

I encourage our parishioners on this Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday), to read and reflect upon the Scripture Readings and Prayers of this Sunday's Mass, as printed below.

FOR THE BIBLE READINGS & PRAYERS FOR THE MASS OF DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

- Read: **pages 3 to 9 (inclusive) of this Sunday Bulletin** OR,
- Click on: **"COVID-19 Parish Updates"**, on the Home Page of this website.

Q. In this time of pandemic fear and uncertainty and in other times of personal stress, I tend to doubt my belief in Divine Providence and question the Lord's interest in our personal lives. Is it wrong to feel this way and why do I feel so guilty when I do?

A. No, it is certainly not wrong to feel this way, even though people of Faith often experience nagging and relentless guilt when they do! In fact, the feeling of which you speak, has been experienced many times by countless other persons of Faith throughout history. Many of them are mentioned in the Gospels. Think of:

- the Twelve Apostles who doubted the Lord's Providence when they were caught in the midst of a threatening storm at sea (*Mk. 4:35-41*) or;
- the Disciples of Emmaus who doubted Jesus' saving promise after His death (*Luke 24:13-35*) or;
- the Apostle Thomas who doubted the resurrection and refused to believe in it, as is recounted in this Sunday's Gospel (*John 20:19-31*) and, yes, even,
- Jesus Himself who, in His final hour, cried out, "My God, My

God, why have you forsaken me". (*Matthew 27:46*). Since then, great Saints like Augustine, Ambrose, Anthony of Padova, Marguerite d'Youville, Teresa of Calcutta, to name only a few, experienced the same feelings of fear and doubt in their times of stress.

Why do you feel that nagging guilt?

Personal guilt is experienced by everyone at one time or another. Positive guilt can be our best friend, when it prompts us to return to the path of truth and right living that we sometimes abandon in our lives. However, the second kind of guilt which you seem to be experiencing because of your feelings

of doubt, can be our worst enemy, relentless in its quest to convince us to believe that we are useless people and that we are never worthy enough to be true followers of Christ, no matter what we do! This negative guilt can linger and is our worst enemy. It often presses like a weight on our shoulders,

prompting us to question our sincerity and our self worth. Whenever we are burdened by this destructive guilt, we must ask the Lord to take it away from us and to set us free!

'Doubt' in today's Mass Readings Like you, human doubts about the Lord's Providence naturally arise within most of us in times of trial. For some, they are temporary and they disappear once the difficult times are over. For others, however, they become stumbling blocks to a life of Faith and Prayer. All three Mass Readings this Sun-

day are amazingly relevant to the world situation in which we find ourselves today. They remind us that persons of Faith have always endured similar hardships in the past but that their Faith and perseverance have always seen them through!

Besides the Gospel which I mentioned above, the other readings also speak of faith and doubt. In the second reading, Peter acknowledges that Christians are, "having to suffer various trials" and that, "their Faith is tested by fire". However, he concludes with these reassuring words, "even though you do not see him now, you still believe and rejoice in Him...".

