

Homily for Divine Mercy Sunday, Year B (7 & 8/4/18)

Today we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. Since Our Lord appeared to St Faustina in the 1930s, there have been great changes in society, and also in perhaps the culture within the Catholic Church. Previously, people were more aware of and afraid of the judgement of God, and knew that they were sinners. Today, instead, we have gone from one extreme to the other. Society has become much more tolerant of sins that previously would have horrified people. I was reading only recently that in the early part of the twentieth century, if, during a film, someone pulled out a gun, the audience were shocked and horrified. Today, it doesn't have that effect anymore. Today, also, people can so easily say that bad things are being done by others in the news, or in wider society. But they don't always see that what they are doing themselves is also rather serious. Without mentioning any details, I had a situation a few years ago where someone came to me for confession and confessed a few relatively small sins. Then, after confession was over, this person described to me something this person was involved in that was a very serious sin. The reason the issue was raised was because the person was saying, "I feel guilty about it, but I know I shouldn't. It's silly, isn't it?" I was faced with the dilemma of, "Now, how do I explain this?"

We need to get back to familiarising ourselves with what Christ taught in the Gospel, the Ten Commandments, and the wider moral teaching in the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church. God's standards do not change. What makes us fulfilled, and what does not, does not change. Appearances can be deceptive. It's sometimes said: "What's worse than finding a grub in your apple? Finding half a grub in your apple." We can be fed certain ideas which appear good, and it's only later that we discover we were hoodwinked, a bit like eating an apple we thought was ripe and juicy, but parts of it turn out not to be. All around us, marriages are failing, and some are being put off getting married altogether because of that. But people haven't woken up yet, it seems, and looked reality square in the face, and realised that it is because of the way society is at the moment that families are in such a mess in the first place. We need to re-think society and put the family at the centre, not make it an afterthought. (I've spoken in slightly vague terms because children are present.) We are all part of society, and, as Christ says, we need to look at our own hearts before we point the finger at others. We've all absorbed wrong ideas and attitudes at

times, that we need the Gospel to cleanse us of. Only in Christ is found the light, and also forgiveness, and mercy. Sin is nothing new. It's just that at different times in history, we perhaps improve in one area, but then develop a blind spot in another.

So the flipside of the message of human sinfulness is the depth of God's mercy. We hear in the Gospel about Christ instituting the sacrament of Confession, telling the disciples that those whose sins they forgive, they are forgiven. But sometimes we struggle with the idea of telling our sins to another person, or more specifically, a priest. I've noticed that when a few priests are available to hear confessions, children seem to prefer to go to a priest that they know; whilst adults prefer to go to one that doesn't know them very well. But the important thing to remember is that in confessing to the priest, you are confessing to Christ. Yes, perhaps some priests seem to be more Christ-like than others; I don't have a beard, whilst I know a few other priests in the area that do. Have you ever thought what it would be like to go to confession to Christ Himself? That would be a very powerful, life-changing confession. This is what He said to Saint Faustina:

“When you go to confession, know this, that I am waiting for you in the confessional. I am only hidden by the priest, but I myself act in the soul. Here the misery of the soul meets the God of Mercy. From this fount of Mercy souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great there is no limit to My generosity.” (Diary VI 6-7)

In a few moments, I'm going to bless the Divine Mercy image on the wall to your right. It has at the bottom the words “Jesus I trust in You”. After Mass, I invite you to come forward to this blessed image, maybe even to reach out and touch it, and to say those words, “Jesus I trust in You”. Entrust all your worries onto Him, and your need for His help with Confession, and trust that He can make you new through this sacrament.