

“On the evening of that day, the first day of the week” – i.e., the day of the Resurrection – ... “he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” These are the words of our Lord to the Apostles when He appeared to them on the day of the Resurrection. With these words our Lord created the Sacrament of Confession. Notice the timing – *immediately* after the Resurrection, on the very day that He rose from the dead. Our Lord would be present to the Apostles for 40 days after His Resurrection but on the very day of the Resurrection, He created the Sacrament of Confession. It is as if He couldn’t wait, that this was something He longed to do, His first and foremost desire; this was the reason for His sacrifice. Prior to these words for creating the sacrament Jesus said: “as the Father has sent Me, so I send you.” In other words, bestowing His mercy on man was His very mission and now He will empower the Apostles to carry out that work and transmit that power down through the ages until the end of time. He has made the atonement, He has purchased for us the way to salvation, and now He cannot wait to create the means for receiving that grace of reconciliation. He longs to grant to us the gift that He purchased for us with His Passion.

Let us turn now to the question of: how do I respond? Consider an analogy. Suppose a mother has one daughter. The daughter has gotten caught up in worldly ways. She has a job, a career, in a large city that is considered high-powered and “important” on worldly standards. The daughter has become “successful” in the eyes of the world, and in her own eyes. The mother now hardly ever sees her and yet she longs for union with her daughter. The mother is not wealthy, she lives alone in a very small apartment, but she is an excellent seamstress. So the mother says to herself: this is what I will do. I will scrimp and save everything I can and with that money I will make my daughter the most beautiful quilt I have ever made and then I will prepare us a magnificent meal and then invite her for Christmas day and present her with my gifts. So the mother moves ahead with her plan. She gets by on the most meager of food, she turns the thermostat way down in her apartment, she even sells as many of her belongings as she can so as to be able to give her daughter all that she can give. She is cold and hungry most of the time, she sleeps on a thin mattress, but she is happy to endure all of this because of her daughter. Finally Christmas day approaches and she invites her daughter to come. The daughter says no at first but after much pleading she agrees to show up. Christmas day comes, the mother is very excited. The daughter does come but is rather cool and aloof; she looks frequently at her watch as if to say: let’s get this over with. The mother notices but she is so excited about bestowing her gift upon her daughter that she holds no hard feelings towards her. So they move to the meager dining room and the mother brings out a tremendous feast. The daughter scoffs and says – I have already had some healthy food. She refuses the mother’s meal. The mother is disappointed but she still has the great gift to give so she goes and gets the quilt. It is beautifully wrapped and prepared. She presents it to her daughter. The daughter decides, somewhat begrudgingly, to open it; she looks at it and laughs – this is pathetically old-fashioned, she says, it doesn’t go with any of my décor. The daughter leaves and the mother sees her throw the quilt in the dumpster.

Before we condemn that daughter, we should ask ourselves what we have done with the gift of reconciliation that our Lord has won for us. He held each one of us in mind, personally and individually, as He endured His Passion – the scourging, the thorns, the hatred and ridicule, the spikes driven into His hands and feet, saying the whole time: it’s alright Father, I offer all of this to You, and in reparation for all the sins of the world. He has me personally and individually in mind as He endured that suffering, precisely because He wanted so badly to bestow this tremendous gift on me. And how many, down through the centuries but especially today, have proudly scoffed at and rejected His gift. How many have said: I know better, this is my way. Is this the response we want to give, the response of that daughter to her mother? You cannot say: this is a false interpretation; the Lord established an authoritative source precisely because He knew we needed it, because there would be attacks on the truth of what He has revealed and prepared for us, namely His Church. It is the definitive teaching of the Church that Confession is 1 of 7 sacraments that our Lord created and is His principle means for the forgiveness of sins.

But I can't see it. Ah prideful soul, consider another analogy, a father with 2 sons. The father, like the mother in the previous analogy, sacrifices everything he has to build his sons a magnificent palace to live, and to dwell in perfect happiness and security. He calls his first son to him. The son can only see the face, the entrance, to what the father has built. The son scoffs and says – I already have something a lot better than that and he leaves, rejecting the gift of his father. The second son comes and he sees the same thing. But then he also sees his father. The father has sacrificed everything; his clothes are in tatters, the father is thin to the point of being emaciated; his hands are gnarled from all the work he has done and from sleeping outside so as to be able to give his sons this great gift. The second son looks at the entrance and doesn't see much but the second son sees something else, in addition to the entrance of the palace. He sees the great sacrifice of his father and says: ok, pops, let's go in; he loves his father because of his sacrifice, he trusts the father and this prompts to go in. When he does, he sees and experiences something magnificent beyond what he could ever imagine. Can we not do the same and embrace the gift that our Lord has won for us?

Not only has God been widely rejected in the contemporary world, but even many of those who make some claim of loving Him proudly reject His gift. The daughter did not deny that the mother who made the quilt was her mother; she just rejected the mother's gift. The first son did not deny that the old man was his father, he just rejected his gift. Those who reject always do so saying: I know better, I decide. In spite of all this rejection, our Lord continues to try to call back His wayward sons and daughters. Divine Mercy Sunday – this Sunday, the first Sunday after Easter – is *the* call for our own times, perhaps His final call.

Helena Kowlaska was born into a poor Polish family in 1905. Our Lord began appearing to her at a fairly young age and little Helena wanted to become a nun. However, her family needed her to work and help support the family, which she did. While her vocation was delayed, Helena began to slide (some) into a little bit of worldliness, sliding somewhat away from our Lord. Then one night when she was at a dance our Lord appeared to her as He was during His Passion – bloodied, beaten, crowned with thorns. He looked directly at her and said: how long will you make Me wait? Helena was so deeply struck that she ran to the local church, prostrated herself before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and pleaded with Him to make known to her what she should do. Jesus said: Go to Warsaw. She went to Warsaw and there became a nun with the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, taking the name of Faustina. This is where our Lord really began to give her the messages He wanted delivered to the whole Church, and indeed the whole world. Our Lord said many things to St Faustina; all that can be given here is a very brief synopsis. Jesus told Faustina that she was to be the Apostle and Secretary of His Mercy – in other words, the thrust of the message is very simply: return to Me by receiving the gift of My Mercy that I won for you with My Passion. Jesus said to St Faustina: **You will prepare the world for My final coming. Speak to the world about My mercy ... It is a sign for the end times. After it will come the Day of Justice. While there is still time, let them have recourse to the fountain of My mercy. Tell souls about this great mercy of Mine, because the awful day, the day of My justice, is near.** To draw special attention to His mercy, our Lord also told Faustina that He wanted a special feast of His Mercy established in His Church – the Feast of Divine Mercy – which was to be on the first Sunday after Easter. This was implemented by Pope St John Paul II in the year 2,000. Jesus also said to Sr. Faustina: **whoever approaches the Fount of Life (Confession) on this day (the Feast of Divine Mercy) will be granted complete remission of sins and punishment.**” This is a tremendous promise.

We will only be able to have one Divine Mercy celebration this year which will be at St Patrick's (Montrose), starting at 1:30 pm. There will be exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, confession available, the Divine Mercy chaplet will be prayed at 3 pm, and Benediction at 4 pm. Confessions will continue until all are heard. You can come and go as you like, you certainly don't need to stay the whole time. If you just want to come and get to Confession and spend a little time in prayer, then do that. Do not let the fact that it's not at your parish deter you. What difference does it make? Flee to our Lord's feet on this day of supreme outpouring of His Mercy, something He Himself has called for.

*God bless you, Fr Kuhn*