Divine Mercy Sunday
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Today we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, the Second Sunday of Easter. The Octave of Easter has always recalled the Divine Mercy of God and his forgiveness in Christ Jesus. On April 30, 2000, Pope John Paul II gave the name, "Divine Mercy Sunday" to the Second Sunday of Easter, as he was canonizing Saint Faustina, the Polish nun who received revelations of the Divine Mercy of God. Divine Mercy Sunday reminds us how much God loves us. His mercy flows through the heart of Jesus and washes over all of his people.

The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles describes the early Christians as devoting "themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers." (Acts 2:42) How we long for that "communal life," which we took for granted before the coronavirus pandemic. How we long for the "breaking of bread" in the Eucharist. This time away from our physical gathering reminds us of how important the Eucharist and our communal life is to us. As we endure this separation, may our yearning increase our love for our Lord, Jesus Christ, in the Eucharist, and increase our love for one another. In the meantime, we are united with one another in the communion of saints, and we are able to make a spiritual communion with Jesus:

> "My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
> I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.
> Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least
> spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and
> and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You."

Psalm 118 speaks of the great mercy of God and how "His mercy endures forever," and how we "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting." We thank the Lord even in the midst of our present suffering because we know that he loves us and watches over us and he will deliver us from this plague. The second reading from the first letter of Peter, speaks of God, "who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

The Gospel this Sunday (John 20:19-31) presents the apostle Thomas as at first doubting the resurrection of Jesus, but then speaking the beautiful prayer of faith, "My Lord and my God." And, Jesus speaks directly of us, his followers through the ages, when he says, "Blessed are

those who have not seen and have believed." We have not put our fingers in the nail marks or put our hand in his side but we are experiencing in a real way the wounds of the body of Christ which are being endured by those who are suffering through this pandemic, their loved ones, and those who are caring for them in such a heroic way.

As we continue to celebrate our Easter joy and the love and mercy of our God, we are reminded of the incredible power our faith in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead gives us over sin and death. Nothing in this world can separate us from the love and mercy of God and nothing can take away the promise of everlasting life given to us by the risen Lord, Jesus. In the midst of this coronavirus pandemic we might be tempted to despair and give up hope. This is especially true since we do not know when this will be over and when we can get back to some kind of normalcy. This is the time when we need our faith most of all. It helps us to know that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves; that God's power transcends our feeble human existence and lifts us up to be part of his very life in the Trinity. What an incredible truth that is! While we experience suffering and uncertainty in this life, we are promised a share in God's life forever in heaven for his faithful people. Confident in the assurance of our faith in Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, we have the courage to face the current crisis and move beyond it to a better future.