

Divine Mercy Sunday

As my family engaged in a novena in preparation for Divine Mercy Sunday I have been drawn to reflect on the meaning of God's mercy. Below are a few thoughts gleaned from prayer and spiritual reading.

In the seventh chapter of Matthew's Gospel Jesus makes four contrasts regarding his kingdom, two types of: gates (7:13-14), prophets (7:15-20), disciples (7:21-23), and foundations (7:24-27). The first of these captured my attention:

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is *wide* and the way is *easy* that *leads to destruction*, and those who enter by it are *many*. For the gate is *narrow* and the way is *hard* that *leads to life*, and those who find it are *few*” (Mt 7:13-14).

It strikes me that Jesus' judgment is contrary to the belief of many Christians who hold the delusion that the road is wide and easy that leads to heaven and most travel it, but the gate that leads to destruction is narrow and almost no one enters through it. No wonder most of what we learn about hell in the Bible comes from the gentle Jesus who spoke about hell considerably more often than he did of heaven.

Jesus gives a clear understanding about the nature of reality, namely, that this life is quickly passing, but there is an eternity beyond. Heaven and hell exist. Therefore everything we do will be evaluated in that light. Drifting along with contemporary culture will lead us to hell, never to heaven. Nor is there any evidence that it brings peace, joy and happiness in this life.

Jesus does more than tell us about the “narrow gate,” he is the narrow gate. He, alone, “is the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, except by him” (Jn 14:6). When the Father didn't find love in the human race, he sent love in the Person of his Incarnate Son who gave us the infinity of love in the Person of the Holy Spirit. Incorporated into Christ's body men and women can share in this love.

“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him” (1 Jn 4:10).

The Divine Mercy devotion is a reminder of God's great mercy. More than a reminder, it is a call us to throw off lethargy and surrender to Jesus. At the opening of the new millennium Pope John Paul II reminded Christians of “the primacy of grace.”¹ Everything depends on Jesus (Jn 15:5). When we neglect this foundational principle we stagnate spiritually and become frustrated and disheartened in our apostolates.

The message of Divine Mercy is clear. Jesus wants to surrender into his arms like helpless little children so he can transform us. Then it does not matter how spiritually deformed we have made ourselves.

¹ *Novo Millenio Ineunte*, Jan 6, 2001