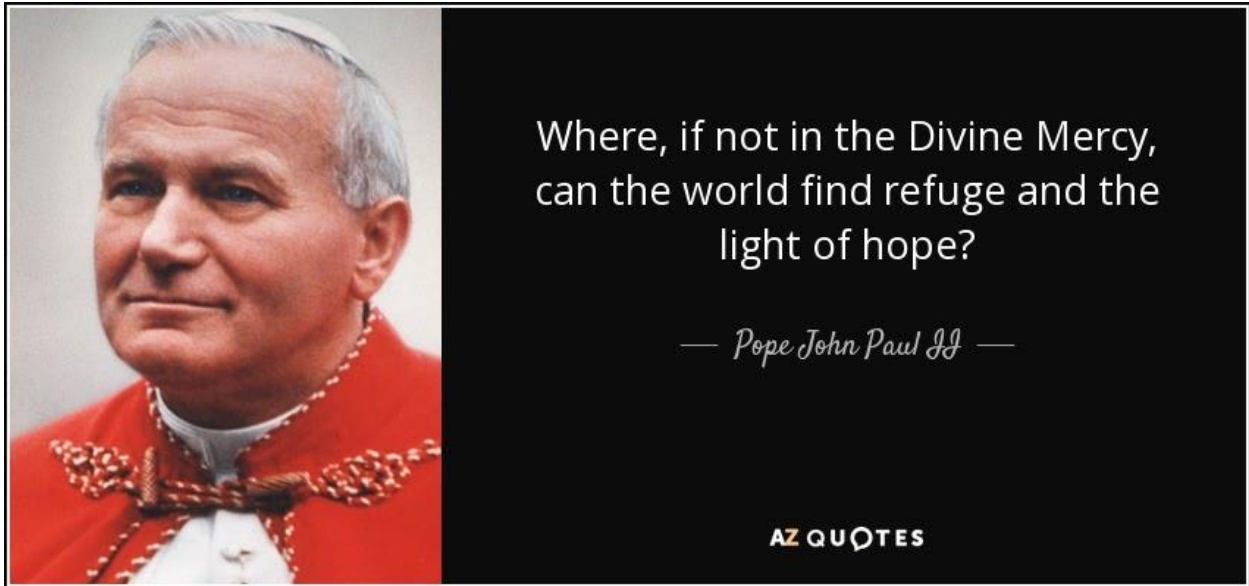


FROM FATHER JOHN – “Let the house of Israel say, ‘**His mercy endures forever.**’ Let the house of Aaron say, ‘**His mercy endures forever.**’ Let those who fear the LORD say, ‘**His mercy endures forever.**’ I was hard pressed and was falling, but the LORD helped me. My strength and my courage is the LORD, and he has been my savior. The joyful shout of victory in the tents of the just: The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the LORD has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it.” ~ Psalm 118

His mercy endures forever, Alleluia, Alleluia! Rejoice Always, He is Risen, Alleluia!!!



Today is Divine Mercy Sunday and the words of the psalmist ring out to all the earth, “**His mercy endures forever!**” In the great victory of His Cross and Resurrection, our Lord Jesus has given us grace upon grace. This is what we celebrate today; the great gift of salvation that Jesus gives each of us by virtue of His Cross and Resurrection. It’s what we celebrate every day at mass, every time we participate in the celebration of the sacred liturgy. The following is from a sermon on Divine Mercy by Saint Bernard, abbot (1090-1153).

“The goodness and humanity of God our Savior have appeared in our midst. We thank God for the many consolations he has given us during this sad exile of our pilgrimage here on earth. Before the Son of God became man his goodness was hidden, for God’s mercy is eternal, but how could such goodness be recognized? It was promised, but it was not experienced, and as a result few have believed in it. Often and in many ways the Lord used to speak through the prophets. Among other things, God said: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction. But what did men respond, thinking thoughts of affliction and knowing nothing of peace? They said: Peace, peace, there is no peace. This response made the angels of peace weep bitterly, saying: Lord, who has believed our message? But now men believe because they see with their own eyes, and because God’s testimony has now

become even more credible. He has gone so far as to pitch his tent in the sun so even the dimmest eyes see him.

Notice that peace is not promised but sent to us; it is no longer deferred, it is given; peace is not prophesied but achieved. It is as if God the Father sent upon the earth a purse full of his mercy. This purse was burst open during the Lord's passion to pour forth its hidden contents – the price of our redemption. It was only a small purse, but it was very full. As the Scriptures tell us: *A little child has been given to us, but in him dwells all the fullness of the divine nature.* The fullness of time brought with it the fullness of divinity. God's Son came in the flesh so that mortal men could see and recognize God's kindness. When God reveals his humanity, his goodness cannot possibly remain hidden. To show his kindness what more could he do beyond taking my human form? My humanity, I say, not Adam's – that is, not such as he had before his fall.

