



Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday of Easter (Sunday of Divine Mercy) | April 8, 2018

Life Reborn

By Mary Katharine Deeley

In the first few days after our first child was born, I wasn't conscious of time. I'd sit still and look at this miracle of life, knowing that I loved her with all my heart and that our lives would never be the same. I'd get to the end of the day and wonder where the time had gone. And when she was married last year, I remembered those days like they were yesterday.

Something like that is happening now, but the first week of Easter is more than a recollection of the empty tomb. Each day's Gospel reading refers to appearances of the risen Christ to his disciples. In this way we mark the "new creation" brought about by Christ's resurrection.

For many of us, the week was another round of work or school. Our busyness might have kept us from giving much thought to the feast we just celebrated. But in our spiritual lives, time has stood still for a little while so we might ponder this miracle of life. It's a reminder that we're born new in this moment, an invitation to savor the experience and allow ourselves to be changed by it.

In today's reading, St. Paul gives us a glimpse of what life reborn looked like for the new Christian community. There was unity of heart and mind and generosity toward those who were in need. After the resurrection, their lives would never be the same.

The Church takes its time with Easter so that, no matter how old we get, we'll remember it like it was yesterday and live accordingly. +

A Word From Pope Francis

Mercy warms the heart and makes it sensitive to the needs of brothers and sisters with sharing and participation. Thus, mercy requires everyone to be instruments of justice, reconciliation, and peace. Let us never forget that mercy is the keystone in the life of faith, and the concrete form by which we make Jesus' resurrection visible.

—Divine Mercy Sunday,
April 23, 2017



Sunday Readings

Acts 4:32–35

The community of believers was of one heart and mind.

1 Jn 5:1–6

And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.

Jn 20:19–31

[Jesus said,] "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I find security in the love of another in a healthy way? Is it the fruit of giving and not possessing?
- Is my strongest foundation in the love and mercy of Jesus?



God's Extravagant Mercy

By Bishop Robert F. Morneau

There is a scene in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that addresses forgiveness. The king, Claudius, has murdered his brother, married his brother's widow, and stolen the crown. In his soliloquy, Claudius reveals what is transpiring in his tortured soul. The king knows that his fault is past but prayer does not serve him well since the effects of his crime—the stealing of the crown, the sinful fulfillment of his ambition, and his adulterous relationship with the queen—all remain. He senses that his murder cannot be forgiven as long as the effects of the murder remain.

Our faith tells us that God's mercy is always available through the salvation gained for us in Christ. We need but turn to God with sincere intent and resolve, confess our sins, and receive divine mercy. No one is excluded from this grace. God's will is that all be saved.

What is blasphemous, what blocks God's extravagant mercy pouring into our souls is not any particular sin that is unforgivable. Rather, the blasphemy happens when we refuse to forgo the effects of our sins (power, pride, possessions) and are unwilling to reform our lives with a sincere

purpose of amendment. It is not that sin is unforgivable, that God withholds divine mercy. Rather, it is an obstinate disposition that hardens the heart, preventing the rain of divine mercy from penetrating the soul.

Mercy Accepted, Rejected

In the Garden, Peter spoke words of betrayal, denying that he knew Jesus. Subsequently, Peter acknowledged his sin, wept bitterly, and was forgiven. With humility and courage, Peter faced his failure. We know the rest of the story.

For just thirty pieces of silver Judas also betrayed his master. Unable or unwilling to accept Jesus' merciful gaze, this disciple took his own life.

Mercy was afforded to both; it was accepted by only one. In some way Judas got stuck in himself and could not believe that he still retained infinite human worth. His sin shattered his sense of dignity and led to self-disdain.

Saint Augustine, in speaking of sin, describes it as *curvatus in se*, that is, turned in on oneself. Sin does exactly that. It refuses to breathe the fresh air of God's mercy. It suffocates us, cutting us off from God and others. There is a disconnect, a partial or total severing of the branch from the vine of God's life.

Jesus came precisely to reconcile us to God, to one another, and to ourselves.

Appropriating God's Message

In another Shakespearean play, *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo sees his beloved at some distance and says to himself: "O it is my love. O that she knew she were." Juliet doesn't know it! God says to us, his beloved daughters and sons: "O you are my love. Would that you knew you were!"

Could the "unforgivable" sin against the Holy Spirit be our refusal, upon hearing the message of God's love in Jesus, to appropriate this message and let it shape our lives? Joseph Campbell once suggested that the unpardonable sin was "the sin of inadvertence, of not being alert, not quite awake." The spiritual life is about staying awake to the infinite love and mercy of God given us in Jesus.

Though Shakespeare as a dramatist is not a "religious" writer, his plays provide clues for understanding the great mysteries of sin and forgiveness. For these clues, we should be grateful. +

Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven" (Luke 12:10).



Risen Lord, you fulfilled your promise by rising from the dead.
 Help me to practice what I preach..
 From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*,
 Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 9-14, 2018

Monday, Annunciation of the Lord:
 Is 7:10-14; 8:10 / Heb 10:4-10 / Lk 1:26-38

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
 Acts 4:32-37 / Jn 3:7b-15

Wednesday—St. Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr:
 Acts 5:17-26 / Jn 3:16-21

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
 Acts 5:27-33 / Jn 3:31-36

Friday, Easter Weekday:
 Acts 5:34-42 / Jn 6:1-15

Saturday, Easter Weekday:
 Acts 6:1-7 / Jn 6:16-21