

Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday
April 11, 2021
Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Sermon #14)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By His great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)

On this first Sunday following our celebration of Easter, we pause to consider the Divine Mercy come down from God. In a series of revelations to St. Maria Faustina, the Lord called for a special feast on the first Sunday after Easter to celebrate the greatest evidence of this mercy witnessed in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of God's only Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Pope St. John Paul II named this feast Divine Mercy Sunday as he canonized St. Faustina on April 30, 2000.

The verse at the top of this handout is only one proclamation of the Divine Mercy of God, the Father almighty. We can find many references—examples—throughout Sacred Scripture. As we look through the Old Testament at the nuances of this thing called Mercy. We can find two terms from the original Hebrew that relate—*Hesed* and *Rahamim*. Let us explore these two words and what they mean for us.

The first—*Hesed*—expresses an essential part of God's character. In the Book of Exodus, God describes Himself to Moses as “abounding in” or “filled with” *hesed*. Translated, this word is “unfailing love,” or “steadfast love.” God promises to Moses and His people this type of love for a thousand generations, for those who return this love to Him and follow His commandments. When the people lost sight of this, Moses appealed to God to remember this promise of mercy and compassion. In Numbers 14:19, Moses prays: “*Forgive the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have pardoned this people, from Egypt until now.*”

Hesed involves action not just feeling, motivating one person to meet the critical need of another. This is a freely given action. *Hesed* surpasses ordinary kindness and friendship. Its roots run deeper than expectations or what is deserved or earned. It describes the disposition of God's heart toward all humanity.

The second word—*Rahamim*—is also an integral part of God and his mercy. It is best described by the words of Isaiah (49:15): “*Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child in her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.*” This love (mercy) is expressed as salvation, forgiveness, promise and hope. The Bible verb, the root word, “*Raham*,” means to love deeply or to have mercy.

The two, both part of God's Divine Mercy, do not only speak to what is strictly due to another—Justice—but consider weaknesses, infirmities or defects; this mercy gives more than is merited. Mercy brings the tender care for another in spite of the unworthiness of the other. Allow me to sum this all up with the words of John 3:16, “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*”