

# Divine Mercy Sunday, in the Jubilee Year of Mercy

## “Time to get it right!”

If you are anything like me, and like getting “right to the point”, as soon as possible: Divine Mercy Sunday has not been celebrated correctly. Now, at this point, I can only imagine what many of you are thinking about: enhancing your afternoon devotionals, getting more people to attend these devotionals, and generally more things for devotees to get involved in. But this isn’t what Divine Mercy Sunday is all about. This really isn’t what Jesus envisioned it to be.

It is no secret, that Pope Saint John Paul instituted this Sunday of Divine Mercy, to purposely fulfill the will of Christ, by establishing, in His Church, a Feast of Mercy. If this is the case, then why aren’t we following the Lord’s instructions, and Saint John Paul’s instructions, too?

I’ve been studying and promoting the Feast of Mercy for 20 years. And I can tell you, not many parishes are getting it right. From the first time, that I read the diary of St. Faustina, in 1996, I recognized, very clearly, that this Feast of Mercy, that Jesus was asking for, was really made to help poor sinners to come back into full union, with Christ and His Church. It wasn’t made for devotees to have, what I refer to as “parties for devotees” on the feastday afternoons!

And another thing, Divine Mercy Sunday is not a private devotion! Nowhere, in the Vatican decree, did it ever mention the word “devotion”. I believe that Pope Saint John Paul added that name to the Second Sunday of Easter, to transition us all, back, into more fully observing the Octave Day of Easter, which is the Sunday of Divine Mercy. He knew, that there was a real need, to more fully celebrate the Feast of Easter, which lasts for a full 8 days of solemnities.

Some theologians had focused so much on the Day of the Resurrection, that they started to forget about the importance of the Octave of Easter. In the old Latin missals, printed in the earlier 1900’s, they nicknamed, the Sunday following Easter “Low Sunday”. “Low Sunday” could be nothing further from the truth. In all reality, that Second Sunday, the Octave Day of Easter, as taught by 3 doctors of the Church, is actually more like a “Grand Finale” of Easter.

There is no greater feast than Easter, and like the great feasts of the Old Testament, it has to be celebrated for a lot longer than just one day. Although the Easter season extends through to Pentecost, the feast of Easter is 8 days long; 8 straight days of solemnities, the highest form of feasts, in the Church, usually reserved just for Sundays and very, very, special feasts. If this is so, why aren’t we really feasting, during these 8 days, and finishing it off with a grand finale?

And not only that, why aren’t we inviting the Easter-only Catholics, to come to this feast? I am really baffled when it comes to this. Bishops and Priests are responsible for these souls. How can we let them walk, right out of our churches, without inviting them to come back? What does our Lord think about all this? He’s given us a feast, that can save every soul on the planet, and we keep quiet about it? We must use this opportunity to save these poor sinners.

Many wrongly think that there are two liturgical options for that Sunday. The truth is, there are no options, for that day. The “or” in the name of that Sunday (Second Sunday of Easter, or of Divine Mercy), does not imply an option. The decree, that established that name addition,

specifically indicated that the readings would remain the same. They were already perfect for a Feast of Mercy! Was there any doubt that Jesus knew what he was doing with His Church?

So, in light of that name addition, what liturgical significance does it have? First of all, it helps us to better focus on the Gospel of that day. If you recall, it is a 2 part Gospel, that spans from the night of the Resurrection, until the following Sunday, when St. Thomas finally decides to trust in Jesus. Was it a coincidence that Thomas wasn't there on the night of the Resurrection? I think, not. The Lord, in His great wisdom, knew that He would establish a feast, associated with trust, on the Sunday following Easter. In fact, St. Thomas, himself, in the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, actually requested that a special feast be celebrated on that Sunday.

The Vatican Office of Divine Worship specifically indicated no changes in the readings, but it would surely, be prudent, to emphasize that Divine Mercy is the Easter gift; nothing short of a "straight ticket to Heaven" for those souls who receive Holy Communion in a perfect state of grace, on that day. Even the official Vatican explanation of the feast, published in 2002, in the L'Osservatore Romano (the official newspaper of the Holy See), said that the graces that could be received, on that day, are "equal to the one we receive in the sacrament of Baptism".

