplary of a true Christian community because they shared everything in common (Acts 4:32-35).

Therefore, to continue the good work that our predecessors started we have to love one another by obedience to God's commandments, as John exhorts in the second reading (1 John 5:1-3). We can achieve it if we abstain from the temptation of doubt of the word of God, individualism, selfishness, judgmentalism, bigotry, racism, etc. and be community-oriented by constantly encouraging values like selflessness, forgiveness, humility, service, kindness, etc.

Grant that by learning from Jesus Christ we may be merciful as missionaries of mercy in our war-torn world, Amen.

HAPPY SUNDAY OF DIVINE MERCY!

Nicholas Ikpeme, CM

Witnessers' Homilies (Mt.10:32)