

**2nd Sunday of Easter, Year A**  
***Divine Mercy Sunday***

# **Sunday Church at Home**

during the Covid-19 Crisis

*Prayers and reflections for Divine Mercy are at the end of this Liturgy.*

The lay leader makes the sign of the cross, saying:

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All reply:** Amen

**Leader:** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**All reply:** Blessed be God for ever

**Leader:** The apostle Thomas addresses the risen Jesus as “My Lord and my God!” It is the fullest expression of faith anywhere in the Gospels and comes like dawn following night after a period of doubt and difficulty in Thomas’ life.

## **LITURGY OF THE WORD**

**First Reading:** Acts 2: 42-47

*Introduction to the reading:* Luke wrote a two-volume work: Volume One was his Gospel and Volume Two was the Acts of the Apostles which describes the life of the Church after the Resurrection of Jesus. Every year, during the seven weeks of the Easter Season, the first reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles. In today’s passage, Luke gives an idealized description of early Christian community life.

### **A reading from the Acts of the Apostles**

The brothers and sisters held steadfastly to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple

together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

The Word of the Lord.

**Let us now pray the Responsorial Psalm beginning and ending with the response:**

**R/:** Give praise to the Lord, for he is good; his mercy endures forever.

Let the house of Israel say,  
'His mercy endures forever'.  
Let the house of Aaron say,  
'His mercy endures forever'.  
Let those who fear the Lord say,  
'His mercy endures forever'.

I was thrust down, thrust down and falling,  
but the Lord was my helper.  
The Lord is my strength and my song;  
he was my saviour.  
There are shouts of joy and salvation  
in the tents of the just.

The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone.  
By the Lord has this been done,  
a marvel in our eyes.  
This is the day the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice in it and be glad.

**R/:** Give praise to the Lord, for he is good; his mercy endures forever.

**Second Reading:** 1 Pet 1:3-9

*Introduction to the reading:* Our second reading during most of this Easter Season is taken from the first letter of Peter, which was addressed to Christians living in the northern part of what is today Turkey. These Christians found themselves out of step with the society in which they lived, and they felt abused and discriminated against. The resurrection of Jesus was held out to them as a basis of hope during their trials, which is why the Church chooses to read from this book during the Easter Season.

**A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept

in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls.

The Word of the Lord.

**Alleluia, alleluia!** You believed, Thomas, because you have seen me, says the Lord; blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. **Alleluia!**

**Gospel:** John 20: 19-31

### **A reading from the holy Gospel according to John**

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, 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."

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

**The Gospel of the Lord.**

### **Reflection on the Readings**

The leader reads the text prepared by the priest and leads the sharing.

## **Homily prepared by Fr Tshepo Duik**

The apostle Thomas went from doubting the resurrection of Jesus to professing his faith in Jesus and declaring Jesus as his Lord and his God. What happened? He encountered the love of Jesus. We could say he encountered the love of the Merciful Heart of Jesus. Jesus said, "...bring your hand and put it into my side..." (John 20:27). In the Gospel of John life flows out of the side of Christ. It flows out of his heart. Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus said that rivers of water would flow out of the person who believes. When the soldier pierced Jesus' side on the cross blood and water flowed out. The Church has always seen this as signifying the Sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist. Now when Thomas sees the wound in Christ's side he is overcome. What Thomas really encountered was the love of the Merciful Heart of Jesus for him.

Thomas is overcome because he sees a heart that is wounded, wounded out of love for humanity. That is what love does, love suffers for the other and Thomas now sees this suffering wounded love before his eyes. Thomas sees the pain in Jesus' heart caused by his ingratitude and his lack of belief. Thomas sees Divine Mercy in physical form. Divine Mercy takes the sin of humankind upon its own heart instead of inflicting on humanity the just punishment for sin. Divine Mercy forgives, heals and restores. Jesus invites Thomas, "...bring your hand and put it into my side...". Thomas is invited, as it were, to touch the Merciful Heart of Jesus. As Thomas encounters Jesus, he is forgiven, healed and restored. His heart is also changed into a heart of love. He can only respond, "My Lord and my God."

The Divine Mercy of Jesus has been spreading out ever since Christ's side was opened on Calvary. Christ's Merciful Heart which raised up Thomas from despair to faith is ready to raise up each of us from any despair we may have to Christian hope. Christ invites each of us, "...bring your hand and put it into my side...". Christ invites each of us to touch his Merciful Heart, to allow our hearts become hearts of love, to allow ourselves to be forgiven, healed and restored. As we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, we acknowledge that Christ's love indeed forgives us, heals us and restores us. Having encountered this mercy and love, like Thomas, we can respond: "My Lord and my God."

### **Reflection questions**

- Can I truly say that I have had a personal encounter with Christ?
- Does my encounter with Christ spur me on to share his love and mercy with other people?