### **Official Vatican Explanation of Divine Mercy Sunday**

According to Jesus' wish, the Feast of Mercy is to be celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Jesus is showing the close connection between the Easter mystery of man's redemption and this feast. ***The Feast of Mercy is to be not only a day designated for the worship of God's mercy, but also a day of grace for all people, particularly for sinners.*** Jesus attached great promises to this feast:

**- One is the promise of complete forgiveness of all sins and punishment. In other words, this grace is equal to the one we receive in the sacrament of Baptism. It offers a completely new beginning.**

**(The image is to be blessed and venerated on Divine Mercy Sunday.)**

- The image represents the Risen Christ, whose hands and feet bear the marks of the crucifixion. From his pierced Heart, not visible in the image, two rays issue forth: red and pale. Jesus explained their meaning. ***"The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls. The pale ray stands for the water that makes souls righteous. These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross"*** (from the Diary of St. Faustina, "Divine Mercy in My Soul", entry # 299).

- The purpose of the image is to serve as an instrument for obtaining graces, and to be a sign reminding the world of the need to trust in God and to show mercy toward our neighbour. The words found in the signature speak of an attitude of trust. Jesus also said that ***"the image is to be a reminder of the demands of My mercy because even the strongest faith is of no avail without works"*** (Diary 742).

Taken from:  
L'Osservatore Romano  
21 August 2002, page 5  
L'Osservatore Romano is the official newspaper of the Holy See.

My emphasis, added, with the parenthesis and bold and underlined words.

Further instruction, concerning the liturgy, can be found in the "Duties of Priests", listed in the last paragraph of the special [Plenary Indulgence, for Divine Mercy Sunday](#), issued by the Holy See on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2002. This is the very best directive for all bishops and priests to properly observe and celebrate the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter, now also called the Sunday of Divine Mercy. This is the only plenary indulgence, attached to a particular Sunday, that is to remain forever.

We have put together a guide for bishops and priests called “[How to Celebrate Mercy Sunday](#)” that makes it easy to understand the requirements found in the “Duties of Priests”, which are: Informing parishioners of the special indulgence, being generous in hearing confessions, and leading the prayers for the indulgence after all of the Masses, and all other liturgical events. The guide also includes suggestions for how to invite the Easter-only Catholics to participate.

The liturgical focus should be on getting everyone to understand that we can trust that Jesus will forgive us of all of our sins and to not be afraid to approach Him, in the sacrament of Reconciliation. We should stress that the Gospel reminds us that Jesus gave the Apostles, and the priests, of today, the power, through the Holy Spirit, to forgive sins. This is the day that we should be making sure that nobody misses out on the opportunity to go straight to Heaven.

So how about that Divine Mercy image that Jesus wants us all to venerate on that day, with the words, “Jesus, I trust in You”. Aren’t these words the theme of St. Thomas’s revelation? Is there any doubt that, this Feast of Mercy, was God’s plan all along? The red and clear rays, in the image, according to Jesus’ own words, denote the blood and water, that poured forth, from His agonizing Heart, when it was pierced on the Cross. The Catholic Church has always taught, that Jesus’ blood and water, were the sacraments of the Church being poured out for us.

In the image, by Jesus’ words, the blood is the life of souls, and the water is what makes souls righteous. So, for Divine Mercy Sunday, the image helps us to imagine the sacraments of Holy Communion (in the red, blood ray) and the sacraments of Baptism, and Confession, too, (in the clear, water ray) are the sacraments being poured out for us, and to cleanse us. I can’t imagine, anyone, questioning the wisdom of Jesus, in asking us to venerate this image, on His feastday.

How about the first part of that Gospel? The image also portrays Jesus walking into the Upper Room, on that first Easter Sunday night, to bestow peace and the power of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, to forgive sins. Not only that, but consider what was the last instruction that Jesus gave His Apostles, before His death, and what was His first instruction, to His Apostles, after His resurrection: the Sacrament of Holy Communion (at the Last Supper), and Sacrament of Reconciliation (on the night of the Resurrection, also happening in the Upper Room). Is there any doubt why Jesus would want our priests to solemnly bless His image and for all to venerate it and to also offer us a complete pardon of sins and punishment on this Sunday?

A very easy way, to understand this feast, is to remember, that the greatest Old Testament feast, the Day of Atonement, was for the Israelites, an annual preparation for the Judgment, and in the same way, this annual, Feast of Mercy, is also an annual preparation, that offers us the total forgiveness of all sins and punishment. A straight ticket to Heaven! If Easter is the world’s greatest feast, why wouldn’t it have the world’s greatest gift; eternal life in Heaven?

Divine Mercy Sunday, the Octave Day of Easter, is the Grand Finale of the 8 day Easter feast! Don’t let anyone miss out on that “Grand Prize”, which is available to every single one of us! Don’t let any Easter-only Catholics walk out of our parishes without hearing about this feast!

Jesus said, that the loss of each soul, plunges Him, into mortal sadness.

Robert R. Allard, Director  
Apostles of Divine Mercy  
[www.DivineMercySunday.com](http://www.DivineMercySunday.com)