

**Homily Outline for the Mass of Divine Mercy Sunday
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
April 11, 2021**

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- I. The Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.) was dissolved in 1991, collapsing from the weight of its own weaknesses.
 - A. This means no one under the age of 30 has first-hand experience of Soviet communism.
 1. As a result, there is a renewed interest in communism and socialism on the part of many who have never experienced its oppressiveness.
 2. I visited Russia in 1988 and spent the summer in Poland in 1989.
 - a. Our tour guide in Russia boasted that there was “freedom of worship” in the Soviet constitution.
 - b. This is very different from the “free exercise of religion” that is protected by the 1st amendment of the U.S. Constitution.
 - c. “Freedom of worship” meant no public expression of faith.
 - d. There were only 50 churches in Moscow, a city of millions of people.
 - e. The small Catholic church in Moscow had few people in church (my common language with the elderly priest was Latin!).
 - f. Poland had a more robust resistance to communism, and so people went to church, but churchgoers were not eligible for membership in the Communist Party or positions in the government.
 - g. Then there was the economic damage, illustrated by the saying, “We pretend to work and the government pretends to pay us” (as the currency was virtually worthless).
 - h. Anything of value was bought on the free market.

B. I mentioned this because today's first reading (Acts 4:32-35) is sometimes used as an argument in favor of communism: "the community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common."

1. There are several problems with this assertion:

- a. They did this voluntarily. No one forced them through totalitarian state power.
- b. They gave their money to the Church, not to the state: "There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need."
- c. Today's Bishops are successors of the Apostles, so the people gave the proceeds of their sales to the Bishops, not to government officials.

2. There is also the reason why they were doing this: "With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all."

3. This was an expression of their faith.

II. Today's Gospel (Jn 20:19-31) has three parts: the appearance to the disciples without Thomas, the gifts of peace and the Holy Spirit with the power to forgive sins, and the appearance to Thomas.

III. Today is Divine Mercy Sunday.

A. In Latin: *miser cordia*; *miserere*: to have compassion; *cordia*: of the heart.

B. Jesus is merciful because He has a compassionate heart and calls us to have compassionate hearts as well in our words and actions.

IV. May God give us this grace. Amen.