

I'll never forget the first time I was behind the wheel. My dad and I had gone to a big, empty parking lot on the East side. Suffice it to say, I was a nervous wreck. We tried a few maneuvers and then came the moment. We were coasting along and my dad very calmly said, "OK, brake," and I hit one of the pedals. Not the right pedal. So instead of coming to a stop, we accelerated toward one of the light poles in the parking lot while my dad, with increasing volume and urgency said, "Brake, *brake*, BRAKE!" Of course, this didn't happen until I had side-swiped the concrete base of a light pole and put a good five or six foot scratch all along the passenger side of the car. Yeah. It was bad. I immediately braced myself for a mini-lecture, but it didn't come. He calmly had me put the car in park and we got out and examined the damage and then drove home. That is, he drove home. My dad would have been perfectly justified in yelling, but he held back, for which I was very grateful. His mercy during that moment of failure made me confident to be able to come to him with failure in the future.

Today is all about the Divine Mercy of God. We all crave the experience of mercy--which is defined as love when it comes into contact with suffering. All of us will suffer in this life we live in our fallen world. We will suffer because of death, sickness, loss and above all, our sin and that of others.

In response to all of our suffering, the risen Christ comes to us with His pierced hands and side. Today's Gospel recounts the beautiful experience that the Apostles had of Jesus in his Risen glory. When He came to them, they were hiding out of fear of persecution by the authorities who had put Him to death. Jesus comes to them and says, "Peace be with you." He says this to reassure them. There is nothing to fear, because He has overcome the worst that the world can hand us! Death is no longer the final word, the Resurrection is! His glorious body, with its wounds intact, are an invitation for them and us to remember that death is absolutely defeated.

Thomas stubbornly refused to believe unless he saw Jesus' wounds for himself. He was likely still reeling from the horror of what had happened. When Jesus comes to them again at a time where Thomas is present, He gives him the opportunity to put his hand into the wounds. His wounds became an invitation to faith, because they announced that death and sin were defeated! Jesus isn't so much rebuking Thomas as inviting him to trust by showing Him mercy. He knew

that Thomas needed reassurance after the tragedy and scandal of the cross, so He gave him just what he needed in order to believe.

We all are called to trust in God's mercy. He knows all of those ways that we are broken, wounded and suffering, and He wants to have mercy on all of us. This Sunday is a perfect opportunity for us to lean into His mercy, to have that faith-enlivening experience of touching Jesus in his resurrected glory! He wants us to be able to say to Him, along with Saint Thomas, "My Lord and My God." Let us remember that in addition to being labeled "doubting Thomas," that Thomas was one of the first to proclaim Jesus' divinity!

Jesus invites all of us to encounter His mercy. There are many ways to do this. First and foremost, we encounter His mercy in the Sacraments. When we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, He strengthens us and cleanses us of those lesser faults, those venial sins that cling to us. If we come to the Eucharistic table with expectant faith, we can experience that peace of being with the Risen Jesus as He comes into us. What greater mercy could there be than having the God of the universe feed our starving spirits with Himself?

Today, Jesus has promised a special grace of mercy when we receive Him in the Eucharist. If we are in a state of grace through Confession, this is available to us today. On Divine Mercy Sunday, Jesus promised St. Faustina that he would wipe away all of the punishments due to sin that would have to be taken care of in purgatory. In other words, He is promising us today to cleanse us of all that undue attachment to sin that we still harbor in our hearts and make them whole again, if only we approach Him with the desire to receive this gift when we receive Him in Communion today. How amazing!

And just as powerful as the Eucharist is the mercy of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. One of the great joys of my priesthood is seeing Jesus' mercy at work right before my eyes in the Confessional. When we bring our sins to Him in Confession, Jesus' mercy wipes the slate clean and gives us overflowing grace to help us continue to grow even after Confession. Remember those beautiful words that Jesus says to the Apostles: "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them." I have received that same authority from Bishop Campbell, a successor to the Apostles, on the day when he ordained me. I could never have earned this

authority. It was given to me out of mercy so that I could share God's mercy with you. Please don't stay away from the mercy of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. come back and be healed, no matter how long it's been!

The final way of encountering Jesus' mercy that I want to mention is in the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. This beautiful little prayer is an awesome way to intercede for the whole world and especially those in our lives who need God's mercy the most. It is even easier than saying the Rosary and can be prayed using the rosary beads. Look it up online if you are not familiar with the prayers.

I was suffering because of my mistake with my dad's car, but his love transformed that suffering into something healing and positive. This is what God wants for all of us. In all of our suffering, He wants to come to us with Divine Mercy. His abundant love actually overflows when we are at our lowest points and can transform those moments beyond our expectations. So let us run to His mercy today. *Father, help us to hear the voice of Jesus, Who invites us to come to Him in our suffering. Help us not to stay away from His Mercy, but, like Thomas, to touch His glorious wounds and be healed. Amen.*