

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

This summer, with three bus-loads of young people from all across the diocese, I'll be heading for World Youth Day with Pope Francis. The last one in Rio in 2013 attracted 1M youngsters, with over 3.5M present for the final Mass on Copacabana Beach. This time WYD is in Krakow. It's my first visit to Poland, so I'll need to learn some Polish! But I'm delighted we'll be in that splendid city where Pope St. John Paul II made his home, where he was a university student, where as a newly ordained priest he said his first Mass, and where later he was for many years Cardinal Archbishop. But also in Krakow is the Convent Chapel and tomb of St. Faustina Kowalska (d. 1938), whose prayers we invoke today, Divine Mercy Sunday. Her message *Jesus I trust in you* and her Image of Jesus the Divine Mercy - just as St. John depicts Him in 2ndR, *clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast, red and white rays streaming from His Heart* - can now be found in almost every Catholic church on earth. No wonder the Holy Father has chosen Krakow for WYD, given that this year is the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

*Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.* The Gospel writers are keen to prove the realism of the resurrection: that the risen Jesus is not a spook but a tangible being of flesh and blood. They shew us that Jesus really *has* overcome death. He is the one Person in human history, Who really *did* rise from the dead and He promises to those who live in Him a blessed destiny: that we too, even though we die, can nevertheless rise to live with Him forever in heaven. *Do not let your hearts be troubled. There are many rooms in my Father's house. I am going now to prepare a place for you and I shall return to take you with me, so that where I am, you may be too.* The resurrection of Jesus shews us God's mercy in overcoming Death, man's last enemy, and the dread of forever ceasing to be.

Today Divine Mercy Sunday is 'the' feast of this Jubilee Year of Mercy. When the Pope first announced the Year, I wondered what it might be. Yet across the diocese God's grace has been poured out in abundance. The *24 Hours for the Lord* initiative has led to record numbers of people going to confession. I've been hearing Confessions myself in the Cathedral and been struck by penitents coming for the first time in 30, 40, 50 years. In this Year of Mercy, the Holy Father wants us to experience personally the loving mercy of God and to put Divine Mercy into action in spiritual and corporal works. The key that opens the door is the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus shews us God's mercy: that He has forgiven the worst atrocity possible, the crucifixion of God the Son, creation killing its Creator. If He can forgive even that, then surely God will forgive us whatever sins we commit, if we truly repent. This power to forgive sins Jesus gave to the apostles, as in today's Gospel: *Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.*

So in this Mass today, let's turn to the Heart of Christ, patient and full of mercy. Through the prayers of St. Faustina, may the Lord have mercy on us and on all sinners. In this Year of Mercy, let us pray for the young and for a renewal of our Diocese that we might be more effective missionary-disciples. And let us pray for ourselves too, that, as the Risen Lord Jesus lays down His life for us now on this altar, we might go out from here to defeat spiritual and corporal poverty, by being at all times *misericordes sicut Pater*, merciful like the Father.