

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST'S DIVINE MERCY

Today has become known as Divine Mercy Sunday. And it was Pope St. John Paul II who was from Poland and knew the nun to whom God gave the message about wanting to be revealed to the world as full of mercy, divine mercy. He knew that sister and he was touched by the message that had been entrusted to her. And so, when he became pope, one of the things that he did was to look into the cause for her canonization. She was named a Saint and there were miracles attributed to her intercession. This is a kind of a heavenly validation of the message that had been given to her. She was not a famous person. She was a nun in the convent, and she died at 33. She'd only been a nun maybe 12 years. And yet God chose her with a message.

This morning I ask you to focus on a couple of things. Look at the crucifix and see Jesus hanging there. He has died. You see the droplets of blood from his side. He gave his life for us to the last drop. Then I want you to look at this stained-glass window behind me, the stained glass of the Sacred Heart. And so, this is in the sixteen-hundreds and Jesus reveals to another nun, to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, and he says, "I want people to focus their attention on the love that is in my heart for them, for you." And if you look, he's touching his heart. His heart is surrounded by a crown of thorns, indicating what he endured, the mockery, the pain. There's a cross emanating from the heart and there's flame at the base of the cross. His heart is aflame, and his love is unleashed in what he endured on the cross. He reveals his heart, and his heart is his Sacred Heart.

So why do we need this new revelation in the 20th century, 400 years later? Because Jesus is saying, "You look at this and eventually the longer you look at this, this you start to focus on my heart. And as you focus on my heart, you need to get a deeper understanding of what flows still from my heart. That's the Divine Mercy. There isn't much mercy in our world today. There's a lot of judgment; there's a lot of harsh criticism; there's a lot of accusation; there's a lot of finger pointing, but not much mercy and not much forgiveness. And these were the things that Jesus brought. Do you think it was only to the world at that time that there was need for mercy and forgiveness? Or is it that the world of all times needs mercy and needs forgiveness?"

We have to focus our attention on our Lord. There's a series that began the last couple of years. I'm sure some of you are familiar with it. It's called *The Chosen*. And there were eight episodes in the first season, eight episodes in the second season, and eight more in the third season. It is about Jesus choosing those who are going to be his followers. And you get a sense of what that was like in those days and the political forces that were at place in place, whether it was in the religion world of the Judaism or whether the Roman world of the empire and you, you get a sense of how people are trying to navigate and hold on to things they either understood or misunderstood. You begin to get a sense of what is going on. So, there's a scene in the very beginning series where Nicodemus, one of the Jewish leaders and member of the Sanhedrin who comes to Jesus at night. Before that Nicodemus was asked to cast out demons from this woman. And he goes into the red-light district, to where she is, and he prays over her, and he has no success in ridding her of her demons and compulsions. But there is no doubt he sees her the way she is. Her life is out of control.

Later on, he sees her and she's at peace. She's centered, she's a completely different person. And so, he goes up to her and he says, "Are you the one that I prayed over and tried to heal?" And she said, "I am." And she said, "The me that you saw then and the me that you see now, what is the difference between the two me's? The difference is Him. Jesus. The difference is him still today. Still. Right here at Saint Anthony's, Taylor's going to become a Catholic today. She's going to make a profession of faith for her Jesus. As we understand Jesus in the Catholic tradition. He's still the one. We have young people who are going to be confirmed in their faith today. They're going to be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The chrism that I'm going to use to confirm them was just blessed on Holy Thursday by Archbishop Perez. It still has the aroma of the Nard that was used in the blessing of the chrism. Chrism is used in the sacrament that you can only receive one time: baptism, confirmation holy orders.

In baptism chrism is used to anoint the crown of the head. You've been taken into, adopted into the divine family. You are royalty. And so, you're anointed on the crown of the head. In confirmation the front of your forehead, you'll be given a new name, a new identity, a deeper identity in Christ. And I'll trace on the head the sign

of the cross in the chrism and I'll say, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen." Just like a communion, the Body of Christ. Amen. And in, in ordination, my hands were anointed with chrism so that I would spend my life building up the body of Christ and I'd be graced for that given, the Holy Spirit to do that. In baptism, the Spirit is poured out with the life of grace and confirmation, the Spirit is poured out in strength, and in Holy Orders the Spirit is poured out to build up the Body of Christ. It's always the work of the Holy Spirit and it's always a sealing, S E A L I N G sealing, what God is doing and what God has begun. And that's what is happening today with the gift of the Holy Spirit. It's a sealing of what God has begun. It's our response. Sometimes I think we think that, you know, know your kind of born into a Catholic family. Maybe you become a Catholic later on in your life, but most of us are kind of cradle Catholics. However, it's not your family that makes you a Catholic. It's baptism into Jesus Christ. That's what makes you a Catholic. And so, the gift of the Spirit is given, but you need to do something personally to ratify that. You need to do something personally to validate that. Those who are going to be sealed today, sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. They may be thinking that they are taking the initiative here, thinking that "I'm presenting myself, I'm taking the initiative." No. What is happening is that the Lord is summoning. The Lord is saying, "Come, come be with me. Come to me. Let me be the difference maker in your life." The difference between that me and this me is Him. Jesus. We have to get that. If we don't get that, we will not keep coming to Him. And we don't keep coming to Him all the time.

But then we do. And those who do come and those who do get it, the Lord says, "I need you. I need to be able to rely upon you. I need to be able to lean on you, to do whatever you can to help others to come to see that I am the one. There is no other." Are you the one to come or shall we look for another? "No, I am the one. I am the one. There is not going to be another. There is no other. You can look everywhere in the world. You can look and examine every way of living. There is only one who can make the difference in your life. And that is Jesus Christ, him crucified and raised up. That's the message. That's what we're celebrating.

That's what we have as the heart of our Catholic faith and heart of our Catholic education. The children in our children's faith formation program, the children at Our Lady of Mercy, this is what they hear. Jesus is the bond. He makes all the difference. And so that's why the children have to be brought to him, not just for instruction, but to experience Him. Come with an expectation. An expectation. Ask yourself: When you came here today, what was your expectation? That you would encounter the Lord Jesus? Because you shall this day. Right here. May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.