



HOMILY FOR THE SUNDAY OF DIVINE MERCY – YEAR B

The “Tone” of the Savior’s Voice

Early on in my seminary formation, I greatly enjoyed learning about morality and ethics. My main role model at the time had a great knowledge of ethics and had impressed that upon me. I enjoyed learning how the great philosophers and theologians evaluated the “rightness” or “wrongness” of a given action. I was drawn to topics like “intrinsic evil” and levels of culpability for a given circumstance. However, at the same time, I also struggled with my own personal life. I was choosing evil quite often. While I was capable of discussing and evaluating the evil of an action philosophically and objectively, at the same time, I routinely chose and took part in such gross and painful things. My actions and my life did not seem to reflect the very topics that I was so passionate about. Due to the pain of my sins, and the voice of shame flowing

from solely a moralistic view of life, I had trouble hearing Christ. There I was, in the seminary, and afraid to let Christ speak to me about *me*. In the end, Jesus felt like a standard I could not live up. Because of this, I hid behind impressive moral jargon and correct teachings, but in reality my heart was far from a relationship with Him.

I bring this up because there is in the Gospel today a line of scripture that used to fill me with fear and move me to isolation. After coming to Thomas, the resurrected Jesus says, “Do not be unbelieving, but believe.” In my narrow, moralistic heart, I used to hear these words as a command issued from a drill sergeant, as if Jesus were shouting, “Get your act together, try harder, and stop being bad!” To one already filled with shame, this voice drove me further away into my own self-sufficient impulses. Over time, however, and to my great delight, I came to learn that the voice I heard is not the living Jesus, the true Christ, and I came to know this because of the “*tone*” behind the words.

The “*tone*” of Christ is what we celebrate today; the Church calls it, “Divine Mercy.” Christ’s eyes, His heart, his tone when communing with us is not one of condemnation or harshness, but a tone of elation, healing and liberation. As I came to hear and trust this love, I noticed scripture “sounded” differently to my heart. The same line in this Gospel passage, “Do not be unbelieving, but believe,” was no longer an external reprimand. Instead, Jesus was inviting me, asking me, and, in fact, begging me to believe Him (He loved me, and therefore He would honor my freedom). To my delight, when I allowed Him in, He let me drink the “streams of living water” that He wanted to pour upon my dry heart. The result of such a gift was that even morally I began to experience freedom. I still had to choose, but my choice was gently guided and propelled to the good and true.

This freedom is what the Church celebrates today on Divine Mercy Sunday. Pope St. John Paul II, the same pope who gave us *Theology of the Body*, was the one who declared this Sunday to bear the mark of Divine Mercy largely because he knew the power of Christ’s words to set the human heart free from sin. Divine Mercy is so linked to *Theology of the Body* because it is due to our dignity as sons and daughters of the Father, that Jesus wants to show us His Divine Mercy. From the balcony of St. Peter’s, the new Pope John Paul II said these words, “Be not afraid! Christ knows what is in man. He alone knows it - I ask you...I beg you, let Christ speak to you. He alone has words of life, yes, eternal life.” The question for each of us on Divine Mercy Sunday is, where do we need to allow Christ to speak with his authentic tone of voice? Perhaps it’s into your marriage that has been unsatisfying for a while now and you are afraid to name it? Perhaps it’s into your workplace, where you don’t even think about letting God in? Perhaps it’s how you see yourself? Maybe it’s an area of sin and resistance where you cannot imagine allowing another person to see this part of your experience? For each of us the encouragement is the same: let Christ speak to you, the real Christ, in his beautiful tone of voice. After all, He is Divine Mercy in the flesh.



Father Ryan Mann was ordained in May 2014. He is a parish priest at St. Charles Borromeo parish in Parma, OH. He loves jazz clubs, comedy clubs and movies. He enjoys great meals with good friends and being out on a boat in the summer time. Above all of these things, Fr. Ryan loves the eternal life and love of Jesus that is given as a taste through all these little pleasures. Fr. Ryan has attended *Theology of the Body I* and *Theology of the Body II* courses with the *Theology of the Body Institute*.