**2nd SUNDAY OF EASTER [27th April, 2014]**

READINGS: Acts 2:42-47/ 1 Peter 1:3-9/ John 20:19-31

THEME: DIVINE MERCY

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

‘**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**’ (1 Peter 1:3, second reading). The ‘**great mercy**’ of God is demonstrated in a unique way in the suffering, death and resurrection of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. He suffered so that we might be saved from the fires of hell; He died so that we might not experience everlasting death; He arose so that we might live with Him forever in heaven.

So great is the mercy of our Lord that at His very first post-resurrection meeting with His disciples, He did not ask those who had denied and deserted Him at His crucial hour to apologize. Rather He took the initiative to forgive them. Thus, He said to them: ‘Peace be with you’ (Jn. 20:21). He then empowered them with the ministry of forgiveness: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. **For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven**’ (Jn. 20:22-23).

The following story may help to illustrate the great love and mercy of God. A couple had a son, to whom they gave the best of opportunities, as well as spiritual, moral and financial supports. But to their disappointment he became a failure due to truancy and drug addiction. As a result, even in their 70s the couple had to take care of their 50-year old son who was jobless, lacked a stable mind, and was often abusive to them.

Similarly, God out of His great love invested generously in us by creating us in His image and likeness and entrusting the whole of creation to us. Yet (in Adam and Eve) we sinned against him. Secondly, like the elderly couple who did not abandon their wayward son, God has not abandoned us. Rather out of His great love for us, He sacrificed His Son so that we might experience how generous is His mercy towards us! Because of this unique sacrifice, God overlooks the punishment we deserve due to sin.

Beloved it might be frightening to think of the fact that God knows every sin we commit in thought, by word, by deed, or by omission. On the other hand it is more than refreshing to know that, because of divine mercy, God overlooks the punishment due to our many sins. If God were do deal with us by His justice alone, none of us would have probably survived the punishment due to a single slight sin. There are, at least, two reasons why our so-called ‘slight sin’ against God deserves a great punishment. First, it is due to the fact that God is infinitely superior to us. For, as an assault on the president of a nation may carry a severer punishment than an assault on a labourer, so every slight sin against God deserves a far greater punishment. Secondly, as an assault on the president by a minister of state may be considered as more serious than an assault by an illiterate citizen, so are the sins of humans, whom God has endowed more than the rest of creation.

So beloved, if our so-called ‘slight sin’ deserves a severe punishment, and we commit several of them in a day, we can appreciate the mercy of God which overlooks not only our ‘slight sins’ but our ‘serious sins’ as well, allowing us to live on for 40, 50, 60 … 100 years, enjoying His rainfall and sunshine for saints and sinners alike (*cf*. Mt. 5:45).

What is more? God is not only overlooking the punishment we deserve, He is eager to forgive us our sins. That is, in view of the blood shed on Calvary, God wants to wipe away our sins as if we never sinned. Beloved let us therefore acknowledge God’s great mercy by:

* Expressing true contrition for our sins;
* Confessing our sins;
* Making use of His graces to overcome further sins in our lives.

Finally, may the divine assistance remain with us, and may the ***overwhelming*** **divine mercy** soften our hearts towards those who trespass against us, amen!