

**I. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, . . .”**

**A. Thomas’ doubt is well known, and some would write him off for it**

1. But Jesus, in his mercy and love, gave Thomas everything he needed to believe
2. Also in today’s Gospel reading, Jesus gave to the disciples the power to forgive sins, to extend mercy in his name
3. Peter also speaks of mercy today in the Second Reading
4. And the first reading describes a community bathed in the peace that springs from forgiveness

**B. On April 30, 2000, Pope John Paul II instituted the feast of Divine Mercy, to be celebrated each year on the Second Sunday of Easter**

1. On this day, the Church ponders and celebrates the great mercy described in the readings
2. This day recognizes the abundant mercy of God offered to us through Christ
3. With great faith and joy, John Paul II understood the Resurrection as a “miracle of mercy” which “radically changed humanity’s destiny”
4. In this miracle, he said, the fullness of the love of God the Father unfolds
  - a) *“Let us thank the Lord for his love, which is stronger than death and sin.*
  - b) *“It is revealed and put into practice as mercy in our daily lives. . . .*
  - c) *“Is not loving God and loving one’s neighbor and even one’s ‘enemies’ after Christ’s example, the program of life of every baptized person and of the whole Church?”*

**C. In observance of Divine Mercy Sunday here at Our Lady of the Lake Parish this year**

1. We are incorporating the prayers from the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, given to St. Faustina, into our General Intercessions
2. You can find out more about the Chaplet, about Divine Mercy Sunday, and about St. Faustina by clicking on the link on our parish web page

## **II. THE ELEMENT OF DIVINE MERCY WHICH I WANT US AS A PARISH COMMUNITY TO FOCUS ON TODAY AND THROUGHOUT THIS EASTER SEASON IS THAT OF GOD'S PRESENCE TO US**

### **A. How often we all have probably thought**

1. Wouldn't it have been great to have actually been in the company of the Disciples of Jesus

a) *Rubbing shoulders with him*

b) *Witnessing the miracles firsthand*

c) *Hearing his preaching and teaching*

2. And oh to have been privy to some of the resurrection appearances

3. It sure would have made faith a lot easier

### **B. It is 2000 years since the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples in the upper room**

1. But millions of people throughout the world take their word on faith that this really happened

2. Unlike the doubting Thomas, they do not demand to see him in person, to thrust their hands in the wound in his side

3. They believe because they experience the loving presence of Jesus among them

4. They hear him speaking in the Gospel

5. They feel his presence in the Eucharist, in the other sacraments, and in all those who believe in him and follow his way

### **C. Indeed, in the precious gift of the Sacraments which Christ entrusted to his church we are blessed to come into contact through tangible signs with the mercy of God shared with us through the Son Jesus**

1. Through the signs of the Sacraments we experience the salvation which Jesus won for us

2. Through the signs of the Sacraments we experience in our own lives, in our own day and time, right here right now, the divine mercy which we celebrate today

**III. AND THAT IS WHY WE AS A PARISH COMMUNITY CELEBRATE SO LAVISHLY, SO JOYFULLY, SO PUBLICLY, THE SAVING MERCY OF GOD**

**A. We are privileged during the Easter Season to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation as a community every weekend**

1. Last weekend we welcomed 12 new Catholics to the Lord's Table for the first time
2. Tonight we will welcome / last night we welcomed 13 young people to our community of faith through the waters of Baptism
3. This Sunday and all next weekend we will be celebrating the First Communion of more than 150 children in our parish
4. The remaining weekends we will celebrate Infant Baptisms
5. On May 2 we will celebrate the Confirmation of more than 100 of our youth
6. On Pentecost Sunday some of our adult Catholics will be confirmed

**B. All of these are celebrations of Christ's presence with us**

**C. All of these are celebrations of Divine Mercy made available to us**

**D. And every time we gather here, weekend after weekend, and at every weekday Mass, we celebrate the Divine Mercy shared with us in abundance**

**IV. AND SO AT THIS CELEBRATION NOW/TODAY WE WILL SEE THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST SHARED**

**A. May it help us**

**B. "... come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief [we] may have life in his name."**