

## Weekend Readings & Reflections

### April 23-24, 2022 – Divine Mercy Sunday/Second Sunday of Easter

**Reflection:** The prophet Daniel in a vision saw “One like the Son of Man” receive everlasting kingship (see [Daniel 7:9–14](#)). John is taken to heaven in today’s Second Reading where he sees Daniel’s prophecy fulfilled in Jesus, who appears as “One like a Son of Man.” Jesus is clad in the robe of a High Priest (see [Exodus 28:4](#); [Wisdom 18:24](#)) and wearing the gold sash of a king (see [1 Maccabees 10:89](#)). He has been exalted by the right hand of the Lord, as we sing in today’s Psalm. His risen body, which the Apostles touch in today’s Gospel, has been made a lifegiving Spirit (see [1 Corinthians 15:45](#)). As the Father anointed Him with the Spirit and power (see [Acts 10:38](#)), Jesus pours out that Spirit on the Apostles, sending them into the world “as the Father has sent Me.” Jesus “breathes” the Spirit of His divine life into the Apostles—as God blew the “breath of life” into Adam (see [Genesis 2:7](#)), as Elijah’s prayer returned “the life breath” to the dead child (see [1 Kings 17:21–23](#)), and as the Spirit breathed new life into the slain in the valley of bones (see [Ezekiel 37:9–10](#)). His creative breath unites the Apostles—His Church—to His body, and empowers them to breathe His life into a dying world, to make it a new creation. In today’s Gospel and First Reading, we see the Apostles fulfilling this mission with powers only God possesses—the power to forgive sins and to work “signs and wonders,” a biblical expression only used to describe the mighty works of God (see [Exodus 7:3](#); [11:10](#); [Acts 7:36](#)). Thomas and the others saw “many other signs” after Jesus was raised from the dead. They saw and they believed. They have been given His life, which continues in the Church’s Word and sacraments, so that we who have not seen might inherit His blessings and “have life in His name.”

### OPENING PRAYER

**Leader:** Welcome to our discussion for the second Sunday of Easter or the Sunday of Divine Mercy. Let us open our time together by praying this prayer for mercy from St. Jerome:

**All:** O Lord, show your mercy to me and gladden my heart. I am like the man on the way to Jericho who was overtaken by robbers, wounded, and left for dead: O good Samaritan, come to my aid. I am like the sheep that went astray: O good shepherd, seek me out and bring me home in accord with your will. Let me dwell in your house all the days of my life and praise you forever and ever with those who are there. Amen.

**Leader:** Today’s readings show us the two sides of God’s love for us. We celebrate the Second Sunday of Easter and Divine Mercy Sunday. To start off, consider the following quote from St. John Chrysostom: “Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again; for forgiveness has risen from the grave.” Reflect on what Dr Sri means by “two sides of God’s love for us”, the quote from St. John Chrysostom, and what God’s mercy means to you as we watch the video.

Play the video on [FORMED.org](#):  
[Opening the Word – 2nd Sunday of Easter / Sunday of Divine Mercy \(Year C\)](#)

#### Digging Deeper:

##### The Sacred and Merciful Heart of Jesus

*“His ‘Sacred Heart’ has given men everything: redemption, salvation, sanctification. St. Faustina Kowalska saw coming from this heart that was overflowing with generous love, two rays of light which illuminated the world. The two rays, [according to what Jesus himself told her], denote blood and water (Diary, 299). The blood recalls the sacrifice of Golgotha and the mystery of the Eucharist; the water, according to the rich symbolism of the evangelist John, makes us think of Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit (See John 3:5; 4:14). Through the mystery of this wounded heart, the restorative tide of God’s merciful love continues to spread over the men and women of our time. Here alone can those who long for true and lasting happiness find its secret.”*

—Pope St. John Paul II

## FIRST READING ~ Acts 5:12-16 ~

Many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon's portico. None of the others dared to join them, but the people esteemed them. Yet more than ever, believers in the Lord, great numbers of men and women, were added to them. Thus they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them. A large number of people from the towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem also gathered, bringing the sick and those disturbed by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.

*Early followers of Jesus were fearful that authorities would persecute them and their families. Consequently, many dared not join the Apostles in the Temple porch.*

- *Is there something you would like to join in your Church family but are scared for some reason? What would help you get over your fear or resistance?*

*Easter changed the disciples. A presence and power of Christ comes out of Peter that heals the sick and disturbed. It is primarily actions and signs that helped people believe.*

- *What signs and wonders could be done by your hands to bring Christ to the sick and disturbed?*

