

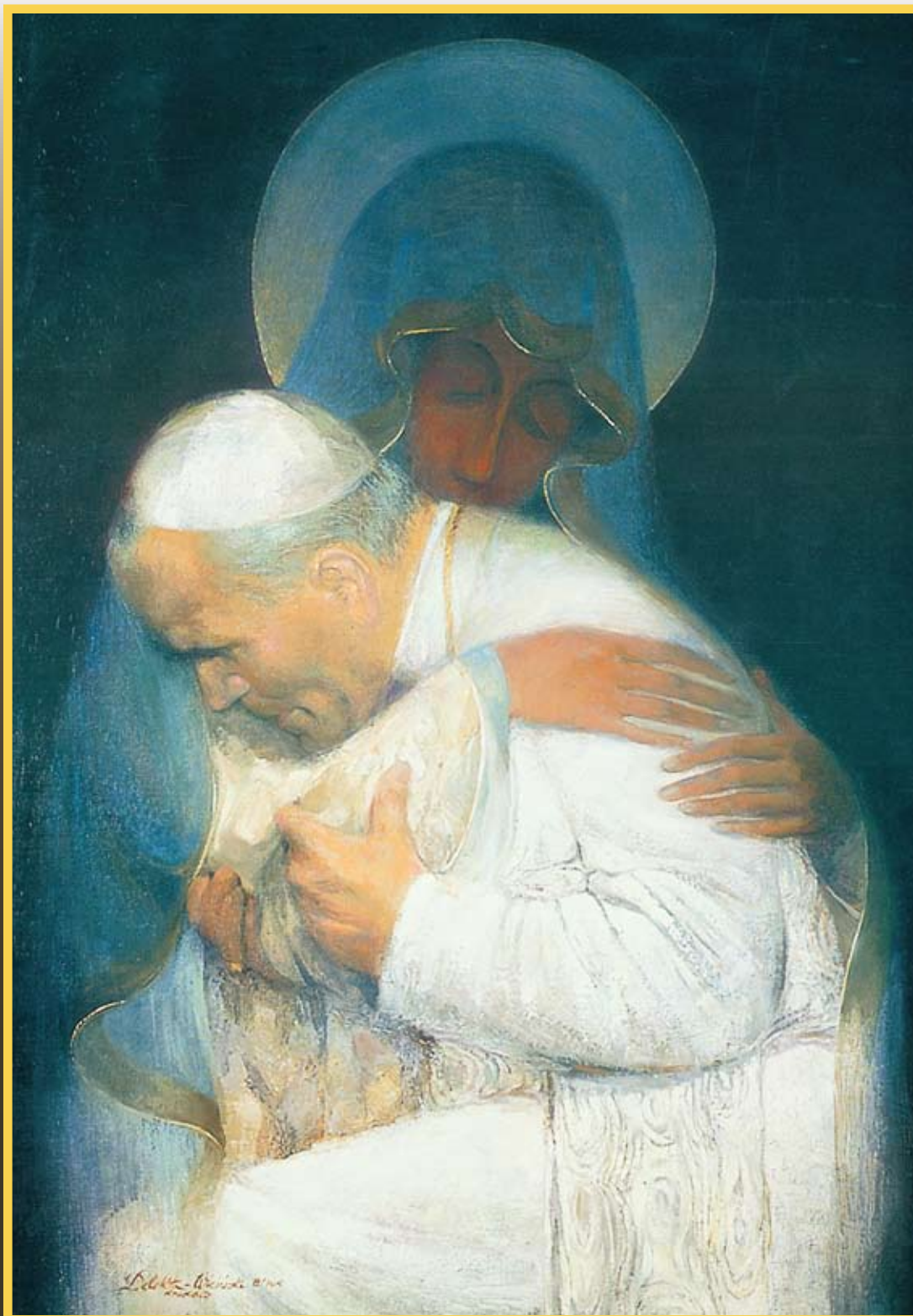
**T I M E**

**O F M E R C Y**

CZAS MIŁOSIERDZIA • TIEMPO DE LA MISERICORDIA

CONGRESS 2007

ISSN 1234-3218



**2007 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CONGRESS OF THE DIVINE MERCY  
LOS ANGELES**



## **God's Servant Pope John Paul II**

**Born:**  
**Karol Jozef Wojtyla**  
**May 18, 1920**

**Elected Pope John Paul II**  
**October 16, 1978**

**Entered Eternal Life:**  
**April 2, 2005**  
**The Feast of Divine Mercy**



**How greatly today's world needs God's mercy! In every continent, from the depth of human suffering, a cry for mercy seems to rise up. Where hatred and the thirst for revenge dominate, where war brings suffering and death to the innocent, there the grace of mercy is needed in order to settle human minds and hearts and to bring about peace. Wherever respect for life and human dignity are lacking, there is need of God's merciful love, in whose light we see the inexpressible value of every human being. Mercy is needed in order to ensure that every injustice in the world will come to an end in the splendour of truth.**

*Joannes Paulus PP II*

### **PRAYER FOR ASKING GRACES THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD THE POPE JOHN PAUL II**

O Blessed Trinity, we thank You for having graced the Church with Pope John Paul II and for allowing the tenderness of your Fatherly care, the glory of the cross of Christ, and the splendor of the Holy Spirit, to shine through him.

Trusting fully in Your infinite mercy and in the maternal intercession of Mary, he has given us a living image of Jesus the Good Shepherd, and has shown us that holiness is the necessary measure of ordinary Christian life and is the way of achieving eternal communion with you. Grant us, by his intercession, and according to Your will, the graces we implore, hoping that he will soon be numbered among your saints.

Amen.

**THE CONGRESS OF DIVINE MERCY IS DEDICATED  
TO GOD'S SERVANT JOHN PAUL II – THE GREAT POPE OF MERCY**



**Archdiocese of Los Angeles**

Office of the  
