

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY - 2018
THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER
THE OCTAVE DAY OF EASTER

Sun. **The Sunday of Divine Mercy**
April 8 **THE MERCIFUL LOVE OF JESUS**
 A reflection from St. Cyril's Commentary on John's Gospel

Mon. **The Annunciation of the Lord**
 GOD'S MERCY HAS COME TO US
 A reflection developed from two sermons by St. Bernard

Tues. **Tuesday of the Second Week of Easter**
10 **WHAT GOD'S MERCY ASKS OF US**
 A reflection from Jesus Christ by Fr. Karl Adam

Wed. **Memorial of St. Stanislaus**
11 **PAYING THE PRICE FOR BEING MERCIFUL**
 A reflection developed from a Wikipedia presentation

Thurs. **Thursday of the Second Week of Easter**
12 **UNION WITH CHRIST'S DYING & RISING**
 A reflection from Origen's Commentary on Romans

Fri. **Friday of the Second Week of Easter**
13 **THE PERIL OF FAILING TO SHARE CHRIST'S LOVE**
 A reflection taken from a sermon of St. Pope Leo the Great

Sat. **Saturday of the Second Week of Easter**
14 **BEING FILLED WITH CHRIST'S LOVING**
 A reflection developed from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

THE MERCIFUL LOVE OF JESUS

A reflection from a Commentary on John's Gospel by St. Cyril of Alexandria

Thomas' profession of faith came swiftly, only eight days after he had declared himself unwilling to believe in Christ's resurrection unless he felt the very nail marks in his hands. Jesus came to him with a mercy that removed every possible doubt. Our Lord Jesus Christ miraculously entered the room where his disciples were, even though the doors were closed. This is impossible for an ordinary earthly body so the fact reassured Thomas and the other disciples when he also let his side and the wounds in his flesh be touched and felt.

Thomas had said: *"Unless my hands touch the marks of the nails and I see them, and unless I put my hand into his side, I won't believe!"* Yet, to some extent, all were guilty of disbelief, even after they told Thomas that they had seen the Lord. St. Luke's account says, *"While they stood in amazement, torn between joy and disbelief, Christ said to them: 'Haven't you anything to eat?' and they gave him a piece of broiled fish and part of a honeycomb, which he took and ate before their eyes."* This proved it wasn't only in the mind of Blessed Thomas that disbelieving thought were still lurking.

It was their very astonishment that made them slow to believe. But when it became impossible to disbelieve what they could see with their own eyes, then Blessed Thomas made his profession of faith on behalf of all: *"My Lord and my God!"* Jesus added: *"Because you have seen me, Thomas, you have believed. But blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."* There is wonderful providence behind the Savior's words—for us. They show us once again how much Jesus cares for our salvation. He is good, and as Scripture says, he wants everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth! Nevertheless, the saying may surprise us.

Christ had to be patient with Thomas, as he always is. When Thomas said he wouldn't believe, as when the other disciples too thought they were seeing only a ghost, Jesus showed his patience. It was because of his longing to convince the entire world that he so willingly showed them the marks of the nails and the wound in his side. It was for the sake of all who need such signs as these to support their faith. He wants us to have no possible reason for doubt. So, he even took food though he had not need for it.

When anyone accepts what hasn't been seen and believes on someone else's word, the faith shown honors not only the one who teaches it but the One the teacher proclaims. Thus, faith in Jesus, who has been proclaimed without being shown, is worthy of great praise. Blessed everyone who believes the message of the Holy Apostles. As the Gospel says, they were eyewitnesses and so became ministers of the word. If you want eternal life, if you long for a dwelling place in heaven, then you must listen to these teachers and then go and help others find faith too.

GOD'S MERCY HAS COME TO US

A reflection developed from two sermons by St. Bernard

What a wealth of mercy is yours, O Lord our God! How prodigal you are in grace; there is none like you, most generous in giving, most fair in rewarding, most kind in freeing us! This is how you look down upon the humble and with mercy save even sinners. Indeed, the celebration of the Lord's resurrection and the holy day of his Annunciation come together to present us with wisdom and truth in abundance.

Think back to the birth of Christ. The angels sang, "*Glory to God in the Eve and Adam's fall*. They turned away from God and good will for lack of three things: fear, godliness and knowledge. Christ, our mediator, never lacked reverence for God, and he has given us counsel that leads to mercy in order to set us free from the power of evil, and then teach us to know God truly.