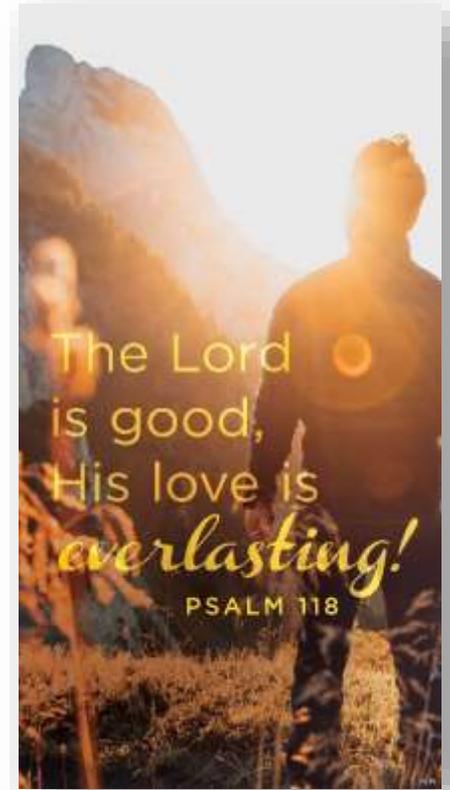
## SECOND READING

~ Revelations 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19 ~

I, John, your brother, who share with you the distress, the kingdom, and the endurance we have in Jesus, found myself on the island called Patmos because I proclaimed God's word and gave testimony to Jesus. I was caught up in spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a voice as loud as a trumpet, which said, "Write on a scroll what you see." Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and when I turned, I saw seven gold lampstands and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, wearing an ankle-length robe, with a gold sash around his chest. When I caught sight of him, I fell down at his feet as though dead. He touched me with his right hand and said, "Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, the one who lives. Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever. I hold the keys to death and the netherworld. Write down, therefore, what you have seen, and what is happening, and what will happen afterwards."

*John, the Beloved Disciple, the writer of the Book of Revelation, was exiled on the island of Patmos because he gave testimony to Jesus. Yet in the midst of imprisonment he has deep and enlightening revelations from Christ – dressed in white walking among the lampstands (symbols of Christian communities). John shares that he experiences the distress of trials, a kingdom vision which sustains him the endurance and comforting presence of being in Jesus.*

- *Imagine Jesus walking amongst the lampstands of Christian communities. Is your community 'shining'? Is there any experience of the disciple John that you can identify with in your life at present?*



## GOSPEL ~ John 20:19-31 ~

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail-marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.” Thomas answered and said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

*Fear was very real for the disciples of Jesus. If Jesus had been hunted and killed the same could be done with his followers. Violent persecution eventually changed toward another type of persecution. Converts from Judaism to Christianity would be disowned by family. A funeral service would even be held to cut a convert off from their family and community. These kinds of oppressive and violent discrimination experiences are still all too real in our world today.*

- *Do you recognize as a Christian the calling to be living an alternative society, to witness to God’s ways whatever the challenges? How does your life-style challenge the world? We also recall St Peter Chanel today who experienced a violent death for being Christian. In what ways do you or your community stand in solidarity with victims of violence and oppression?*

*While other disciples had believed Pete, John, and Mary, Thomas refused and placed certain conditions on his belief. He needed Jesus to be very real for him. Jesus responded to Thomas’ probing and questioning.*

- *Do you identify with Thomas or know someone who is like Thomas? What is their/your question or source of unbelief? Ask Jesus for what you need from him. How could you be like Jesus for unbelievers and make faith real?*

*Peace is a special gift Jesus promises to his disciples. The disciples are afraid of the Jews and meet behind locked doors. Jesus repeats his words of peace twice. Peacefulness, as a gift of the spirits forgiveness and presence is to be characteristic of a disciples encounter with the world and the world with us.*

- *Can you say you are ‘at peace’?*

## MEDITATION

Do you know the joy of the resurrection? The Risen Lord Jesus revealed the glory of His resurrection to His disciples gradually and over a period of time. Even after the apostles saw the empty tomb and heard the reports of Jesus' appearance to the women,

they were still weak in faith and fearful of being arrested by the Jewish authorities. When Jesus appeared to them He offered proofs of His resurrection by showing them the wounds of His passion, His pierced hands and side. He calmed their fears and brought them peace, the peace which reconciles sinners and makes us friends of God. Jesus did something which only love and trust can do. He commissioned his weak and timid apostles to bring the good news of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. This sending out of the disciples is parallel to the sending out of Jesus by his heavenly Father. Jesus fulfilled his mission through his perfect love and obedience to the will of his Father. He called his first disciples and He now calls each one of us to do the same. Just as He gave His first disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit, so He breathes on each of us the same Holy Spirit who equips us with new life, power, joy, and courage to live each day as followers of the Risen Lord.

The last apostle to meet the resurrected Lord was the first to go with him to Jerusalem at Passover time. The apostle Thomas was a natural pessimist. When Jesus proposed that they visit Lazarus after receiving news of his illness, Thomas said to the disciples: *"Let us also go, that we may die with him"* (John 11:16). While Thomas deeply loved the Lord, he lacked the courage to stand with Jesus in his passion and crucifixion. After Jesus' death, Thomas made the mistake of withdrawing from the other apostles. He sought loneliness rather than fellowship in his time of trial and adversity. He doubted the women who saw the resurrected Jesus and he doubted his own fellow apostles.

When Thomas finally had the courage to rejoin the other apostles, the Lord Jesus made His presence known to him and reassured him that He had indeed overcome death and risen again. When Thomas recognized his Master, he believed and exclaimed that Jesus was truly Lord and truly God! Through the gift of faith we, too, proclaim that Jesus is our personal Lord and our God. He died and rose that we, too, might have new life in Him. The Lord offers each of us new life in His Holy Spirit that we may know Him personally and walk in this new way of life through the power of His resurrection.

- *Do you know the joy of the resurrection?*
- *Do you believe in the good news of the Gospel and in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring you new life, hope, and joy?*

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** In closing let us now pray together:

**ALL:** Lord Jesus Christ, through your victory over sin and death you have overcome all the powers of sin and darkness. Help me to draw near to you and to trust in your life-giving word. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and strengthen my faith in your promises and my hope in the power of your resurrection. Amen.

**Leader:** (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

[Discussion questions created by Fr Frank Bird sm, Marist Priest, and distributed by [www.maristlaitynz.org](http://www.maristlaitynz.org), were shared with permission from [www.livingtheword.org.nz](http://www.livingtheword.org.nz).]

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