

Yom Kippur and Divine Mercy Sunday

What does Yom Kippur and Divine Mercy Sunday have in common you might be asking yourself? You might be surprised to find many things that are very similar including both being a yearly feast of atonement demanded by God, the confession of sins, and the promise of the total forgiveness of all sins and punishment.

Yom Kippur is a feast that is surely the most important Jewish holiday, just like Divine Mercy Sunday is becoming the most important feast for Catholics today.

The name "Yom Kippur" means "Day of Atonement," and that pretty much does explain what the Jewish holiday was. It was a day set aside to "afflict the soul," to atone for the sins of the past year. This day was, essentially, a last appeal, a last chance to change the judgment, to demonstrate true repentance and make amends.

Jesus told St. Faustina, the "Feast of Mercy" would be the "last hope of salvation". His exact words were, "*Souls perish in spite of My bitter Passion. I am giving them the last hope of salvation; that is, the Feast of My Mercy. If they will not adore My mercy, they will perish for all eternity... Tell souls about this great mercy of Mine, because the awful day, the day of My justice is near.*" (Diary 965)

A Yearly Celebration

Just as God commanded Moses and the Israelites to celebrate a yearly (feastday of Atonement) Yom Kippur, Jesus also requested, through His prophet, that a yearly Feast of Mercy be established in the Catholic Church on the Sunday after Easter.

And this shall be an eternal law for you. This is true of the native born and of the proselyte who comes to join you. This is because on this day you shall have all your sins atoned, so that you will be cleansed. Before G-d you will be cleansed of your sins. It is a Sabbath of Sabbaths to you... This is a law for all time. (Leviticus 16:29-31)

In the diary of St. Faustina we read Jesus' words, "*I desire that the first Sunday after Easter be the Feast of Mercy*". (Diary entry 299) "*I want to grant a complete pardon to the souls that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion on the Feast of My mercy*". (1109) The Octave of Easter, as Saint Gregory (a doctor of the Church) declared, is even a greater feast than Easter Sunday itself and called it the "most privileged octave-day". Divine Mercy Sunday is becoming recognized as the greatest Sunday of Sundays, in a sense, like the Sabbath of Sabbaths!

St. Thomas Aquinas also supports St. Gregory's reasoning: "the first looks to the essence of the thing, the second to its operation; and this second perfection is even greater than the first." The last day is always the greatest day of any celebration!

Confession of Sins

An important part of Yom Kippur is the (*Viduy*) or confession. The confessions serve to help reflect on ones misdeeds and to confess them verbally is part of the formal repentance in asking G-d's forgiveness.

To obtain the forgiveness of sins and punishment, for the Feast of Mercy, Jesus made the confession of sins mandatory to obtain His promise on that day. Our Lord said, "*The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment.*" (Diary 699).

The Church, by adding a Plenary Indulgence in 2002 to Divine Mercy Sunday, was essentially backing-up the promise of Jesus. Pope John Paul II had also said that he had fulfilled the will of Christ by instituting this Feast of Divine Mercy.

Take note also that Pope John Paul died on the vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday after receiving the Sacrament of the Sick and celebrating the mass. Very interesting to note: Confession for Yom Kippur was traditionally done on the eve of the feast.

Forgiveness of sins and punishment*

In Leviticus 16: 30 we read: *This is because on this day you shall have all your sins atoned, so that you will be cleansed.*

Jesus made a promise about the Feast of Mercy (Divine Mercy Sunday), that the soul that would go to Confession and receive Holy Communion on that feastday would "*obtain the complete forgiveness of sins and punishment.*" (Diary 699)

Note: For those who would doubt that the special Plenary Indulgence would offer anything less, I offer the following thoughts: Wouldn't the promise of Jesus fulfill anything at all that might seem to be lacking in the explanation of the new Plenary Indulgence? It seems obvious that Pope John Paul II knew that he was fulfilling the will of Christ when he added the indulgence, including the duties for priests.

*Although the Israelites offered animal sacrifices for atonement on Yom Kippur, our Christian "Day" of Atonement is Good Friday, but our "Feast" of Atonement, where we receive the gifts of the atonement (the total forgiveness of sins and punishment), is on Divine Mercy Sunday, the tenth day after Good Friday. It is interesting to note that Yom Kippur started 10 days earlier on Rosh Hashanah.