

2nd Sunday Easter Year "A" (Divine Mercy Sunday)  
April 26-27, 2014  
Readings: Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20: 19-31

We are given a powerful image in our second reading today, in which St. Peter exhorts us to rejoice, even if for awhile we may have to suffer. He says this so that "your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor..." Saint Peter is recalling to the minds of the apostles and disciples that their faith is the most precious gift they have, no matter what. I wonder how many people could say that today, in a day and age where reason and pragmatism are the order of the day. What counts is getting things done, accomplishing our goals- and little else.

As is often the case, secular society is most certainly *partially* correct. We are a goal driven people, and it is good and admirable to be driven by goals in life. The successful person is often one who sets consistent and challenging goals for himself. At the end of the first reading, St. Peter wrote of the inexpressible joy that awaits us at achieving faith's goal, our salvation. The goal of our faith is salvation. It is a goal that can only fully be realized after we die, never while on this earth. We often feel the need to see results now. We can become so driven that we never see the ultimate goal; we are caught up in the many others goals we set.

I propose to you today that in the midst of the many goals we do set, and need to set for ourselves in school or work, or in our families, that we also set a goal of drawing closer to God the Father this Easter season. We all have goals during Lent; what about Easter? For example, we could set as a goal to manifest joy more readily; focus on the fruits of the Holy Spirit. We would do well to consider seeking to manifest gratitude more readily - whether to family, parents, or to God.

Today we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, a particular week set aside to focus on the riches of His mercy. By naming this Sunday *Divine Mercy Sunday*, St. John Paul II gave the highest endorsement possible to a private revelation, in recommending this devotion to the faithful. Jesus gave the apostles a divine command as well as a divine authority to forgive sins in his name. This was the institution of the Sacrament of Penance of which so many took advantage here during the preparation for the celebration of Easter.

Pope John Paul II left an amazing legacy. His principal documents include 14 Encyclicals, 15 Apostolic Exhortations, 11 Apostolic Constitutions and 45 Apostolic Letters. His international apostolic journeys numbered 104; no other Pope met as many people as Pope John Paul II. More than 17.6 million pilgrims attended his Wednesday General Audiences. He also attracted young people by beginning the celebration of World Youth Day.

For his part, Pope John XXIII left a different legacy, not one measured by years (for he only served as pope for 5 years), but a legacy of gentle love, joy and a firm belief in the goodness of humanity. He convened the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and presided at its first session. He wanted to attract people to the beauty of the faith, expressed in ways that they could understand.

God will never force us to believe. He did not force Thomas, but when Thomas overcame the doubt that clouded him for a time, he emerged stronger in faith because of it. He did not overcome the doubt on his own—we need God's grace to move us to faith. God will not grace us with faith unless we freely choose to be open to it. In this respect, we have a **duty** to seek God. It is not a game of hide and seek, but seek and find.

Thomas eventually was able to profess with full voice and pure heart, “My Lord and my God,” and he was greatly blessed because of it. He was overcome with peace upon this realization. Rather than fret over his earlier disbelief, he wasted no time in spreading the Gospel far and wide. Tradition says he went to India, where today he is revered as the founding saint of the Church in India.

When we bow before the majesty of God the Father and the Divine Mercy of his son Jesus Christ, we will be overwhelmed with gratitude. Let this season of Easter be a season of profound gratitude for God’s love and mercy.