

Getting Really Excited About Easter

What we really need this year is some real excitement about Easter.

The heck with the economy. People are getting distracted about what is really important, and that is our salvation. Easter is that time of year when we can get a completely new beginning.

OK, you are probably saying “a new beginning?” Yep, that’s right... a brand new beginning. Just think about it. It is just like being able to go back and starting all over again. Haven’t we all dreamt or thought about how great that would be? Well, here is how we can all obtain it.

OK, by now, we are all getting into the swing of things with the feast of Easter actually being a full eight days long. No longer are people nicknaming that Sunday after Easter “Low Sunday”. Those days are long gone. The Second Vatican Council straightened that inaccuracy long ago.

Far from that Sunday being a “low”, we have come to recall that it is actually the “Octave of Easter” where everyone can receive a “completely new beginning”. For centuries the Church had been celebrating that octave as a great feast. Over the many years we had gradually lost the meaning and importance of that octave. The octave day of a feast is actually the greatest day. We find the roots of this in the Old Testament feasts mentioned in the Gospel of John 7:37-39.

So how can this Octave of Easter get us a brand new start? Our Lord came to remind us of that Sunday’s greatness. We all know the story about Jesus appearing to Saint Faustina and telling her to have the Church establish the Feast of Divine Mercy on the Sunday after Easter. It was during the time that, that particular Sunday was nicknamed “low”. Can you imagine Jesus’ frustration with that nickname, when that feast was actually the most important feast of all?

Thank God that Pope John Paul II realized this and instituted that Feast of Mercy that Jesus wanted, and right smack, exactly on that Sunday after Easter, that He wanted it celebrated on. If you can remember, Jesus made a special promise on that day, to completely forgive all sins and all punishment for anyone who went to Confession and received Communion on that day.

That means a completely new beginning, just like we have never sinned before. If you were to die and that day, after doing what Jesus said to do, you would go straight to Heaven! “Such a deal, such a deal” as Mother Angelica would always say about that special promise. We really need to get cranked-up about it and let everyone else know about this incredible deal too!

Even the Vatican has recognized this incredible promise. It not only made that an official feast in the Church in the year 2000 calling it Divine Mercy Sunday, but it backed up that promise by issuing a special, annual plenary indulgence for that feast on June 29, 2002. It also published its official explanation of it in the Vatican’s newspaper in August of 2002 using these words:

“The Feast of Mercy is to be celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Jesus is showing the close connection between the Easter mystery of man's redemption and this feast. The Feast of Mercy is to be not only a day designated for the worship of God's mercy, but also a day of grace for all people, particularly for sinners. Jesus attached great promises to this feast. One is the promise of complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. In other words, this grace is equal to the one we receive in the sacrament of baptism. It offers a completely new beginning.”

If the Vatican itself says that the promise offers a “new beginning” who are we to argue, right? It also wants us to realize how Easter is directly tied into the next Sunday, explaining how Jesus is teaching us about the importance of the octave when it proclaims “Jesus is showing the close connection between the Easter mystery of man's redemption and this feast”. Even the readings for that First Sunday after Easter were already absolutely perfect for a Feast of Divine Mercy.

Jesus is absolutely incredible. Just when our world around us seems to be falling apart, Jesus is giving us this greatest treasure of all: a direct path into Heaven! He is giving us encouragement for our times and is asking us to trust in His promise and He wants everybody to know about it. The Church has also made it the duty of priests to inform souls about the plenary indulgence, to make extra time for confessions, and to actually lead the prayers after the masses on that day.

You can just feel the excitement growing each year as more and more people are experiencing that “ocean of graces and mercy” that is coming down in torrents from Heaven on that special Octave Sunday of Easter. Many souls have come back to the Church and have been reconciled. People are having “born again” experiences and they’ve been helping to re-juvenate the Church.

Parishes are installing Divine Mercy images as Jesus requested to give us more graces and as a visually reminder of His pouring out of a “whole ocean of graces” that are symbolized by the two rays of light (representing the Blood and Water when He was pierced on the Cross). The words “Jesus, I trust in You” on those images help us to trust in His promises. The images are also a representation of all the readings on that day and are helping priests with their homilies.

Even Pope Benedict XVI wrote of the importance of having such images in every church in his book “The Spirit of the Liturgy”. He wrote of the “void” that had been left in the sanctuaries from the removal of images and icons. He perfectly described the Divine Mercy image as a necessary help for all liturgies and also an aid to lead souls to the Second Coming of Christ.

Jesus told us to be not afraid to go to Him in the confessional, where He is always right there waiting for us. He told Faustina “When you approach the confessional, know this, that I Myself am waiting there for you. I am only hidden by the priest, but I Myself act in your soul. Here the misery of the soul meets the God of mercy. Make your confession before Me. The person of the priest is, for Me, only a screen. Never analyze what sort of a priest it is that I am making use of; open your soul in confession as you would to Me, and I will fill it with My light.”

Isn’t this all incredible. The Catholic Church, moved by the Holy Spirit, has acted brilliantly and has perfectly fulfilled the will of Christ. If all these things weren’t enough to convince us of God’s goodness, Pope John Paul II was taken home “to the house of the Father” right on the vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday after his friends had celebrated Divine Mercy Sunday with him!

How wonderful is our Lord and Savior! He has given us everything that we need to go straight to Heaven, even as our world persists in so much sin. It must be true what Saint Paul wrote “Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more”! Come Lord Jesus, we trust in You!

Note: The Church has indicated that a person can go to Confession up to about 20 days, before or after, Divine Mercy Sunday to fulfill the requirements for that special plenary indulgence.

Written by Robert R. Allard on the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 2009. Bob has been involved with the promotion of the Feast of Mercy since 1996. His website is www.MercySunday.com