

**Homily Outline for the Second Sunday of Easter**  
**Divine Mercy Sunday**  
**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception**  
**April 19, 2020**

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- I. Radio interview with Sam Madonia Good Friday Morning: where is God in this coronavirus pandemic?
  - A. I answered that God permits evil so that He may bring good from it, as we know His Son Jesus was allowed to suffer and die on the cross so that we might be saved from our sins.
    1. As a result of “sheltering in place,” more families are spending time together.
    2. Although people cannot come to church for Mass, more people are watching daily Masses being streamed online than normally come to church physically.
    3. Hopefully these people will come to church when the restrictions on public gatherings are lifted.
  - B. Thinking about this question since then, others have noted that our society has removed God from our schools, our movies and television programs, indeed from much of public life; God respects our freedom, so if we ask Him to go away, why are we surprised that He seems to have left us in times of calamity?
  - C. Another answer suggested by some is that the coronavirus pandemic is a punishment from God. I cannot say for sure that it is, but neither can I say for sure that it is not.
    1. Does God punish people for their sins?
    2. Psalm 14:1, “The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”
    3. The Bible gives many examples of God punishing the sins of the people
      - a. Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise, the Garden of Eden, after their sin of disobedience (Genesis 1:3-24).

- b. Noah's Ark (Genesis 6:5 to 8:22) - God punishes the whole world for their wickedness, except the righteous Noah and his family.
- c. King David - after his sins, God gave the him the choice of either plague, war, or famine as a chastisement. David chose the plague with these words: "It is better that I fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men" (1 Chronicles 21:13). Therefore, Saint Charles Borromeo concludes, "The plague, along with war and famine, is attributed very especially to the hand of God."
- d. Some might object that punishment is from the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, Jesus brings forgiveness, not punishment.
- e. But see the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25:45-46 on the Last Judgment: "'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."
- f. President Abraham Lincoln, who died 155 years ago this past Wednesday, April 15, in his Second Inaugural Address given just a month before he died, suggested that the Civil War was a "scourge" from God as a punishment for the sin of slavery.
- g. Pope Pius XII, in his discourse to the men of Catholic Action on October 12, 1952, affirmed that the world was threatened by an enemy much worse than the fifth century enemy Attila the Hun, "the scourge of God."
  1. We have a stained-glass window here in our Cathedral of Pope Leo the Great confronting Attila the Hun.
  2. Pius XII : "Oh, do not ask us who the 'enemy' is or what clothes he wears. He is found above all in everyone's midst; he knows how to be violent and subtle. In these last few centuries he has tried to create intellectual, moral, and social desegregation of the unity of the mysterious organism of Christ. He wanted nature without grace; reason without faith; freedom without authority; and sometimes authority without freedom. He is an 'enemy' who has become ever more concrete, with a ruthlessness that still leaves people astonished: Christ yes, Church no. Then: God yes, Christ no. And finally his full cry: God is dead; and even: God never existed."

h. In 589, an overflow of the Tiber River in Rome brought about a terrible epidemic. Pope St. Gregory the Great suggested to the people that “the plague was a divine affliction that they should accept as a means of turning to God, and with fatherly encouragement he raised their panic-stricken spirits.” He organized a 3-day penitential procession in which clergy and laity marched “to meet together at the basilica of the Blessed Mother.”

II. We talk about God’s “punishment” as a “scourge,” but the word I think expresses best what God is doing is “chastisement,” from *castigare*, from *castitas*, chastity, or purity.

A. The word “chastisement” comes from the Latin *castigare*, which is often translated literally as “to castigate,” which still has its focus on a harsh punishment

B. But if we dig a little deeper, we find that the root of the verb *castigare* is the noun, *castitas*, which means “chastity” or “purity,” and the adjective *castus*, which means “morally pure.”

C. Similarly, in English, the word “chastisement” comes from the verb, “to chasten,” which comes from the adjective, “chaste” or “morally pure.”

D. Thus, we can say that God chastises us as a purification.

1. God is not a sadist seeking to afflict us with pain simply to see us suffer.

2. God is cleansing us of sin to purify our faith.

E. We see this clearly in today’s second reading from the First Letter of St. Peter: “In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6-7).

III. Today is Divine Mercy Sunday.

A. Faced with God’s chastisement, we turn to God with repentance and atonement for our sins.

B. There is a plenary indulgence today for those who go to Confession and receive Holy Communion.

1. Confessions are heard today and every day here in the Cathedral from 4:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon.

2. For those unable to go to Confession, you should make a perfect Act of Contrition, expressing sorrow for your sins and love for God, while intending to confess any serious or mortal sins to a priest as your earliest opportunity.
3. Those unable to receive Holy Communion physically should make a spiritual communion, that is, express to God your desire for Him to come into your heart and your longing to receive Holy Communion as soon as possible.

IV. Three times in today's Gospel Jesus says, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19-31).

- A. The disciples are being locked doors because they are afraid the same thing will happen to them as happened to Jesus.
- B. Jesus appears in their midst and twice says, "Peace be with you."
- C. When Thomas later joins the other disciples behind locked doors, Jesus appears again and says, "Peace be with you."
- D. During these days of the coronavirus pandemic, many people are also behind locked doors "sheltering in place," afraid to go outside.
- E. Jesus comes to us in our time of fear with this same message: "Peace be with you."

V. May God give us this grace. Amen.