How could he have shown his mercy more clearly than by taking on himself our condition For our sake the Word of God became as grass. What better proof could he have given of his love? Scripture says: *Lord, what is man that you are mindful of him; why does your heart go out to him?* The incarnation teaches us how much God cares for us and what he thinks and feels about us. We should stop thinking of our own sufferings and remember what he has suffered. Let us think of all the Lord has done for us, and then we shall realize how his goodness appears through his humanity. The lesser he became through his human nature the greater was his goodness; the more he lowered himself for me, the dearer he is to me. *The goodness and humanity of God our Savior have appeared, says the Apostle.*

Truly great and manifest are the goodness and humanity of God. He has given us a most wonderful proof of his goodness by adding humanity to his own divine nature."



Here is the direct link to the readings for Divine Mercy Sunday.

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/041121.cfm>

We always read this Gospel passage, the story of Doubting Thomas, on Divine Mercy Sunday. One reason for reading this passage every year is that it takes place one week after the Resurrection of our Lord. But, I think a more important reason that the Church gives us this particular reading every year is that moments of doubt come with faith; even for people of strong faith.

St. Theresa of Calcutta shared her own doubts in *Come Be My Light: The Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta*. She wrote in her private letters, *“Where is my faith? – even deep down, right in, there is nothing but emptiness & darkness. – My God – how painful is this unknown pain. It pains without ceasing. – I have no faith. – I dare not utter the words & thoughts that crowd in my heart - & make me suffer untold agony. So many unanswered questions live within me – I am afraid to uncover them – because of the blasphemy – If there be God, - please forgive me.”*

St. Teresa was the stereotypical nun. Self-effacing, self-sacrificing, hard-working and always in prayer, she seemed to embody saint-like qualities. She cared for the poorest of the poor in the most difficult of circumstances. She certainly had faith. How else could she have done what she did? Yet, she had moments of doubt. We all do.

One of the challenges to our faith is intellectual. When we consider the nature of God, the Holy Trinity, the Divinity and Humanity of our Lord Jesus, the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord, it’s easy for our minds to falter, to fail to accept intellectually these mysteries that seem to be beyond all understanding. We live in a world where we can speak into our cell phones and instantly receive satisfying answers. This doesn’t work with great Mysteries of our faith.

We need to embrace the humility that accepts the Mysteries that God has given us rather than thinking we have all the answers to the central questions of human life. When we deny that there is something out there greater than our ability to understand, we give doubt an opportunity to creep in. The thing that we have to remember is that God is God and we are not. Humble acceptance is the attitude we need in face of intellectual doubts.

Another challenge to our faith is physical rather than intellectual. Someone becomes seriously ill, a loved one dies, a young person dies in traumatic fashion. We fall into the trap of asking God, “Why did you let this happen?” Or, “Where were you when we were going through all this?” We’re going through a crisis right now with this pandemic and it’s natural to ask why, to wonder why God has allowed this to happen or where God is when we need him.

These are natural questions but they also let doubt creep in. We need an attitude of Trust in these types of situations. We need to Trust that our Lord is with us, that He understands that we are suffering just as He suffered on the cross. God's answer in these situations is that He is with us, carrying us through the trying times and that He is giving us the grace and the strength to grow closer to Him even as we face the difficulties the world is throwing at us.

The most common way we let doubt enter our lives is to quit living the life of faith; to fall away from the practices of our faith. To fall away from prayer, from reading the scriptures, from participating in the sacraments. When we stop living and behaving as Catholic Christians it becomes easy to stop believing in our Christian faith. When we give lip service to living out the life of discipleship, we give doubt room to creep in.

"Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.' Thomas answered and said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.'"

Our Lord Jesus wasn't just talking to St. Thomas. He was talking to us. He was telling us to look around and see the Grace that He has given us, that He has given our families, that He has given our nation and our world. St. Thomas gives us what the answer to doubt should be, whenever it creeps into our lives, "My Lord and my God!" Or, as the possessed boy's father cried out in the 9th chapter of Mark's gospel, "Lord, I do believe, help my unbelief!"

We need to ask for the Lord's help, we need to trust that the Lord, who, in His Divine Mercy, gives us all good things, will give us strength to overcome all doubt; the strength that comes with faith. Always remember, St. Thomas overcame his doubt and paid homage to our Lord and God. We can do the same as long as we humbly place our trust and faith in the Mercy of the Lord our God.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

