



**Second Sunday of Easter (Year A)  
Divine Mercy Sunday**

**Homily**

**By the Most Rev Bishop Don Sproxton  
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral Parish House  
Sunday 19 April, 2020

Divine Mercy Sunday, the last of the eight days of special rejoicing and celebration of Easter, was inaugurated by St John Paul II to highlight that at the centre of Holy Week and Easter, lies the immense compassion and mercy God has for all people. The greatest sign of the love of God for us has been the sending of Jesus, who by enduring his passion inflicted on him by scheming men, would bring about our salvation and freedom.

On this Sunday, we reflect on the promise that Christ stands beside us in every trial, and that he alone strengthens faith and hope. The experience of these past weeks has been very difficult. As Christians, we have been deprived of being together and celebrating with our communities the great acts of the love of God for us, shown in the death and resurrection of Jesus. It has been difficult, yet necessary for us to join in the effort required of us all to minimise the impact of the coronavirus on the people of our State and nation. Thankfully, our efforts and sacrifices are showing signs of success.

We are grateful for the wonderful commitment of each person who stays at home, and observes social distancing and good hygiene practices; for the medical professionals, doctors, nurses, general staff and scientists who are on the front line of the work to stop the advance of the virus through our community and who are providing excellent care for those suffering and hospitalised; for the leadership of the Premier and Prime Minister, and government ministers and officials; and the voluntary work of people in our community who are responding to the many needs of people affected by this crisis.

One image that to me was very powerful was the photo in the media of the nurse whose face was red raw through wearing a mask during the long shifts she worked caring for patients. I know of the amazing work being done by teachers who have put together packages of work for their students and connect with them each day on-line. The parents are now being asked to do so much more in guiding their children at home with their work, and are fortunately supported by the teachers. Even more is being asked of our teachers and school staffs as parents are encouraged to send their children back to school. They will be attempting to cater for children in classrooms and those who remain at home.



We are seeing the best in people. Families reaching out to elderly neighbours and asking if they need help with shopping. The connections are trying to be maintained with the members of our families, especially the grandparents and those living far away. So many needs are being provided for, including our mental health, through our efforts to remain connected. There will be more, perhaps, many more weeks ahead of restrictions and sacrifices being asked of us. There will be moments when we will tire or find what is being asked beyond us. This will be when our faith will be needed so that hope can be sustained in us: faith to go the extra mile-faith that God is with us.

The Word of God today gives us encouragement. We have heard how the first Christian communities sought to live. Many of those were noted for the love that seemed to be actively at work among their members. They cared for and supported one another. At so many times since in history, we have looked back to this vision of the church, and have been inspired to work for renewal so that the church might be again what God has meant us to be.

The trials of life that come our way, from outside and from within us, upset the peace and harmony that we strive for in our community. Our history teaches us that very soon after the Christian community began the first of many persecutions occurred and internal disagreements arose. Yet, those early Christians came to realise that the times of trials were when they had experienced the consolation of the power of God in special ways. Their faith had been tested and proved like gold. In fact, they found that they had grown in faith and were stronger by passing through those painful times.

As Christians, we know that faith in the resurrection leads us to hope. The Gospel of John tells the story of Thomas the Apostle and of his inner struggle or trial to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. It is a trial that we can relate to because we each have to enter that struggle to believe that in Jesus the Light overcame the darkness, that love defeated evil. Then we have to take the further step to believe that he is with us in our struggles and trials, so that we can look forward to coming through stronger, better and at peace within.

A big part of Thomas' difficulty was trusting the witness provided by the Church, when the Good News was announced to him by the women and the other apostles that Jesus was risen from the dead and had been seen by them.

The Thomas story itself is Good News because it shows the lengths that Jesus went to, out of concern for Thomas, to meet him and help him overcome his difficulties. Jesus did not reject him for his lack of faith and trust. In the long-run, Thomas would become an outstanding apostle, bringing the story of Jesus and God's love, beyond his homeland, to far off lands and cultures. He would be seen as a man of faith, hope and love, and so many were attracted by him, first of all, and then they asked to become part of his community of Christians, as they came to know Jesus, whom they had not seen for themselves.



So it is for us as we make our way through this time of pandemic. The faith that we have in Jesus and what we know about his love for us gives us encouragement. We are restricted so that our communities can be made safe and the more vulnerable in our neighbourhoods and families will not be exposed to the potentially deadly virus.

This live-streaming of the Mass in a way keeps us close to Jesus and reminds us that he is with us. When we pray for spiritual communion later the sacred bond with him is strengthened by his grace. And the bond with one another in the parishes is also strengthened.

Without seeing him, we believe.