Regional Bishop  
(310) 215-0703

Our Lady of  
the Angels  
Pastoral Region

5835  
West Slauson  
Avenue  
Fax (310) 215-0749

Culver City  
California  
90230

September 14, 2007  
Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross



My dear Friends in Christ,

I am most pleased to welcome you to the Second Southern California Divine Mercy Congress, held at Christ the King Church in Hollywood.

In a world filled with discord, so lacking in harmony, forgiveness, and even the most basic concern for others, we continue to find hope and consolation in the Mercy and Forgiveness of God.

As Disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are called to be instruments of Divine Mercy, sharing with our neighbors and with the entire world the Good News of Christ and of the Father who loves us beyond all boundaries.

I am praying with you throughout the days of this Congress. May you come to a deeper and ever more expansive awareness of the Mercy of God in your own lives, and may you share this awareness with others through your words, your actions, and your daily prayers.

Sincerely in Christ Jesus,

Most Reverend Edward Wm. Clark  
Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles  
Our Lady of the Angels Pastoral Region





As Pastor of Christ the King Parish in Hollywood I warmly welcome you to the Second Southern California Divine Mercy Congress.

Christ the King Parish is home to the Divine Mercy Image blessed and signed by God's Servant John Paul II, and enthroned in the chapel of Divine Mercy since September 14, 2003.

The Congress' main team is "**Divine Mercy the Answer to a Troubled World**". God's Servant John Paul II said in his homily in Krakow on August 17, 2002, where I had the grace to be present, "Apart from the Mercy of God, there is no other source of hope for mankind".

Your participation in this Congress, your presence in our Sanctuary of Divine Mercy expresses your devotion to Jesus the King of Mercy and your willingness to bring souls to the fountain of His Mercy, which is the only answer to a troubled world.

