

It doesn't get any better than this!

Years ago when I lived in **San Jose**, California, as a **Manager for Kodak**, I knew a guy named Jim, a **Manager for Hewlett Packard**, who had a **nice ski boat**.

On several occasions we would take his boat out on the waterways east of **San Francisco Bay** and **waterski**. It was **a lot of fun**.

The **water** was still, the **weather** was perfect and we would tradeoff skiing for hours.

Then with **the afternoon sun** setting and **the water** calm all around us **we'd sit back** and **have a sandwich** and a **cold beer** on the boat. and **Jim** would regularly say,

"It doesn't get any better than this!"

To him, he couldn't imagine anything else at the moment that could improve on the enjoyment we just experienced with
warm breeze and **sunshine**, **good skiing** and **delicious food** and **drink**.

And Jim would express his great delight ... ***"It doesn't get any better than this!"***

Perhaps you've experienced moments like that in your life... moments so very good

In fact, for **those of you** who attended the Easter Vigil or **Easter Sunday Mass** last week ... you may well have said or felt those very same words!

You may well have been touched by the immensity of God's love ...
that **He showed** by offering His Son, Jesus, up to death ...
in order to bring **Redemption** to **the whole world** ... once for all ...

And especially for our **RCIA class**, who came into the church at the Easter Vigil,
many shared at our Tuesday meeting how profound it was to be baptized or to go Confession or to receive their First Holy Communion.

They said things like: **they never felt such peace** and **relief**;
they slept like a baby for the first time in years;
they don't have the words to describe it; or
there's a new level of peace in our home!

Easter was **profound** for them ... and **hopefully** for you too.

You see ... it gets better every year as our **understanding** and our **appreciation** of **the goodness of God** grows in our hearts and our minds.

Most of the parish went to Confession during **Holy Week** ... and opened themselves to the same relief and **gladness** at being forgiven for sins.

So you **Brand New Catholics** and you **long-term Catholics** may have felt like my friend, Jim, and thought to yourself...

“It doesn’t get any better than this!”

But you know what? It does!

Yes it does ... because **the Love of God** and **the Mercy of God** is **infinite ... so there’s always more to receive and experience.**

Last Sunday we celebrated Jesus’ victory over sin ... that put us back into a right relationship with the Father ... and opened the Gates of Heaven.

That’s huge ... that makes Easter the Greatest Day in History, the Greatest day ever!

So you might have left Mass feeling, “It doesn’t get any better than this.”

Only to come here today and hear this Gospel passage from John 20 that describes how Jesus, in the vastness of His Love for us, quickly established the way that we could tap into His Mercy to receive forgiveness for our individual sins.

Yes, **today we heard that Jesus gave access to His Mercy through His Priests by giving them the power to forgive sins!**

John tells us that on Easter Sunday morning, the Risen Jesus came into the midst of the Apostles through locked doors and breathed on them saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

In doing so, **He bestowed on them the Spirit of God ... which made them dispensers of God’s mercy!**

He said, “The sins you forgive are forgiven.”

Wow! Jesus gave the power to forgive sins to men!

That **means** that He **poured out his Mercy** on the world in a **previously unheard of way ...**

through the ministers of His Church ... the **Bishops** and the **Priests ...**

in a Sacrament that has come to be called:

Confession or Reconciliation.

So you see ... **it got better!**

It's one thing to have the Gates of Heaven opened ...

but **it's another thing** to have access to the means to purify our hearts so that **our souls** can be purified to enable us to enter into the Gates of Heaven.

For as scripture says, “*Nothing unclean will enter the Kingdom of God*”.

So ... as of Easter Sunday evening ... we've had access to God's mercy ...
through the Priests of His Church!

An some **2000 years later**,

Jesus affirmed this to be **His plan** for the dispensing of His Mercy.

For this is the very message He made known to St. Faustina in the **1930's.**

From **her Diary writings**, here's what **Our Lord** said to her about **Confession.**

“When you go to Confession, to this fountain of mercy, the Blood and Water which came forth from My Heart always flows down upon your soul. ... In the Tribunal of Mercy [the sacrament of Reconciliation] ... the greatest miracles take place and are incessantly repeated. ... Here the misery of the soul meets the God of mercy.”

“Come with faith to the feet of My representative. ... I Myself am waiting there for you. I am only hidden by the priest ... I Myself act in your soul. Make your confession before Me. The person of the Priest is, for Me, only a screen. Never analyze what sort of Priest it is that I am making use of; open your soul in confession as you would to Me, and I will fill it with My light.”

“Were a soul like a decaying corpse, so that from a human standpoint, there would be no hope of restoration and everything would already be lost, it is not so with God. The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full ... From this fountain of mercy souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great, there is no limit to My generosity.”

(The Divine Mercy ... Message and Devotion booklet ... p. 66)

Now there are **2 aspects** to **God's Mercy ... Forgiveness and Reparation!**

To help understand this, imagine for a moment that **after Mass** you're in the **parking lot** talking to a friend while standing next to your car ... when someone backing out of their slot crashes into your car, breaking your taillight and crumpling your fender.

They immediately get out of their car and come over to you telling you **how sorry** they are for **their mistake** and asking for your forgiveness.

Having just come from Mass, you graciously say,

"... it's ok ... thank goodness no one was hurt ... I forgive you."

So the **other person** heaves a big sigh of relief, thanks you earnestly and **then** gets back into their car and they begin to drive away.

Seeing this, you call out to them, *"Hey stop! You are going to fix my car aren't you?"*

Yes, you forgave their action ... but your car is still broke ... and you'd like it fixed.

I hope that this **little example** makes clear the **distinction** between forgiveness and reparation; they are **two different aspects** of the process of reconciliation.

