

**HOMILY**  
**BY ADAM CARDINAL MAIDA**  
**BLESSED SACRAMENT CATHEDRAL**  
**DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY**  
**APRIL 3, 2005**

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

On this Sunday after Easter—also known as Divine Mercy Sunday—we gather with deep sorrow in our hearts at our beloved Holy Father’s passing from this world. While our hearts are anxious and feel great emptiness, we should not be somber or afraid for we believe in resurrection. Last Sunday, we gathered here to celebrate Christ's Resurrection from the dead, and again today—and every Sunday—we do the same.

Belief in Christ's Resurrection shaped the whole life journey of Karol Józef Wojtyła ... as a mere boy, it gave him consolation and hope at the death of his mother... as a young man growing up in the midst of World War II, his faith gave him the strength and courage not to despair. That same faith in Jesus Christ prompted him to pursue priestly ordination and gave him the fervor and zeal to preach hope to others, even in the darkest hours of Communism. That faith conviction was the abiding heart and center of his episcopal service as he handed his life over completely to the Lord and His Church... *Totus Tuus*. And because his brother cardinals saw that fire for the Good News of Christ's Resurrection shining within him, they elected him Holy Father twenty-seven years ago. He has now lived and died a model Christian, a humble servant of the Gospel, a believer in the Resurrection.

Here below, we already miss him terribly but we know he is with the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints. While we rightly and justly marvel at all that he accomplished in his twenty-seven years as Pope, we also need to learn from his example, reflecting on how we ourselves are called to live resurrection faith in our own life vocations.

One of the many lessons our Holy Father has left for us is the legacy of his own devotional, spiritual life. In particular, today, we turn to the devotion of Divine Mercy, as a means for contemplating the mystery of Christ's Resurrection.

Several years ago, in keeping with the revelations received by St. Faustina Kowalska in Poland approximately 70 years ago, Pope John Paul II designated the Sunday after Easter as Divine Mercy

Sunday. We recall the visions she had of Christ with rays of love and mercy stretching out from His heart, a Christ gently moving toward us with His hands raised in benediction. At the bottom of the Divine Mercy image are the beautiful words of her response: “*Jesus, I trust in you,*” words that characterize Pope John Paul II’s life witness and words which should also echo in our own hearts.

The events of the past few days and the Scriptures for this weekend remind us that the glory of God shines through the pain of human suffering. This is the paradox of our faith: the glory of resurrection is revealed to us in the weakness of human flesh. The disciples came to believe in the Risen Jesus when they saw His wounds; the wounds of Jesus were a necessary point of continuity and assured them that this Risen Jesus was indeed the same one who had suffered and died. Note the same truth in the Divine Mercy image: the healing rays of life and love come forth from the *wounded* hands of Christ.

Each of us has certain wounds or scars from operations or accidents that have happened over the years. In some way, these wounds “define” us—physically and spiritually. Our physical and psychological limitations and struggles are part of the uniqueness of our own personalities. Without our wounds, we would not be fully human, and without our wounds—even our sins and failings—we would not understand the full power of God’s healing love.

In today’s Gospel, St. Thomas comes to belief in the Resurrected Christ as he sees the Lord’s wounded hands and side. The wounded Lord met Thomas, who was himself psychologically wounded with the burden of his doubts. One wounded person met another wounded person... and there was healing! Consider the example of our late Holy Father forgiving the man who tried to assassinate him: the wounded Holy Father offered peace and forgiveness to a man who respected neither him nor his office. Time and again, in word and in deed, our Holy Father proclaimed the dignity of every human life—no matter what! He showed us eloquently that faith in the Resurrection and trust in Divine Mercy must change how we live with and for others.

This process of healing and experiencing Divine Mercy happens not only among individuals, but also on a corporate level. Among the many mysteries we celebrate at Easter is the way Christ’s Death-Resurrection formed a new community of faith, a healed group of disciples.

At the beginning of today’s Gospel, the disciples were fearful, hiding behind locked doors. Perhaps the “locked doors” symbolized hearts that were embarrassed and ashamed, angry with

themselves and one another, blaming themselves for deserting Christ in His agony and death. Each of them needed healing and peace—a gift only Jesus could give. And so, three times in these verses Jesus greets them with the word “Peace!”

They also needed peace with each other. Once they had felt the Lord’s mercy and compassionate acceptance, then they could show those same gifts to each other. A *community* was coming to birth. And from that communal experience of Divine Mercy, they discovered the strength and energy to go forth as missionaries announcing and manifesting Christ’s healing love and the promise of eternal life.

Our Church and world today are in great need of healing and hope. We feel empty and somewhat at loss without our leader in the faith, our Holy Father on earth. But the Lord seems to be challenging us to learn from his example and fulfill his message in our own life vocations. No matter what our wounds—physical or psychological—God can (and does) use us for His glory and the building up of the Church.

In today’s second reading, St. Peter reminds us that earthly trials, struggles, and disappointments are unavoidable, but, with the eyes of faith, these apparent wounds or sufferings can indeed be glorious! For every wound can somehow be a threshold to greater communion with the Lord and all the other members of His Risen Body, the Church.

The physical and psychological challenges our Holy Father endured made him a great man of faith... the same can be true for us as we cooperate with God’s grace, trusting in His Divine Mercy, giving ourselves completely to the Lord and the people God places along our life’s path.

On this Divine Mercy Sunday, let us thank the Lord for the faith witness of Pope John Paul II and let us pledge to follow his example of selfless love... love that was faithful to the end. May his soul and all the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.