*Fr. Antonio Cacciapuoti*

Fr. Antonio Cacciapuoti  
Pastor of Christ the King  
Roman-Catholic Parish



### Archbishop Edward Ozorowski

## God's mercy is a form of His love

God's mercy is a form of His love. It is best illustrated by an evangelical parable about a father and his two sons (Lk 15:11-32). A loving father gave life to an older and younger son, loving them both equally. His love manifested itself through his care for his sons allowing them independence and a

share of his estate. The younger son did not value his father's love, which he abused. He took his share of the inheritance and left home. The young son squandered his money and lived recklessly, coming close to ruin. The father chose not to forbid his son to leave home, as that would have curtailed his freedom. Instead, he allowed him to go, while continuing to love him. The son never doubted his father's love and returned home. The father welcomed him back with open arms. Fatherly love saved his young son from death. When the father embraced his prodigal son, placed a ring on his finger, draped a robe on his shoulders, and held a feast to celebrate his son's return, his love became mercy. The Latin word "misericordia" means to show a kind heart. The father showed the prodigal son a kind heart, saved his life, and restored the splendor of his lost dignity.

The older son was different. He considered himself much better than his younger brother. After all, he stayed with his father and endured the burdens of responsibility

and humiliation. He did not realize that while working for his father, he worked also for himself. He reproached his father for injustice in treating the younger son so kindly when he deserved punishment while at the same time not appreciating the one who should be rewarded. However, again, the father's love was merciful. The father did not berate his older son, did not reject him in anger, but patiently explained to him a father's love. The father's mercy became a light for the older son's eyes.

God's mercy should never be considered separately from His love and treated merely as pity. From a man's perspective, this love may indeed look like pity because man does fall and commit sins. However, from God's perspective, it is always love.

Moreover, this love for people has been merciful from the very beginning. In giving man free will, choice, God saw what man did and knew what would happen as its consequences. Yet, He never abandoned His first love. He created the world with the idea that the Son of God will become man, and man will become God (St. Irenaeus). This way, the merciful love of God was revealed in the act of creation and the act of salvation – sin that deserved punishment became a blessed sin (Exultet). This is and has always been the way. From the moment of conception and birth, every man is embraced by God's love. This love is greater than human weaknesses and sins. That is why man is alive. God's love to man is mercy.



**For the sake of His sorrowful Passion,  
have mercy on us and on the whole world.**

## The Lay Institute of Divine Mercy

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Tel. 323/463-1333, E-mail: [mercyinstitute@ca.rr.com](mailto:mercyinstitute@ca.rr.com)  
Visit our website: [www.divinemercury.opoka.org](http://www.divinemercury.opoka.org)



## DIVINE MERCY: THE ANSWER TO A TROUBLED WORLD

### *Saint Peter's Keys – The Keys of Divine Mercy*

*September 14 – 15 – 16, 2007*

**The hour has come when the message of Divine Mercy needs to fill hearts with hope and become the spark of a new civilization: the civilization of love.**

*John Paul II, Krakow-Lagiewniki, 18th of August 2002*



### **His Excellency Professor Edward Ozorowski Archbishop Metropolitan of Bialystok – City of Mercy, Poland will preside our Congress**

Archbishop Ozorowski is a well known Theologian, Professor and Writer. He is the author of 1500 books and publications. Archbishop Ozorowski is the first Bishop to be elected during the first week of the Pontificate of God's Servant John Paul II.

In 2005 he was a delegate of the Polish Conference of Bishops for the IX Bishop's Synod in Rome.

His statement about the Eucharist as a sacrifice was warmly welcomed by all bishops. "Thanks to the Eucharist, the Divine Mercy is accessible to men. He eats it and drinks it. Mercy penetrates and changes men. Men becomes this, what he eats and what he drinks" – said Archbishop Edward Ozorowski.

## 2007 THREE-DAYS CONGRESS SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2007

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2007

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2007

5:00 P.M. – 9:30 P.M.

8:00 A.M. – 9:00 P.M.

9:00 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.



