

## St Pius & St Anthony Divine Mercy Sunday Year A Homily 2026<sup>Jn 20:9-31</sup>

When I was a kid there was a band called 'Stryper' (get this – a Christian metal band?), named after Isaiah 53:5 (KJV) 'by his stripes, we were healed.' I bought their first cassette tape. We heard that reading Is 53:5, (NAB trans) in our Good Friday service, 'By His **wounds** we were healed' and it is those wounds that figure so prominently in today's gospel on this Divine Mercy Sunday. Why? Because wounds mark us. They identify us (often aren't unique scars, like tattoos, noted in autopsies and what's used to positively ID us after death if there's been disfigurement or decomposition?). Wounds, say something about who we are! And Jesus' unique wounds certainly ID Him for the apostles, which is why He so publicly manifests His wounds to them. Jn 20:20 tells us specifically, "Jesus showed them his hands and his side" to verify His identity. It is really Him! The gospel writers subtly validate Jesus' real bodily resurrection through such details (*not only is it really Him, but He still has a real human body too*). In today's gospel, John accentuates Jesus' still fresh open wounds, yet Luke 24:41 will add another interesting detail about Jesus **eating** - Lk 24:41, tells that when Jesus appeared to them after resurrection, He asked "Do you have something to eat?" And it is not because He is famished due to not eating for three days in the tomb. No, it is to demonstrate to everyone that He is real, and this body of His is real (ghosts - mirages don't eat) – His body functions – takes in and still processes/digests food. So, the fresh wounds visualization is further proof – it is Jesus, and He is real! Yet, the still wounded Jesus also had a practical function, to discredit and counter the false claim denials of Jesus' bodily resurrection. One claim denying Jesus rose from the dead, was that it was only an imposter 'body-double' showing up in places. But highlighting the deep, open wounds (gross detail of 'put your hand IN my side'-Jn 20:25, 27-'Oh, would that sting still!' but Jesus goes the distance for us). So the counter to the claim of this resurrected one being an imposter, is, just ask yourself, "How likely is it to find a willing imposter to play the part submitting to having had repeated on them the gruesome scourging/thrashing to be able to show authentic torn open flesh wounds? That unlikeliness buries that claim denying the resurrection!

But also, don't wounds/scar stories help bond us and fascinate us humans anyway? Many a time I have visited a hospital room of a patient after surgery, and inevitably I hear, "Yes, look, it is healing up well already", as they pull the sheet back (I may not be excited about seeing the gashed flesh), or maybe I hear, "Look, they did it robotically and I only have 3 incisions!" But there is a bonding that happens through the showing/sharing of wounds. I know today I still feel a certain

kinship to the voting poll worker who so innocently, asked me one time when I was signing the poll sheet, "I don't want to pry, but how did you get that slash down your index finger?" I was moved, that he asked, that he cared to notice. Also, I was embarrassed to admit, it came from a learning experience I gained, about not ever lettin again, my finger get between a jiggling piece of rebar being driven into the ground, and a dropping sledgehammer head – it trenched out a furrow of flesh to the bone, the length of the digit. Not as exciting as a knife or broken bottle fight, but it is still a good story, that said something of my biography.

But wounds have stories to tell too! Haven't we all been there? I'm sure all, any of us, could sit down over coffee with each other and though we might think we don't have anything to talk about, easily we could spend hours jumping into our life stories, by pointing to a scar on our body and telling the whole story! So we see that Jesus' wounds also tell a story and bond us! That is why I always say we Catholics love the crucifix – (and it ID's us often!)—by contiuning to face the broken body of Jesus,— not just a sanitized cross, the full depth of the story of Jesus is made known – Yes, He is risen, but His body wounded makes it reall an dfelt what He went through to get to resurrection for us! Suffering is real! God loves us that much – Jesus hurts in this world with us, and He is willing to die for us that we may live. He accepts our punishing judgement that we might be saved and released from the sentence of our sins (Is 53:5)!

And that is why we celebrate Divine Mercy today! The Crucifixion of Jesus brings about our redemption and the forgiveness of our sins. That is Mercy! Romans 5:8, gives us a good definition of Mercy: It proclaims that "God proves His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." For us! Read 'for us' as 'in our place' He took our sentence upon Himself (Is 53). Set us free!

Or I have a friend who says that the best description of mercy, comes from a scene of one of Clint Eastwood's western movies. Ironically, it is from the movie titled 'the Unforgiven' when the Clint's character Bill Munny, the reluctant, wizened old marshal, remarks that 'it is a hell, hell of a thing, to take a life', and the cocky, naïve little Scholfield Kid sittgin beside him, replies, "*I guess he had it coming*", to which Clint's Munny character answers back, "Kid, we all have it coming." Mercy acknowledges that 'we all got it coming', but Jesus takes it for us!

Since St John Paul II canonized St Faustina Kowalska Apr 30, 2000 – part of whole New Milllenium Jubilee Year – he declared the second Sunday of Easter, today, Divine Mercy Sunday. Why? The gospel reading today says it all! In this day of reckoning scene, when Jesus meets up again with the group of apostles, first time after His torture and agonizing death, (and keep in mind that Jesus had been denied by them, deserted by them) & what is the first word out of Jesus' mouth?

(We all have to think what might be the first word out of our mouths facing such a group- when the wounds are still stingingly fresh too) Well, Jesus' first word is **"Peace"**! Not Revenge, not Retaliation, not Reprisal, No, it's Reconciliation – That is what comes out of His Mouth! And as if we didn't get it the first time, He repeats it, "Peace" (as if saying, 'Did you hear me?' & when he reappears later when Thomas is with the others, He will say it again – 3x 'Peace' vss 19,21,26). Now vindictive and vengeful people of every generation try to put words into Jesus' mouth, make Jesus say what justifies their sinful bloodthirst – But Jesus reveals definitively in this scene 'Glory comes through **Peace**', the overcoming of enemies thru divine friendship (kill with kindness)-end of enmity by self sacrificing substitution – Jesus says 'No' to Violence. Maybe we could say this, that to counter crime, Jesus' weapon-buy back program, to end street violence, was the putting away of the sword (Mt 26:52), by it being plunged into the earth upside down – it's the CROSS. An end to killing-end such callousness and cruelty! Where's humanity? 'Converting Mercy' is the solution Jesus shares! Jesus' repetition fo the word 'Peace' here calls to mind His other repetition of a word over and over in his First Sermon - the word 'blessed' (Beatitude). And who is blessed-saved there, but the meek, merciful and mournful, the poor, persecuted and pure of heart, those hungry for goodness, and (wait for it) the peacemakers! (Mt 5:1-12) Not the weak dealers of death, politically powerful, who pulverize others! No, Jesus' stronger solution **embodies** Merciful Peace! His wounds are His Testimony. We know our Savior because of the sight of His vulnerable woundedness! He knows hurt, and desires an end to it. The Master is known by His Restaint! That is Mercy! God's true glory-His merciful, and converting forgiveness of us!