

- The great Cistercian monk St. Bernard of Clairvaux once said: “The secret of Christ’s heart is revealed to us through the clefts of His body.”
- St. Bernard’s point is that if we want to know Jesus intimately, if we want to penetrate His heart and be in relationship with Him as His friends, then all we need do is look at His wounds, for they reveal His true nature, which is sacrificial love.
- Our Lord’s wounds are passageways into His Most Sacred Heart, and our Mass today draws us to meditate on our Lord’s wounds in two ways.
- First we have the beautiful story of our Lord inviting the doubting St. Thomas to probe the wounds in His hands and to place his hands into His wounded side.
- Throughout our Church’s history we Catholics have always venerated the wounds of Christ, particularly the wound in His side from which blood and water flowed, as the very font of our Lord’s mercy and compassion.
- We see in Christ’s wounds the depth of His love and mercy; we see the lengths to which He was willing to go in order to save us from His sins. Thus, the wounds of Christ have always been symbols of His great mercy and love.
- Secondly, as we meditate on the fact that today is Divine Mercy Sunday, we are drawn once again to the wound in the side of Jesus as the font of His mercy.
- If you are unfamiliar with the story of the Divine Mercy devotion, it all started on February 22, 1931, when our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ appeared to a young Polish nun by the name of Sr. Faustina. We now know her as *Saint Faustina*.
- Jesus was dressed in white and held His left hand to his chest and held up His right hand as if giving a blessing, as we see in the image of Divine Mercy. From his chest flowed two rays: one of red; the other of a light shade.
- The two rays denote blood and water – just as flowed from His side when He was pierced by the centurion’s lance as he hung dead upon the cross.
- The pale ray stands for the water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls.
- Christ said to Sr. Faustina: “These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized heart was opened by a lance on the Cross. These rays shield souls from the wrath of My Father. Happy is the one who dwells in their shelter, for the just hand of God shall not lay hold of Him.”
- Our Lord’s message to Sr. Faustina was simple: that God’s mercy is deeper and richer and greater than any of us can ever imagine – and that it is available to all mankind, most especially the worst of sinners.
- In addition to asking St. Faustina to spread His message of mercy, our Lord called her to be a model of how all people are to be merciful to one another and an instrument for God’s plan of mercy for the world.
- In short, our Lord called Saint Faustina to live a life of complete sacrifice; a life totally lived for others. Through her personal sufferings and penances, she was called to make up for the sins of others.
- Through her daily life in the convent she was called to be a doer of mercy, bringing joy and peace to all whom she met. And by writing about God’s mercy, St. Faustina was asked by God to spread His message of mercy and encourage others to trust in the Lord.

- Our Lord asked St. Faustina to do all of these things because He told her that He wanted to prepare the world for His second coming. For indeed, it is when our Lord comes again and this world comes to an end that all of us will stand before our Lord's judgment throne in need of His mercy.
- The result of all of St. Faustina's labors on behalf of our Lord is a 600-page book called *Divine Mercy in My Soul*. It's a diary that records all of her mystical experiences with our Lord and His mother that repeats and clarifies in very easy and simple language the Gospel's story of God's love and mercy for us all.
- Truly, it's one of the Church's greatest spiritual treasures from the 20th century. Not only does it tell us of God's incredible and inexhaustible mercy, but it also tells us how to live a life of mercy – to be merciful to others – in response to God's love.
- In short, our Lord wants us to know that His love and mercy are greater than any sins we can ever commit. He wants us to know that He loves us no matter how great our sins may be.
- And He wants us to call upon Him in complete trust in order to receive His mercy, and to pass along His mercy to those around us.
- He wants us to be merciful to everyone we meet, treating them with not simply with dignity and respect, but to treat them with true Christian charity.
- Today, Divine Mercy Sunday, is the day when we are called to stand beneath those red and white rays emanating from our Lord, to immerse ourselves in His mercy, for the salvation of all souls.
- My dear friends in Christ, we are called to examine ourselves today, to look at our sinfulness and all that keeps us from the Lord. But we do so not with an eye to judging or condemning ourselves. We do so in order to receive God's mercy!
- The way we receive our Lord's mercy as Catholics is in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the institution of which we hear about in the Gospel today.
- As we consider our sins, please remember that Jesus never rejects a repentant heart, that He will never refuse an appeal to His mercy.
- Therefore, we should never fear to ask for His mercy and forgiveness when we recognize our sinfulness – no matter how great our sins may be. Indeed, Christ is actually eager to give us His mercy! And it's in our Lord's mercy that we find our peace.
- In the Gospel today Jesus invites Thomas to examine three of His wounds, and this three-fold invitation is coupled with our Lord saying three times: "Peace be with you."
- Indeed, when we experience God's mercy, we cannot help but experience His peace – for His mercy sets our hearts at ease and consumes all our anxiety.
- We also experience great peace when we share Christ's mercy with others. We are given God's peace every time we share His mercy by truly forgiving someone who has hurt us or whenever we share Our Lord's mercy through charitable acts.
- So let us not fear the Lord's judgment, but let us turn to Him now and ask for His mercy and forgiveness. Let us ask for His mercy with complete trust, and be generous in sharing that mercy with others.
- In doing so, let us enjoy the peace of Christ which is beyond all consolation.