

## Easter Week 2 (Divine Mercy Sunday) - 2026

**Act 5:12; Ps 117; Apoc 1:9-13. 17-19; John 20:19-31**

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*'For the sake of his sorrowful passion, have mercy on us, and on the whole world.'* This is the repeated prayer on each decade of beads of the Divine Mercy Chaplet. This is the prayer that Jesus gave to St Faustina. This is Divine Mercy Sunday.

If I remember my history correctly the base of the blade of a Roman spear was about 3 – 3 1/2 inches wide. Wide enough to put your hand into the resulting wound in the side of Jesus, when he was pierced at his crucifixion. Thomas, I understand why you wanted to place your hand there, because it would prove the authenticity of Risen Lord. I think it was Fulton Sheen who said: *'Satan never has and never will appear with scars'*. He is right, Satan inflicts wounds, Christ carries them: he still does. It is the authentic sign of a Christian, to bear the wounds of the suffering Jesus. Anything else is posturing

On the first Divine Mercy Sunday 26 years ago, Pope St John Paul II, speaking of St Faustina's devotion to the cross, said:

*... Christ has taught us that man not only receives and experiences the mercy of God, but is also called to practise mercy towards others: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." He also showed us the many paths of mercy, which not only forgives sins but reaches out to all human needs. Jesus bent over every kind of human poverty, material and spiritual.<sup>1</sup>*

Did you notice that when Pope St John Paul II speaks of St Faustina's devotion to the cross, he used only words about Mercy? Where do the cross and mercy intersect? Firstly, maybe we can ask, what does this mercy consist of that Faustina speaks of? What is 'Mercy'? Mercy is compassion, but it not merely compassion. A good definition that might suffice for our purposes is as follows:

*'Mercy is the forbearance and compassion shown to a powerless person, from the one who has authority over them, especially when punishment is deserved or expected and who has no claim to receive kindness.'<sup>2</sup>*

What this really means is that we do not have a claim to deserve Mercy from God. This is not something that admits to discussion in our current climate of insisting that nothing is our fault, that all our individual problems are due to medical or social ailments. This is the world's insistence that there is no such thing as sin, and this insistence is not only in the world outside but the world seeping into the Church as well. If people really believed that they might be responsible for their own actions, and if they believed that they might in their own actions be a source of evil in the world, we would inhabit a less selfish, less despairing, less violent world. We would be in a more holy world, because we would be too busy doing battle with what is inside ourselves to be hurling rocks and dismantling the reputations of others. Show me a person who spends their time loudly denouncing their neighbour and telling people they are how despicable they are and I will show you a person who does not look inside. They will look in a mirror to see how they appear to others, but they will not ask how they appear to God. Such a person does not feel the foot-hold of Mercy in their

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<sup>2</sup> This is a refinement of the definition from the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. Useful to look at broader definitions and nuance. We should not be way-laid by nuance.

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lives because they cannot see the need. Such a person does not need to go to confession or receive absolution. Such a person places a statue of Buddha in their garden and is content.

Divine Mercy claims something else: Divine Mercy claims the cross. Divine Mercy claims that only the Sacrifice of God himself, the Blood of his Son, can remove our Sins. His life has been poured out for all our sins. Not just for the major ones, not for the ones that we pass off as just 'being human' or of no consequence, but for everything that comes between our soul and God and causes us suffering, and Jesus suffering. This is why Jesus asked that St Faustina to have the 'Divine Mercy' painting created: to show his crucifixion wounds and the red and pale rays issuing from his heart: red is his Blood, the pale one is the Holy Spirit. Both pour out from his pierced heart. This is God on the Cross.

You understand that we have no claim to heaven, no merits of our own to climb the heights on our own, just His sacrifice. His Sacrifice is his gift of Mercy to us. This is because he picks up our humanity and our death and places it upon his divinity and immortality. He gives up his life's blood - which is to say everything - so that we might live. All we have to do is allow ourselves to be anointed by it, by the cross. Many people are horrified by this; they run from it. They hurl abuse at the Church because of this, or they leave. They refuse to accept that the chalice is the Precious Blood for the anointing their lips. They refuse the forgiveness of the priest in Confession from whose hand runs the absolving blood of Jesus from the cross. This is why some Christians try to strip the cross from the Gospel. Sometimes I feel like running too, it is too consuming, too much love, too 'organic', who can bear it?

Do you understand that Divine Mercy is the cross? That it is a gift from God to all sinners? That we are asked, begged, to receive it so that we might

live? Do you understand that Divine Mercy is God's love for us, and that it has taken the Blood of His Son to wash away our sins? You do! Good. Now go and live your life accordingly, bearing witness to His mercy and His cross. They are all you need into the living prayer: *'For the sake of his sorrowful passion, have mercy on us, and on the whole world.'*