When you forgave the person for breaking your taillight and denting your fender that was an important step,

but it was just the first step in the whole reconciliation process.

They expressed their sorrow for their damaging action and you forgave them for wrecking your car and inconveniencing you.

But your car is still damaged and now it **needs to be repaired** to bring it back to its proper operating condition. That's going to involve the process of reparation ... of repairing the damage to your taillight and your fender.

Hopefully the other person is insured, **but** they may still have to pay a deductible and **their insurance rates** may be affected by this additional accident.

In **some way,** big or small, they will have to invest themselves in making this situation right ... of repairing the damage that they have caused to your car.

Now think for a moment of what happens when we sin.

Sin is **the misuse of our freedom** whereby we hurt God or our neighbors.

Sin damages our relationship with others and in doing so it wounds the Body of Christ. **When we sin, there is damage.**

And **just as when we damage someone's car fender by accident ...
and receive their forgiveness...**
the **fender** still has to be repaired,

so too, when we create damage by sin, we're responsible to do two things:
seek forgiveness from God, and make **reparation** for our offenses.

An **integral part** of going to the Sacrament of **Confession** involves your desire to fix
the damage done by your sin ... by performing the penance the Priest gives you.

It's called **Satisfaction** meaning that by doing your penance, you are attempting
to satisfy the need to repair the wound your sins have made to the **body of Christ**.

The Priest's words of absolution accomplish the first step, gaining God's forgiveness.
Carrying out your penance accomplishes the second step,
making **amends** for the **wounds** you created by **your sins**.

One reason for **penance** (the temporal repair of sin) is to make us realize the
magnitude of **sin's evil**. It's **not as easy** as crashing into someone's car, saying
you're sorry and driving away! **Something** must be done to correct what we broke.

A second reason for **penance** is that often times our sorrow is not equal to the
malice of our sins. We often don't comprehend the **huge ripple effect** of sin,
especially for **grave** and **serious sins** like adultery, murder and abortion.
Many other lives are impacted when we commit **grave sin** and **a lot of repair** will be
required to make things right.

And third reason for **penance** is to allow us to atone for our sins **here on earth** and
shorten our **time in Purgatory**.

Purgatory is where we go to be purified before entering into **Heaven**.
Only **souls** that are in the **perfect state of grace** go right to be with God in Heaven.
Nothing but **love** will fit inside the Gates and **so all selfishness**, pride, arrogance,
self-love and hardness of heart must be purged from the soul before it enters Heaven.

Purgatory is where we atone for unforgiven Venial sins and it is the place where we
make reparation for all other forgiven sins that required more penance than we
performed on earth.

I share all this with you as a **backdrop** to the **core message** from our readings today
and to **the Feast** that we celebrate ... the Feast of **Divine Mercy**.

Just last week we celebrated the fact that we have a Savior, the God-Man, Jesus
Christ, who by **His suffering and death** reconciled us with the Father.

He now sits at **the right hand** of the Father to intercede for us.
He dispenses **grace** and **mercy** so that we can live in His light on earth
and live forever in His light in Heaven.

Do you believe this? Do you believe that Jesus is the Risen Lord?
Do you acclaim Him as did **Thomas** in the Gospel saying, “*My Lord and my God?*”

If you do, then you’re on the right track.

Because as we heard today from the end of **John’s** Gospel,
“(These things were) written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God and that through this belief you may have life in his name.”

See **God** created us to be with Him forever ... all of us ... the good & the not so good.

Once **we too** were dead in sin. **But then** in **Baptism**, we became alive in Christ!
Which is where we need to stay, alive in Christ, in order to enter into Heaven.

But given our **human weakness** and the **many temptations** of the devil,
we often slip into sin and damage the *life of Christ* in our soul.

Jesus knew this and **that’s why** He gave **His Apostles** ... the **first Bishops** of **His Church** ... the **power** to forgive sins!

And today, **2000 later,**

that power to forgive sins is still available through His **Priests** and **Bishops!**

Today is the **Feast of Divine Mercy**, a day established by **Pope St. John Paul II** in
the **Jubilee Year of 2000** to celebrate the **lavish Mercy of God!**

And as the **Vicar of Christ’s Church**, he declared that all **Catholics**, who will go to
Confession, attend **Mass** on **this Day**, and worthily receive **Holy Communion**, **pray**
for the intentions of the Pope, and have **total detachment from sin**, will receive
complete forgiveness of **sins** and **punishment**. **Mercy & Satisfaction** done together!

This means that *going to Confession* during this time would take away **not only** sins,
but also all the temporal punishment due to them ... the **sins** and the **reparation!**

Can we even begin to comprehend **how incredible** this offer is?

Yes, we know that we receive God’s **forgiveness** for our sins
each time we celebrate the sacrament of **Confession** ...

but **Jesus** goes way beyond that here by offering the **complete remission** of **all**
temporal punishment. This means that all the time that we would need to spend in
Purgatory because of our sins is wiped away. It’s called a **Plenary indulgence!**

This **means** that **all wounds** for our whole life would be repaired ...
forgiveness granted and **reparation made together ... at the same time!**

It's like having your parking lot accident forgiven
and **the car repaired ... in the same instant!**

A **plenary indulgence** removes all sin and all punishment!

This is a tremendous act of God's mercy!

If there's one Mass you would not want to miss in your life ...
it would be the Mass offered on Divine Mercy Sunday!

Let's not miss the chance to draw deeply on Jesus' **endless fountain of Mercy!**

And then sing our Psalm Response throughout the day,,
"Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His mercy endures forever."

Lets revel in Easter Joy ... it just gets better and better.

Stay the course of goodness **so that you enter into the Kingdom of Heaven**

For **it's there inside** that you'll be able to say with all truth ...

It doesn't get any better than this!