### CONGRESS LOCATION AND INFORMATION:

**Christ the King Roman-Catholic Parish  
(Church and Parish Auditorium)  
627 N. Arden Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90004  
[www.ctk-la.org](http://www.ctk-la.org)**

In the church of Christ The King there is a special chapel dedicated to the Divine Mercy. The Image of Merciful Jesus at the church of Christ the King, one of the contemporary copies of the countenance known through Saint Faustina's revelation, deserves your special attention. The Image has been blessed by God's Servant

John Paul II on April 30, 2003 during a special audience in the Vatican. Holy Father John Paul II – The Great Pope of Mercy placed His signature on this Image. This Image, Blessed by the Vicar of Christ and together with a powerful message of mercy is reaching the faithful in Los Angeles.

### GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIVIDUAL CONFESSIONS

#### GIFT STORE

Religious articles will be available to purchase during the Congress

CONGRESS SCHEDULE



FRIDAY – SEPTEMBER 14, 2007

- 5:00 PM Congress Registration
- 6:00 PM Opening/Welcome
- 6:15 PM – 7:00 PM Opening Conference  
**Primacy of Saint Peter in the Plan of Divine Mercy**  
Speaker: : His Excellency Archbishop Edward Ozorowski
- 7:00 PM Opening Mass (bilingual: English and Spanish)  
Homily – Father Antonio Cacciapuoti
- 8:15 PM – 9:15 PM Presentation: Saint Faustina and Devotion to Divine Mercy

SATURDAY – SEPTEMBER 15, 2007

- 8:30 AM Congress Registration
- 9:30 AM – 10:00 AM Opening/Welcome – Fr. Antonio Cacciapuoti, Pastor
- 10:00 AM – 10:45 AM Conference: **Triumvirs of the Divine Mercy: Saint Faustina, Father Michael Sopocko and John Paul II.** Speaker: Father Dr Andrzej Debski
- 11:15 AM – 12:00 PM Conference: **Divine Mercy and Justice.** Speaker: Father Slawomir Szkredka, M.A., M.Div

C.C.D. – CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

- 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM Regular Classes
- 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM Archbishop Ozorowski Classroom Visits (Grade: 1- 5)
- 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM Conference (Grade 6-8): **Divine Mercy – The Answer to a Troubled World.**  
Speaker: Sister Annunciata Cormelio, CSMJ

- 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM LUNCH BREAK
- 1:15 PM – 2:00 PM Conference: **Trusting God in Marriage, Family and Religious Life.** Speaker: Sister Katrina Le, CSMJ
- 2:00 PM – 2:45 PM Open Discussion and Free will Offering for Divine Mercy Deeds.  
Facilitator: Father. George J. Bobowski
- 3:00 PM **Holy Hour of Mercy – 3:00 O'clock Prayer and Chaplet to Divine Mercy**

LIFE TEEN GROUP AND CONFIRMATION CLASSES

- 3:00 PM – 3:30 PM Holy Hour of Mercy – 3:00 O'clock Prayer and Chaplet to Divine Mercy
- 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM Conference and Discussion: **Divine Mercy – The Answer to a Troubled World.** Speakers: Mr. Robert Martinez, Sister Annunciata Cormelio, CSMJ, Father Andrzej Debski and Father Slawomir Szkredka

- 3:30 PM – 4:15 PM Conference: **Pedagogy of the Divine Mercy.**  
Speaker: His Excellency Archbishop Edward Ozorowski
- 4:30 PM – 5:30 PM Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Penance Service and Individual Confessions
- 5:30 PM Holy Mass and Healing Prayers (bilingual: English and Spanish)  
Homily – Monsignor Charles Chaffman
- 7:30 PM – 8:30 PM DINNER BREAK
- 8:30 PM Religious Music Concert: OHOM Music and Youth Ministry