## Prayer of the Faithful

**Leader:** We pray to our Father who in his great mercy has given us a new birth by raising Jesus from the dead.

**Reader:** We pray for the Church: *(pause)* that we may offer an uncompromising witness to Christ by being united in mind and spirit as we worship, study and serve the needs of others.  
*(PAUSE)* LORD HEAR US

We pray for all who work in healthcare, public safety, and other essential services: *(PAUSE)* that God will protect them and their families as they serve the greater good in this pandemic.  
LORD HEAR US

We pray for all who are unemployed or facing uncertainty about their jobs during lockdown: *(PAUSE)* that God will guide them in maximizing their resources and open new opportunities for them to use their gifts and skills.  
LORD HEAR US

We pray for all who struggle with faith: *(PAUSE)* that the Word of God may open them to a relationship with God and enlighten their path to fuller life  
LORD HEAR US

We pray for all working to end the pandemic: *(PAUSE)* that God may inspire and give insight to all who are caring for the sick, developing treatments, or researching vaccines.  
LORD HEAR US

We pray for members of our families and friends who have died and those whose anniversaries occur about this time.  
*( PAUSE)* LORD HEAR US

We pray for all who have died this week, especially those with the Covid-19 virus.  
Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord.

And let perpetual light shine on them.  
May they rest in peace. Amen.

**Leader:** Let us pray our prayer for healing:

**All pray:** Lord Jesus Christ, you travelled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love. Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care. Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbours from helping one another. Lord Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow. Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace. Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace. Lord Jesus Christ, heal us. Amen.

### **Spiritual Communion**

We can unite ourselves to the Eucharist through making a spiritual Communion. By making an Act of Spiritual Communion, we express our faith in Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist and ask him to unite himself with us. Here is the Act of Spiritual Communion written by St. Alphonsus:

**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 unite myself wholly to You.  
Never permit me to be separated from You.  
Amen.**

### **CONCLUDING RITE**

**Leader:** Let us pray to the Father in the words Jesus our Saviour gave us:

**All say:** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive

those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

**Leader:** Grant, all-powerful God,  
that the Easter mystery we have shared  
may never cease to touch our hearts  
with the force of its saving grace.  
**We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

## **Blessing**

A leader who is a layperson, using no gesture, says:

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen.

Instrumental music may be played or a hymn may be sung.

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## **Origin of Divine Mercy Sunday, the Divine Mercy image, and the Chaplet.**

**Saint Faustina:** Mankind’s need for the message of Divine Mercy took on dire urgency in the 20th Century, when civilization began to experience an “eclipse of the sense of God” and, therefore to lose the understanding of the sanctity and inherent dignity of human life. In the 1930s, Jesus chose a humble Polish nun, St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, to receive private revelations concerning Divine Mercy that were recorded in her Diary. St. John Paul II explains:

*This was precisely the time when those ideologies of evil, nazism and communism, were taking shape. Sister Faustina became the herald of the one message capable of off-setting the evil of those ideologies, that fact that God is mercy—the truth of the merciful Christ. And for this reason, when I was called to the See of Peter, I felt impelled to pass on those experiences of a fellow Pole that deserve a place in the treasury of the universal Church.*

~ Pope Saint John Paul II, Memory and Identity (2005)

**Divine Mercy Sunday:** St. Faustina's Diary records 14 occasions when Jesus requested that a Feast of Mercy (Divine Mercy Sunday) be observed, for example:

*My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the Fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. ... Let no soul fear to draw near to Me. ... It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy.*  
(Diary, no. 699)

On May 5, 2000, five days after the canonization of St. Faustina, the Vatican decreed that the Second Sunday of Easter would henceforth be known also as Divine Mercy Sunday.



**The Image:** Jesus appeared to St. Faustina in a vision, with his right hand raised in a blessing and his left touching his garment above his heart. Red and white rays emanate from his heart, symbolizing the blood and water that was poured out for our salvation and our sanctification. The Lord requested that "Jesus, I trust in You" be inscribed under his image. Jesus asked that his image be painted and venerated throughout the world: "I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish" (Diary, no. 48) and "By means of this image I will grant many graces to souls" (Diary, no. 742).

**The Chaplet of Divine Mercy:** The Chaplet was also given to St. Faustina with this promise: "Encourage souls to say the chaplet which I have given you" (Diary, no. 1541). "Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death. ... Even if there were a sinner most

hardened, if he were to recite this chaplet only once, he would receive grace from My infinite mercy. I desire that the whole world know My infinite mercy” (Diary, no. 687). (Instructions for its recitation are provided on a separate page.)

## **How To Pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy**

### **Optional Opening Prayers:**

You expired, Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls,  
and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world.

O Fount of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy,  
envelop the whole world and empty Yourself out upon us.

*(Repeat 3 times)* O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a  
fountain of Mercy for us, I trust in You!

Our Father, Hail Mary and the Apostle's Creed

For each of the five decades *(On each “Our Father” bead of the rosary, pray)*

Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved  
Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

*(On each of the 10 “Hail Mary” beads, pray)*

For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

### **Concluding prayer** *(Repeat 3 times)*

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

### **Optional Closing Prayer**

Eternal God, in whom mercy is endless and the treasury of compassion inexhaustible, look  
kindly upon us and increase Your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might not despair  
nor become despondent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to Your holy will, which  
is Love and Mercy itself.

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