

Sunday, April 8th 11:30am Mass
Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy)
By Bill Pitocco

Eight days ago we and all the rest of the 1.3 billion Catholics throughout the world celebrated with wonder and gratitude the Resurrection of our Lord. Today, we turn our eyes back to the little group of Apostles, the 1st 12 parishioners of the Catholic church, who, eight days after Easter Sunday, were gathered in the upper room. And Jesus appears to them, once again, in the glory of his resurrected body, effortlessly passing through their locked glorious wounds, mercifully removing all doubts that had separated him from the rest of the tiny church. And then he looks into the eyes of his Apostles, breathes on them, and gives them the power and task to forgive sins in his name. This was the start of the sacrament of confession, which ever since then has been bringing other stray sheep back into the Good Shepherd's merciful care.

Almost 20 centuries after that encounter, in the year 2000, Pope Saint John Paul II established this first Sunday after Easter as a universal Feast of the Church in honor of that Divine Mercy. In so doing, he was fulfilling a request our Lord himself made in his appearances to the Polish nun, St Faustina Kowalska. Just the thought of Christ's mercy fills us with confidence and hope. But it should also fill us with humility. If Christ is so eager to spread the news about his boundless mercy, it's because we need that mercy. It's because sin is a reality in our lives and in our world, and sin causes real damage that only Christ can repair. This is the tough side of God's mercy - the reality of sin. Sin, of any kind, big or little, eventually causes misery. It separates us from God. But without God, it is impossible for us to live a meaningful life. This is why God's mercy is so crucial.

I found a story that helps illustrate this point. Maria was a poor widow who lived in a Brazilian village with her thirteen year old daughter, Christina. For years, they had survived on Maria's humble salary. Now her beautiful, joyful daughter Christina wanted to find a job too. She dreamed about an exciting life in the big city, even though her mother tried to convince her that a poor, uneducated youngster would only find trouble there. One morning Maria awoke to find her daughter's bed empty. Maria knew immediately where her daughter had gone, and set out to find

her. On her way to the bus stop she went into a photograph booth at the drugstore and spent all she could on pictures of herself. With her purse full of small black and white photos, she boarded the next bus to Rio de Janeiro. Maria knew Christina had no way of earning money, but was too stubborn to give up. When pride meets hunger, a human can justify doing things that they wouldn't have one before. Maria began her search through the city. At each place she left her picture - taped to a light post, in a grocery store, at a restaurant, on hotel bulletin boards and at corner phone booths. And on the back of each photo, she wrote a note. She took the bus back to her small village. A few months later young Christina descended the stairway of the place she was living. Her face was tired. Her formerly joyful eyes now spoke of pain and fear. Her dream had become a nightmare. She felt hopeless, trapped, and ashamed, and wanted to go home. Yet in her mind, the little village was, in many ways, too far away. As she reached the bottom of the stairs, her eyes noticed a familiar face. She looked again, and taped on the lobby mirror was a small picture of her mother. Christina's eyes burned and her throat tightened as she walked across the room and removed the small photo. Written on the back was this compelling invitation: "Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it doesn't matter. I love you. Please come home." Christina did go home.

We all need to be reminded of these difficult truths, because life in this world can get distracting. And the reminder God is giving us today will bear fruit in our lives if we follow the ABC's of the Divine Mercy. What are the ABC's of Divine mercy you ask? Well, in honor of our own beloved Father Mario I'll break them down for you..

A. Ask for mercy. The best way to ask for his mercy for ourselves is through the sacrament of confession, entrusted to the Church on this very day 2000 years ago. Here is what Jesus told St Faustina about confession: When you approach the confessional, 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 we can also ask for mercy for others, especially by praying for those who don't trust or believe in Christ's mercy.

B. Be merciful. Jesus told St Faustina, "I demand from you deeds of mercy... You are to show deeds of mercy to your neighbors always and everywhere." This means doing good things for others not because they deserve it or to get a reward, but simply in order to follow in the footsteps of our merciful Lord. But where can we find the strength to do that?

C. Completely trust in Jesus. Jesus himself will give us his grace, if we let him. He will

make us into ambassadors of his mercy, just as he did with the first Apostles. What are the ABC's of Divine mercy – A- Ask for Mercy, B -Be Merciful and C- Completely trust in Jesus!

Whenever we are afraid to Ask for mercy, when we feel too weak to Be merciful, we should simply pray the prayer that Jesus told St Faustina to write underneath the image of his Divine Mercy: "Jesus, I trust in you." When we think our dreams have faded, that our lives are hopeless, that we are trapped or ashamed of something we've done, you have to remember, that your village is not too far away. God sent Jesus to this earth to find you, to find us. And along the way he and those who have gone after him, have left pictures for us everywhere. Jesus is God's picture taped to a Roman cross and they are all over the world for you! When you see it, run to it! Know that no matter what you have done, no matter who you have become, On this Divine mercy Sunday, know that Jesus loves you and he wants you to come home