Now our Savior feeds us with the bread of understanding and gives us the water of saving wisdom. He gives us the understanding of things spiritual to strengthen our hearts and to give us vigor for every good work. To people who don't perceive what is of the Spirit of God all this seems foolish. It is the pure and perfect truth that it doesn't profit you to gain the whole world at the price of losing the loss of your soul.

What is truer than that the yoke of Christ is pleasant, yet a worldly person cannot understand. Our souls live on this sort of inner truth and it becomes a food that is spiritual. Until this truth becomes palatable, pleasant, it doesn't really pass into you. Of everything necessary for saving people, the Savior lacked nothing. The three virtues of fear and godliness and knowledge of truth had been lost and now they are restored! We can listen to truth tell us: Return to God and you will find mercy and peace. We are counseled by mercy to pray in these words, "*You, Lord, are the father of mercies and are gracious and merciful about all others. Can a mother forget the child in her womb? Even if she did you wouldn't forget.*"

Now the time for mercy has come; the Lord Jesus Christ has come and he is our mercy. It is as if God had bent down to write in the dust words of mercy and forgiveness, even as Jesus did while the woman caught in the very act of adultery stood there awaiting her sentence. Jesus is the one of whom it was written, *comes*". We, like that woman, are ready with all our hearts to turn to God in repentance. We see that death is the fruit of our sin. But Christ forgives and makes sinners righteous before God. He forgave the woman and forgives us. Through this righteousness we are brought to peace with God and with one another. It is in the peace of God that we find life in its fullness.

WHAT GOD'S MERCY ASKS OF US

A reflection taken from Jesus Christ by Fr. Karl Adam

The initial, immediate reaction which the appearance of the Risen Christ called forth among the disciples was the new and revolutionary realization that he truly is the Lord! *"The Lord is risen indeed and has appeared to Simon!"* This is what was what all cried out to the two disciples on their return from Emmaus. *"It is the Lord!"*, was what John said when he saw the risen Christ on the shore of the lake. *"My Lord and my God"*, Thomas exclaimed when he saw the marks of the wounds in the risen Christ. *"Lord, who are you?"*, asked Paul as he lay on the road to Damascus.

This word, "Kyrie", "Lord", was faith's initial response to Easter's message. In his sermon at Pentecost Peter declared solemnly, *"Therefore, let the entire house of Israel know for certain that God has made that same Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ"*. According to the usage of the time "Lord" or "Kyrie" means God's self-revelation to the Chosen People in might. If the disciples had seen Jesus more as human before their Easter experiences, and realized his divinity only when it broke through the surface of his humanity in signs and words, afterwards that divinity became the central fact in their belief in the risen Christ who was in their midst. They were aware of his humanity only in relationship to his divinity.

The experiences of Easter gave an important depth and clarity to the disciples' conception of Christ. The old ideas about the human figure of Jesus were incorporated into and permeated by a new conception of his divinity. For the first time they were intuitively certain that Jesus the human being was, in the depth of his being, their "Lord and God". Because it was their Lord himself who had come to stand before them in human form, their other ideas began to clarify. They realized that his proper place, his homeland, could be nowhere but in Heaven and at the right hand of God the Father.

The Risen One assured them, *"I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God"*. This is why the apostles now joyfully preached the news that God had exalted Jesus to his right hand. Never again will this "seated at the right hand of the Father" be absent from the Christian creed. The natural consequence was that from this risen Lord all life and spirit, all grace and forgiveness, all power and might are to be poured out over all his people. They hear such words from the risen Christ: *"Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world"* and *"Behold, I sent you my Spirit which the Father promised"* and *"Receive the Holy Spirit, if you forgive anyone's sins they are forgiven; if you retain them they are retained"*. These final words call attention to their and our mission. The new life of their risen Lord is our eternal life and that of all who believe and follow Jesus. We are to find way to proclaim this everywhere and convincingly.

PAYING THE PRICE FOR BEING MERCIFUL

A reflection taken from a Wikipedia presentation

St. John Paul II called St. Stanislaus the saint of morality. That is because he is said to have been killed while celebrating the Eucharist by a king whom he had called to task for sexual immorality. When the king refused to repent or seek forgiveness Stanislaus excommunicated him. When he couldn't find anyone willing to kill Stanislaus and get him out of this jam, he did the deed himself.

