

- Last Sunday we celebrated our Lord's Divine Mercy, the Church's annual reminder to us that the mercy of God is inexhaustible and always available to those who are sorry for their sins.
- The primary message of Divine Mercy Sunday is that we must never despair of God's mercy because it is deeper and richer than we can possibly imagine.
- Divine Mercy Sunday reminds us that our Lord is the Good Shepherd Who has given His life for His sheep. He is the Good Shepherd Who knows His sheep, and Who desires that all might come to know His voice and follow Him.
- The message of Divine Mercy reminds us that our Lord is the Good Shepherd of all souls Who has suffered for us, and Who bore our sins in His body so that we could be free of them.
- And now as we pause for a moment and consider anew the beautiful mysteries we've celebrated the past 3 Sundays: that our Lord willingly suffered and died for our sins, that He arose again from the dead, and that He forever lives to extend His mercy to us – pardoning our sins and aiding us in our need and misery – we are, hopefully, changed for the better!
- The liturgies of Palm Sunday, Easter, and now in recent history Divine Mercy Sunday, teach us of God's extraordinary love for mankind, and this knowledge should change us.
- In celebrating the Paschal mysteries of our Lord's suffering, death, and resurrection, we are made witnesses to God's great love, just as were the very first Christians who were privileged to see our Lord's suffering, death, and resurrection firsthand.
- In our first reading we hear of St. Peter reminding the people of all that has just taken place in Jerusalem with regard to our Lord's death and resurrection. And he doesn't mince words!
- St. Peter reminds them of how Jesus was handed over and denied justice, and that a murderer was released in His stead. He tells them how they put the "author of life" to death.
- While God allowed this to happen so that the messianic prophecies would be fulfilled, the fact remains that the people sinned. Thus it is that St. Peter implores them to repent and be converted so that their sins may be wiped away. And we must repent, too!
- While we were taught of our Lord's unending mercies last Sunday, we must never presume upon our Lord's mercy. To the contrary, God's extraordinary mercy must make us even more contrite and sorry for our sins!
- Truly, my brothers and sisters, the goodness of God that we have experienced in these past few weeks in our liturgies must lead us to a change of heart, to a deeper conversion, to a more firm renunciation of sin and a more steady embrace of our baptismal promises.
- The magnificent season of Easter isn't just a celebration of our Lord's resurrection. It's also a call to on-going conversion so that we might be ever more prepared for our own death and resurrection.
- Building upon the virtues we've cultivated through our Lenten fasting, prayers, and penances, we must continue along the path to holiness rather than slip back into lives of sin, sloth, and indifference.
- And we must do this not solely for ourselves and for our own salvation, but we must do it primarily for God's glory and, secondarily, for the edification of those around us.
- Whether we want to acknowledge it or not, we each have a responsibility to God and neighbor. We are called to love God above all else, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

- It's with this responsibility in mind that we are renewing our stewardship efforts here at St. Ann's. We are doing this not because we need more money and volunteers...although these things are always helpful!
- As I've mentioned before, it's my hope that our stewardship efforts will lead each of us to love both God and neighbor more. My hope is that our stewardship efforts will lead each of us to be less selfish and self-centered and more willing to live for others.
- As we look at our broken society that is becoming increasingly hostile to the Gospel, many point to the widespread abuse of human sexuality that has led so many people to embrace evils such as contraception, fornication, pornography, and all sorts of aberrant conjugal unions, as the primary culprit de-Christianizing America.
- Many are also quick to point to the rampant greed, gluttony, and excessive materialism that so plagues American life these days as being the primary destroyers of our country's soul.
- To be sure, these things are evils that are destroying the souls of so many people and eroding the beautiful fabric of faith our country has always prided itself on.
- But underlying the embrace of each of these evils is a fundamental selfishness and a prideful sense of entitlement. It is this selfish pride that is so deeply rooted in so many of us that I believe is our biggest moral danger. And so I want our parish to combat it!
- Our tagline here at St. Ann's is that we are: "the little parish with the big heart." It sounds a bit corny, but it is a true statement. As your pastor, I want it to be even more true. I want us to be a community of selfless and generous people who live for others.
- I want us to prove ourselves as faithful witnesses to our Lord's suffering, death, resurrection, and His mercy by our willingness to give without counting the cost.
- That's why I'm asking you and each member of your family to make a commitment of your time, talent, and treasure today at Mass.
- To this end, you should have received a letter in the mail this week with a commitment card.
- If you didn't get a commitment card, you can find them at the ends of each pew, and I ask you to go ahead and complete them if you haven't done so already.
- My hope is that by each of us becoming more intentional in the ways that we give, each of us will cultivate within ourselves selfless and generous hearts that inspire others to give.
- My hope is that by cultivating an atmosphere of stewardship at St. Ann's, we can each render proper thanks and glory to our Lord, Who has done so much for each of us.
- My hope is that by our generosity, we can help stem the tide of selfishness that is destroying our country and our culture.
- At this time I ask our ushers to come forward to collect the commitment cards....