

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER OR DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY
THE MARKS OF MERCY

“Unless I see the holes that the nails made in His hands, and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hands into His side, I refuse to believe” (Jn. 20: 25)

The Marks of Jesus: There is a story of Satan appearing to St. Theresa of Avila in the form or image of Jesus. When he made his appearance, St. Theresa could perceive that he was not Jesus. So she quickly ordered him to leave: “Get out of here, Satan!”, she commanded. Satan made to leave but turned back and asked: “How did you know I was not Jesus?” St. Theresa answered: “You have no marks.” He then left. Satan has “no mark.” They are the distinguishing identities on the Body of The One who was scourged, suffered, nailed to a cross, pierced with a lance, died and resurrected. The marks of Jesus are marks of love, not just His suffering. They are marks of His victory over Satan. In the story of Jesus’ appearance in today’s Gospel (Jn. 20: 19-31), St. John tells us that when Jesus appeared: “He showed them His hands and His side” (Jn. 20). He showed “the marks.” To identify Himself as Him, Who hung on the Cross and was pierced by the side. The presentation of the marks is an invitation to Thomas, to the disciples and to us to embrace Him in His wholeness – in His Suffering and His Resurrection. It is a calling to be ready to suffer, to bear those marks on our bodies for Him. There is also a story of a very prominent parishioner, who died and went to heaven. But before he would enter he had to be interviewed by St. Peter by the gate. St. Peter asked him to introduce himself. The man mentioned his name and reeled out the unending positions he held in the Church and various levels. St. Peter was not impressed by all the works for the Lord seeming lack of time for the Lord of the work. Therefore, he asked the man: “Where are the marks?” He had no marks to show. His roles and services were at his convenience and to gain human praises. Marks are signs of the sacrifices we make, the sufferings we endure for the sake of Christ, Who gave us an example to follow by His suffering and sacrifice on the Cross. The first Christians in the First Reading (Acts 4: 32-35) exemplified that when they owned nothing personal but sold everything and contributed to the common treasury so that all would be without lack.

Jesus’ Second Appearance: Notice that Jesus had to come a second time “eight days” after His first appearance for the sake of one man who was drifting down with doubts and desire. The first time Jesus appeared to the eleven was on the evening of Resurrection Day. He gave His peace, for he was the “Prince of Peace” as Isaiah foretold. He breathed upon them, the “Ruah of God” in the Book of Genesis that gave life to the figurine made from dust to have life (Gen. 2: 7). As the breath of God gave life to the first man so the breath of Christ gives new life to a new creation saved from the sin of the First Man. But Thomas was not there! On

his return, the disciples told him: "We have seen the Lord." He refused to believe and hold on to his prerequisites: to see, to feel, to touch and to put his finger in His hand and his hand in His side. Thomas was a practical man. He needed something to hold on to. The disciples were in a similar position earlier when Mary Magdalene came back from the tomb with the same news. The Resurrection was a difficult event to believe because it was unprecedented and unimaginable. It needed more than hearsay or a second party report to believe. Each of the disciples was struggling at different levels of incredulity. Only Thomas dared to express it. Thomas was a courageous man: when the other disciples were afraid to go back to Judea to see Lazarus who was reported sick, he showed a courageous faith in Jesus when he said: "Let us also go that we may die with Him" (Jn. 11: 16).

A Journey of Mercy: On this Sunday of Divine Mercy we can reflect on the return visit of Jesus to the disciples on the eighth day of the week as a journey of mercy. He came that Thomas may have a second chance. For what is mercy but a second chance given out of love to a sinner who does not deserve it. Mercy is a gift, never merited. That is why God sent His Son to die for us while we were still sinners (Rom. 5: 8). God loved us first and showed us His mercy through His Son. Christ, the Son, in obedience to the Father, suffered and died for us to actualise the mercy of God and opens the fountain of His heart to pour down His mercy upon us sinners. Through His daughter, Sr. Maria Faustina, Jesus revealed Himself as The True Source of mercy for humanity; and commissioned her, as He did the apostles, to be a witness of His Divine Mercy to the whole world. Our Lord Jesus Christ guided Sr. Maria to draw His image with white and red rays shining out from His Sacred Heart with the signature: *Jesus, I trust in You!* She was to present this to the world as the picture of His Divine Mercy, which pours forth for the sins of the whole world. Jesus specifically gave the following instructions: *I want the image solemnly blessed on the First Sunday after Easter, and I want it to be venerated publicly so that every soul may know about it.* Therefore, during the canonization of Maria Faustina on the Second Sunday of Easter of 2000, then Pope John Paul II promulgated this great feast for all Catholics and for every Christian who may choose to recognise the mercy of Christ in this way. The relevance and importance of this feast day are captured in these words of Jesus recorded in Maria's *Diary*: *"This Feast emerged from the very depths of My mercy, and it is confirmed in the vast depths of tender mercies. Every soul believing and trusting in My mercy will obtain it ... Let all mankind recognize My unfathomable mercy. It is a sign for the end times; after it will come to the Day of Judgment"* (420, 848). We are all invited to participate in this devotion at Three O'clock daily saying the Divine Mercy chaplet for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

My dear friends, like Thomas, in our struggles to believe, to be merciful and to love, let us not lose sight of the Living Lord. We pray that we can recognise Him in the many ways He reveals Himself to us in these days and times. Let us explore the avenue of Divine Mercy

opened to us by tapping into the Three O'clock prayer as individuals, as a family and as a Church. Let us be eager to make sacrifices that will leave the marks of our love for Christ and our neighbours. May the grace of God be sufficient for us all.