

April 19, 2009

While we spent 40 days of Lent to prepare ourselves to celebrate the Lord's victory over sin and death on Easter, we celebrate the glorious Feast of Easter for seven weeks. During this time, we reflect on what it means to live in the light of Jesus' Resurrection.

The Second Sunday of Easter is called Divine Mercy Sunday. This feast was inspired by the visions of Sister Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938), a Polish nun who was canonized by Pope John Paul II in the Jubilee Year. We acknowledge that we are sinners and often fail to respond to God's love. Yet, we never despair nor give in to discouragement because of the Divine Mercy which Jesus revealed so powerfully in His sufferings and death on the cross.

In the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles for this feast (Acts 4:32-35), we are given a glimpse of the way the disciples of Jesus lived after His Resurrection. They were of one heart and one mind. They held their possessions in common, and no one among them was in need.

Divine Mercy Sunday and the depiction of the early Church are wonderful backdrops against which we might consider the 2009 Catholic Services Appeal which begins in our parishes this Sunday. Like the early Christians, the Lord calls us to live in unity and charity while we are attentive to the needs of one another.

In these Easter days, we recall that everything is a gift from our good and loving Father. God freely gave us life, faith, talents, abilities, resources, and most especially His eternally begotten Son, who gave His life that we might know the abundance of God's love and mercy.

Now, God continues to bestow His bountiful mercy and love upon the people of our time. He does so through you and me. St. Paul expressed this well: “We are God’s co-workers” (1 Cor 3:9).

Through our generous participation in the 2009 Catholic Services Appeal, we bring God’s abundant love to others in ways that no one of us is able to do individually, nor are we even able to do as individual parishes.

The Catholic Services Appeal supports one-third of the annual diocesan budget. Through the CSA, we provide education and formation for future priests, deacons, and lay ecclesial leaders who will serve God’s people in our parishes and schools. Through your generosity, we provide supportive services for our Catholic schools, religious education programs, and youth ministry programs. Within the CSA, we set aside \$500,000 in scholarships for Catholic youngsters who would otherwise not be able to attend our Catholic schools.

One of the largest recipients of your CSA contributions is Catholic Charities through which we extend the Divine Mercy to those who are in dire material or emotional need.

Through the CSA, Catholics within our diocese fund charities and ministries for which there are second collections in other dioceses: the charities of the Holy Father, missions in the United States and abroad, the retirement needs of priests and religious.

Parishes that exceed their CSA targets receive rebates that enable them to offer new programs and to make capital improvements to their church and school buildings.

The early Christians, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, expressed their gratitude to God for His Divine Mercy by living in unity and charity and sharing their resources with those in need. May they inspire us to care for one

another, especially those most in need, through our generous support of the Catholic Services Appeal.

May your generous gift to this annual appeal express your gratitude to the Lord, your love for the Church which Jesus founded as He breathed His last on the cross, and your desire to be “God’s co-worker” in extending the transforming power of God’s merciful love to others.