

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

MERCY, MERCY, MERCY!

The late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen once told a story of a visit he made to a maximum security prison our in California. The bishop, who was a talented speaker, was really at a loss to say to all these men who thought that he was the "good guy" and that they were all the "bad guys." So he began his remarks to the inmates this way: "There is just one difference between you and me...you got caught-I didn't!"

I suppose that when we think about it, all of us have done things in our lives that we were not very proud of. Take for example our gospel for this Sunday as a case in point. This second Sunday after Easter, we listen to the story of Saint Thomas. He has come down to us throughout history with a nickname: "Doubting Thomas."

Thomas didn't believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. He didn't trust the witness of his own fellow disciples who had seen Christ. For hard headed Thomas needed proof that Jesus had risen so much had the scandal of the cross and Good Friday eroded his faith. And Jesus gave him that proof. He allowed Thomas to touch his hands and side to view those scars which were really the "trophies" of his victory over sin and death.

Thomas, the last apostle to believe in the resurrection was the first to profess his belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ for he cried out: "My Lord and my God!" What a wonderful testimony to the power of grace.

We might reflect a little on the wound in Christ's side today. How was that wound created? Well, we read about it in the gospel of Saint John. One of the soldiers who kept watch on Calvary pierced the side of Our Lord with a spear to make sure that he was dead. There came forth from the side of Jesus blood and water. There was truly no more left for the Lord to give. That wound in his side has come to symbolize the great love and mercy of God.

This Sunday is also called "Divine Mercy Sunday." Maybe some of you have heard or read about Sister Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938). Sister Faustina was a Polish nun who received visitations and visions of Jesus who specifically asked that a Feast of Divine Mercy be celebrated the Sunday after Easter.

In her diary, Sister Faustina described Jesus pointing to his breast from which there came forth two large rays-one red and the other white. The Lord asked that an image be painted of what she had seen with an inscription: "Jesus, I trust in you." We have a beautiful painting of the Divine Mercy which hangs here in our church.

Sister Faustina was canonized by Pope Saint John Paul II on April 30, 2000. In his homily on that day, Pope John Paul said this about the message of Divine Mercy: "This consoling message is addressed above all to those who are afflicted by a particularly harsh trial or crushed by the weight of the sins they have committed, have lost all confidence in life and are tempted to despair. To them the gentle face of Christ is offered; those rays from his heart touch them and shine upon them, warm them, show them the way and fill them with hope..."

I think the Pope's words can describe all of us at times. We're not as good as we should be, in fact we are all poor sinners-the "bad guys" at times-imprisoned in our own sin and selfishness. We need the mercy of God. Today, on this special Sunday, let us make this prayer our own, "O blood and water which came forth from the heart of Christ, have mercy on us and on the whole world!"

Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome