

Homily: Divine Mercy Sunday: 2nd Sunday of Easter 2024: Cycle B: Acts 4: 32-35; Ps. 118; 1 Jn 5: 1-6; Jn 20: 19-31

“Modern Challenges to the Faith and the Solution in the Divine Mercy of Jesus”

1. In the 1st reading this weekend we hear that the Apostles and the early Catholic Christian community were of one mind and heart and held everything in common, and no one was in need, as they bore witness to the Resurrection of Jesus. That may be slightly idealistic as we know early on heresies or false teachings about Jesus and the Faith developed, particularly the heresies under the banner of Gnosticism (secret knowledge) which I will get into a little later. But the fact was when the Christian community was small it was easier to help each other in charity. As the Church grew larger obviously this became practically much more difficult, and so the Church tried to help form the faithful in relation to the proper use of material things. The idea of **tithing** from the OT or giving 10% of what we have to honor God who is the source of everything and to help others in charity was incorporated into the Church’s social teaching. The best advice I heard once in that regard is to give 5% to your local Parish/Diocese and then the other 5% to other good Catholic charities. This is definitely something to always strive for: *to detach ourselves from our over-tendency to focus too much on material things which prevents us from growing in spiritual maturity* which always involves in some way **the beatitude of living poverty in spirit** which means depending ever more on God and trusting in His Providential care for each of us and our families. At different times in life, we may not be able to give quite 10% because of real situations of debt or previous bad financial decisions, but then there are hopefully other times when we can give more than 10%.
2. Another increasingly big issue of the modern world is **the confusion about our bodily nature**. If we don’t know who we are, namely a man or a woman, created in God’s image and adopted by Him in Baptism, we will never grow in holiness – hence this is the final attack on the gift of humanity made in God image, by Satan and the other fallen angels, as Pope Benedict pointed out early on in his papacy when this transgender ideology was starting to take hold in the world of ideas. This confusion, like the over-emphasis on money and material things, will keep us over-focused on one’s self and this passing earthly life to the detriment of our eternal destiny in Christ of new life free from sin and

selfishness and death. You see **the culture of death** at work here where ppl literally mutilate the divine gift of their bodily nature to try to satisfy their confused spiritual nature. Humans are body and soul, as witnessed in the 2nd reading today when St. John the Evangelist points out, Jesus is both water and blood = *He was truly human in all ways to redeem our total human nature*. The **gnostic heresy** in its various forms is always confused in some way about the relationship with body and soul, *over-emphasizing one over the other*: early in the Church, the denial of the reality of the body; now, the obsession with the body. We must pray and work towards helping people who are confused in their bodily identity to realize the Lord alone can help and heal our bodies and souls to be integrated in Him in the pursuit of holiness and communion with Him.

3. Finally, we come to Divine Mercy Sunday the day before we celebrate the great Solemnity of the Annunciation of Jesus, on Monday this year because of how Holy Week fell. The moment He began to take on our human nature in the womb of our Lady; and also why we as a Church teach human life is sacred from the moment of conception. Also Monday is the day of the total solar eclipse which will be 92% here in Bedford from 2 pm to 4:30 pm. Some think something drastic is going to happen spiritually as well - we'll see. But the concept of what is called the inner illumination of conscience is referred to in **the Diary of Divine Mercy**, paragraph 83: Jesus says the following to St. Faustina, *Write this: Before I come as the just Judge, I am coming first as the King of Mercy. Before the day of justice arrives, there will be given to people a sign in the heavens of this sort: All light in the heavens will be extinguished, and there will be great darkness over the whole earth. Then the sign of the cross will be seen in the sky, and from the openings where the hands and the feet of the Savior were nailed will come forth great lights which will light up the earth for a period of time. This will take place shortly before the last day*. And then the prayer we say at the end of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy is taught to St Faustina, *O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You!* Do we trust Jesus will take care of us, regardless of what happens in the world? Let's pray that we will be generous with our money and material possessions, that we will thank God for both our spiritual & bodily nature and pray for and help those who are confused, and let's draw close to Jesus's mercy in prayer for us and the whole world.