Actually St. Stanislaus' problems with King Boleslaw begin because he called for mercy instead of harshness. The king had been at war but couldn't keep his army together because too many of the knights had wives who were unfaithful during their husband's long absence as soldiers. The king treated the guilty wives very harshly and St. Stanislaus called for mercy instead. Besides, the king didn't care about the sin of adultery, which he had committed himself, but only the good order of his army. St. Stanislaus wanted him to recognize that the "problem" of adultery was not one that could be solved by harsh punishments but required mercy and pastoral care. The king evidently didn't have time to care for his people, or himself, but only for seeking dignity and power.

St. Stanislaus was concerned primarily about the spiritual welfare of his people and saw the Church as important for Poland and its unity. After killing him, the king hacked his corpse into parts and spread them over the countryside. Supposedly they came together again miraculously and this became a symbol of the problem of keeping all parts of Poland together as one country. So, the saint is both the patron of Poland and the symbol of its unity, always being destroyed but always being restored afterward. He seems to have been the first native Polish Primate of Poland.

Concern for people's spiritual welfare, inspired him to found Benedictine monasteries in all parts of the country. He saw that seeking power and wealth were primary causes of the dismemberment of his country. He tried to counteract these values by using communities of monks to propagate a different and more spiritual way of leading a Christian life. He wanted to use faith and dedication to imitating Christ to modify the existing culture and replace its purely worldly values of individual exaltation with Christian and spiritual concern for loving one another. The idea was that ordinary people could witness how Christians who love and help one another can live a life of peace and mutual care and well-being. To live the monastic life whole heartedly and well was to give a very important witness, not only to ordinary people but to those who ruled them and were charged with protecting them and seeing they were treated justly. In the most literal way possible Stanislaus gave his life for the love of others.

UNITING OURSELVES WITH CHRIST'S DYING AND RISING

A reflection from Origen's Commentary on the Letter to the Romans

Christ has given his death to us as a call to die to sin and to live for one another. Sin isn't to have free reign in people; it will not if we believe and live the death to sin that Christ shows us. Do you believe you are dead to sin and truly crucified and buried with Christ? This kind of death should be a way of life for those who have faith.

St. Paul says, "*If we have died with Christ we believe that we shall also live with him*". It is important to notice the precise meaning of the phrases Paul uses. He doesn't say "we have lived" as he does "we have died" but says "we shall live" when Christ is revealed in glory. This is a way of showing that death is at work in the present world and only in the world to come will there will be life in fullness. Christ is our life. So, "*our life is hidden away in God*" now and for the time being, while death is still at work. Our life will be revealed when Christ is.

But the death which is at work in us has certain decisive moments. As with There is the moment when Christ cried out with a loud voice and gave up the spirit. But there is also a time when he was laid in the grave and its entrance was sealed up. Finally, there is the moment when the women came to look for him in the tomb but didn't find him because he was already risen. Each of us who believe in Christ must experience this three-fold pattern in our own dying.

First of all, Christ's death must be manifested in us by a verbal acknowledgment of our faith in him. It is, after all, faith that leads to righteousness in the heart and it is a verbal confession that leads to salvation. In the second place, we die with Christ by putting to death those passions which belong only to earth. This is part of carrying Christ's death about with us wherever we go. It is this kind of death which is to be a work in us. In the third place, we have to proclaim Christ's death by showing that we have already begun to rise from the dead and are walking in a newness of life.

The first moment of our dying in Christ is when we renounce the world, the second is when we renounce sin and the third is when we are perfected in holy wisdom. But this rising is seen only by God, as only God saw Christ rise from the dead. Christ chose to empty himself and take on the lot of a slave. He became obedient even to death on a cross. By that dying he destroyed the Lord of death. In doing this he set us free. He bound the strong one and plundered all that the devil had possessed. He carries all he has freed to heaven. We have only to empty ourselves in obedience to God and in love for one another. Becoming like Christ, we then will be taken by our Savior into the joy and fullness of eternal life.

