

## **Homily - Jn. 20: 19 -31**

**Second Sunday of Easter, 10<sup>th</sup>/ 11th April 2021**

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A mother once approached Emperor Napoleon pleading with him to pardon her soldier son who was to be executed. Well! Napoleon stayed firm and told her that since it was the man's second major offence, justice demanded death. But then the mother implored him saying: "I do not ask for justice," rather "I plead for mercy." "But," "he does not deserve mercy," said the Emperor."

The poor woman was not let down by his response and she said: "Sir,", "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for." Moved by this, Napoleon finally told her: "Well, then, I will have mercy."

We are on the Second Sunday of Easter and today we celebrate the Divine Mercy Sunday: a day on which we are invited to reflect on God's infinite love and mercy for His people, as lived and taught by Jesus Himself, our Lord and Master.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2000, the Second Sunday of Easter, Pope John Paul II canonized Sister Faustina, the apostle of Divine Mercy. He was determined to ensure that the Divine mercy left a permanent imprint on the Church.

And so, he designated the Sunday after Easter as the feast of the Divine Mercy. And for him it was also the fulfillment of a lifelong mission. At the canonization of Sr. Faustina, Pope John Paul II said: "The Cross, even after the Resurrection of the Son of God, speaks, and never ceases to speak, of God the Father, who is absolutely faithful to His eternal love for human beings.

Well! The Gospel of today in fact helps us to grasp the full sense and the value of this gift. The Evangelist John makes us share in the emotion felt by the Apostles in their meeting with Christ after His Resurrection. Our attention focuses on the gesture of the Master, who transmits to the fearful, astounded disciples the mission of being ministers of Divine Mercy. He shows them His hands and His side, which bear the marks of the Passion, and He tells them: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn. 20: 21). Immediately afterwards "He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained' " (Jn. 20: 22-23). Jesus entrusted to them the gift of "forgiving sins", a gift that flows from the wounds in His hands, His feet, and especially from His pierced side. From there a wave of mercy is poured out over all humanity.

Pope Francis in his apostolic letter *Misericordia et Misera* (Mercy with Misery) that he signed on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at the conclusion of the extraordinary year of Mercy makes deep and touching reflections on Mercy. In his letter he would say: Mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the Church; it constitutes her very existence, through which the profound truths of the Gospel are made manifest and tangible. Everything is revealed in mercy; and everything is resolved in the merciful love of the Father.

Well!, The humanity for more than a year now has been facing the "darkest days" with the first outbreak of Covid 19 that started in Wuhan, Hubei, China in late 2019. As we know since then, the Coronavirus has reached almost every country in the world. And as of now, Covid 19 is still continuing to spread around the world, with more than 130 million confirmed cases and 2.9 million deaths across nearly 200 countries. In a way, all of us feel so helpless in these strange times. But even during this time of unimaginable crisis, we cannot, but be touched by all the examples of kindness, compassion, care and concern people have been showing each other risking their own lives, whether it comes as part of their duty or comes as an initiative. And that is mercy in action.

We all come across different ways people truly inspire each other during these days of uncertainty and helplessness. The story of Darrell Blackley who died at North Manchester General Hospital on Friday, the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 after testing positive was one such incident that made a deep impact on me among the many I perused over the past couple of months. The family of the 88 year old Darrell asked people to carry out acts of kindness in his memory. And the message written on behalf of the family was this: "We invite you to forget flowers and cards; instead we would like you to give acts of kindness. Help someone who is lonely or struggling during this time, who needs shopping, childcare or a chat". "Post tiny acts of kindness given and received and share. Build something beautiful in Darrell's memory.". And that again is mercy in action.

Sr. Faustina wrote in her Diary: "I feel tremendous pain when I see the sufferings of my neighbours. All my neighbours' sufferings reverberate in my own heart; I carry their anguish in my heart in such a way that it even physically destroys me. I would like all their sorrows to fall upon me, in order to relieve my neighbour". This is the degree of compassion to which love leads, when it takes the love of God as its measure!

And it is this love which must inspire humanity today, especially as we continue to face the deadliest and fastest moving pandemic we have ever seen, heard or experienced.

Well! Let me conclude my homily quoting the chorus of a beautiful hymn that I love so much:

“If we could see with the other man’s eyes,  
And love with the other man’s heart,  
We’d know just what it feels like  
To be playing the other man’s part.

Fixing our gaze on the Divine Saviour, let us then pray: “Have mercy on us and on the whole world” and let us repeat with Sr. Faustina: “Jesus, I trust in you”, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Fr. Yashin**

