

Father Bob's Homily

Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)

Gospel: John 20:19–31

Today is Divine Mercy Sunday, and what we reflect on is the forgiveness that flows from the Heart of Jesus into our lives—the forgiveness of our sins.

We often think of that mercy most clearly in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, in going to confession. And that is right and true. But from a biblical perspective, mercy is an even broader concept.

As the hymn reminds us: “There is a wideness in God’s mercy.”

That wideness speaks to God’s loving kindness—His deep, faithful love for us. Mercy, we might say, is the form love takes when it encounters misery.

One of the ways we see this “wideness” of God’s mercy is through the sacraments—especially those closely connected to the Easter season.

Let us begin with Holy Thursday.

Why do we celebrate Holy Thursday? Because it is the night of the Last Supper. And at the Last Supper, Jesus instituted two sacraments: the priesthood (Holy Orders) and the Eucharist.

Jesus gave us the priesthood so that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass would continue throughout time, until He comes again in glory. He desired that His sacrifice on Good Friday would not be forgotten, but remembered—made present.

And in the Mass, we receive Holy Communion—His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—given out of love for us.

Already, we begin to see the wideness of His mercy: that He would remain with His Church and lift us out of sin, darkness, and death.

Then we come to today—Divine Mercy Sunday.

This is where we reflect more deeply on forgiveness, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. If you have ever been asked why Catholics go to confession to a priest, the answer is found in today’s Gospel from John.

Jesus breathes on the apostles and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them.”

In that moment, He institutes the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Just as He empowered the apostles to be the first priests, He now empowers them to forgive sins in His name. Jesus wanted His Church to be a forgiven Church.

As we continue through the Easter season, we hear from the Acts of the Apostles—the story of the birth of the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit.

At Pentecost, fifty days after the Resurrection, the apostles receive the Holy Spirit. That gift gives them courage to proclaim Christ crucified and risen.

This is the foundation of the sacrament of Confirmation—the strengthening presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

A sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace.

We might also say: an outward sign instituted by Christ, out of love and mercy, to give grace.

As the apostles go out and preach the Good News, the expected response is Baptism.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we see people hearing the Gospel and becoming baptized believers in Jesus Christ. That mission continues today.

All of this reminds us of the wideness of God’s mercy.

In Baptism, we are united to Christ.

In the Eucharist, we are nourished in Christ.

In Confirmation, we are strengthened in Christ.

In Reconciliation, we are forgiven when we fall away from Christ.

And through the priesthood, Christ remains present in His Church.

Yes—there is a wideness in God’s mercy.

May we always give thanks to the Lord for His love and mercy.

Happy Divine Mercy Sunday.