THE PERIL OF FAILING TO SHARE CHRIST'S LOVE

A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Pope Leo the Great

If our hearts don't hesitate to believe what our lips have professed then not only has Christ died and been raised to life for us, but in Christ we too have been crucified, in him we have died and been buried and in him we are being raised up to a new way of life. This last is our third day. St. Paul says, *"if you have risen with Christ then seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God; set your hearts on heavenly things and not on the things of earth, for you are dead and our life is hidden with Christ in God."*

As people of faith we know for certain that we have the power to raise up our hearts to heavenly things and to devalue desires that are merely worldly. The Lord solemnly guarantees his presence to us in these words, *"Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of this world"*. If Christ is with us there is nothing that we cannot do with him. The name "Jesus" means "Savior". He doesn't forsake us by ascending into heaven. From the right hand of the Father Christ strengthens us not only to endure trials as he did but to love others and serve others as he did.

There are many who believe it is very dangerous to fail to celebrate the festival of the resurrection. It is even more dangerous to fail to live the risen life Christ shares with us and gives us the strength to live with all our hearts. We must not act like fools who given themselves over to selfish pleasure seeking or run away from what seems difficult or hard. The earth is full of the Lord's mercy. Christ's victory is available to us everywhere. This gives substance to his promise, *"Fear not I have overcome the world"*. It is always Easter for us as long as we abstain from the old leaven of vice and sin.

If you understand the mystery of God's boundless love and kindness, says St. Paul, and if you realize what the Son of God had done for our salvation, then have among you the same attitude as was Christ's. Even if you are rich you mustn't fear the abasement of loving the poor by giving what you have. If you are of noble birth don't be afraid of doing whatever genuine love requires in dealing with others. Don't consider anything beneath your dignity, for you follow one who took upon himself the condition of a slave for others' sakes. We too must walk in his footsteps. We must learn to devalue whatever would prevent us from loving a brother or sister in need.

Listen again to St. Paul: *"Have the same attitude as Christ Jesus. He was God and didn't regard this as something to be clung to; instead he emptied himself and became like a slave, becoming identical with ourselves as a human being for all to see. In his human body he humbled himself and became obedient even to Name that is above every other name!"* This is God's call to each of us. Go and do likewise!

BEING FILLED WITH CHRIST'S LOVING

A reflection from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Christ is the firstfruits of those who have died and the firstborn from the dead. His resurrection is the prototype of all others and guarantees our rising. His resurrection has prepared for us a twofold grace. Through living the paschal mystery in our daily lives we rise from the death of sin, and by our joyful celebrations of his rising we rouse ourselves from the sluggishness of spiritual sleep.

A person is indeed slothful and half-hearted if that person doesn't feel a thrill of joy, a sense of new life and vigor, at the glad cry: The Lord is risen! For myself, when I looked upon the dead Jesus I was overwhelmed by despairing grief. But in the living God, as Scripture calls him, my heart and my flesh could rejoice. It is with no small profit to faith, no slight dividend of joy, that Jesus returns to me from his tomb. I recognize the living God where only a little while ago I could only mourn a dead human being. My heart was filled with sorrow because he had been slain and now that he is risen not only my heart but even my flesh rejoices in the confident hope that I too will rise and be immortal.

I slept and I arose, Christ tells us. Awake then, my sleeping self, and rise from the dead so that Christ may give you light! As the new sun rises from below the horizon, the grace of the resurrection already casts its radiance over the entire world. It is a radiance reflected in the eyes of those who have watched with Christ from since daybreak. This wakefulness ushers in the day of eternity.

This reveals to us the day that will know no evening and whose sun will never set. Only once did that sun that is our Jesus go down, and now once more and once and for all that sun has ascended above not only the earth but the heavens. He has led death captive in his triumphal procession.

This is the day that the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad! If you too watch daily at the threshold of the House of Wisdom and keep your eyes fixed on the doorway of that House, then you too, like Magdalen, as she with you keeps vigil at the entrance to his tomb, will find the One she found. You will know that what was written of wisdom was written of Christ: Wisdom hastens to make self-disclosure to all those who desire it whole-heartedly. Those who rise early to seek this wisdom will have no trouble but will find it at the gate. While it was still dark Mary came to watch at the tomb. She found Jesus. She found love. She found love not according to the flesh but in the spirit. Jesus called her to share that love by sharing Him whom she loved. If you too do such watching, see if you don't find yourself singing with Mary: "*In the morning fill us with your love; we shall exult and rejoice all our days*"! We rejoice by loving one another. We rejoice by showing mercy as it has been shown us. In this love is the fullness of life.