SUNDAY– SEPTEMBER 16, 2007

- 10:30 AM **Solemn Holy Mass** (bilingual: English and Spanish). Celebrant – His Excellency Archbishop Edward Ozorowski
- 12:00 PM – 01:00 PM LUNCH BREAK
- 1:30 PM – 02:30 PM Conference: **Divine Mercy – the Answer to a Troubled World.** Speaker: Father Vincente A. Robles
- 3:00 PM **3:00 O'clock Prayers – Great Hour of Mercy**  
Chaplet of Divine Mercy  
Reflection: **Divine Mercy – the Answer to a Troubled World.** Fr. John-Paul Gonzalez, M.A., M.Div  
Procession of the Blessed Sacrament  
Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament
- 5:00 PM– 5:30 PM Closing Remarks: Your Experience and Testimonies

CONGRESS SPEAKERS



**Most Reverend EDWARD OZOROWSKI, Archbishop Metropolitan of Bialystok – City of Mercy, Poland.** Archbishop Ozorowski was ordained a priest in 1964, Bishop in April 29, 1979. In his coat of Arms He has Saint Francis holding on to the Crucified Master and Holy Mother of Mercy with this words from the letter to the Philippians "IN EO QUI CONFORTAT On October 21, 2006, Holy Father Benedict XVI nominated Bishop Edward Ozorowski as the Archbishop Metropolitan of Bialystok, the City of Mercy. "He made me a guardian of the centuries-old tradition, that was originated in Vilnius, and grew on the big territory of Lithuania and Byelorussia which today remains in the border of Poland" – wrote Archbishop Ozorowski in his letter after his nomination. In 2003 Archbishop Edward visited Christ the King Parish in Los Angeles, he brought the message of Mercy, which was published, in his book "Dialogs on Divine Mercy". Archbishop Ozorowski is a very well known Theologian, Professor and Writer. He is the author of 1500 books and publications.



**Reverend Father VINCENTE A. ROBLES,** Pastor of Santo Niño Parish in Parada, Philippines. Promoter of the Devotion to the Divine Mercy, Founder of the Asian Congress of the Divine Mercy and Former Rector of the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Bulacan, Philippines. Father Vic Robles was born January 22, 1958 in Malolos, Bulacan. He was ordained on November 30, 1987. Founder of the Divine Mercy Shrine in Marilao. It was during the eve of the Feast of Divine Mercy April 6, 1991 at 6 P.M. Mass that Fr. Vic made his covenant with Jesus: "Please give me a place to stay. I have no money but I believe if it is your project, nothing is impossible". The Shrine was solemnly declared as a National Shrine on November 30, 2002. Father Vic is a charismatic Priest. "I am just an instrument ... a Vessel of God's Mercy" says Father Robles.



**Sister KATRINA LE and Sister ANNUNCIATA CORNELIO, The Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus.** The Congregation was founded in 1947 by Fr Michael Sopocko as the answer to the apparition of Jesus Christ, who ordered St. Faustina among other things, to fund a new religious community. The spirituality of the congregation consists in surrendering God's activity and in trustful accepting of all the consequences, which such surrendering brings. The congregation leads the apostolic activity, to answer to the actual needs of the Church. The Sisters work in 17 monastic houses in Poland and in 16 houses abroad. They lead a hospice, a house of the protection of life conceived, where they proclaim retreats and catechize.



**Reverend Father John-Paul Gonzalez** is a native priest of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. He was born on the first anniversary of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II and twenty-two years later the two would meet during a papal audience. Father John-Paul studied at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, California where he received his Master of Divinity and Master of Arts (Systematic Theology) degrees. He was ordained a priest on June 3, 2006 in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. Currently he is an associate pastor of St. John of God Parish in Norwalk, California where another shrine to Divine Mercy was recently erected. His own personal pilgrimage to Poland made him a great devotee and promoter of the Divine Mercy devotion.



**Reverend Father Slawomir Szkredka** is currently the associate pastor at St. John the Baptist church in Baldwin Park, California. A native of Poland, Fr. Slawomir has received his seminary formation both at the Metropolitan Seminary in Krakow, Poland and at SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, Michigan. Ordained in 2002, He holds Masters of Divinity., M.A. in Theology and M.A. in Philosophy degrees.



**Reverend Father Andrzej Debski,** born in 1976, priest of the Archdiocese of Bialystok. He completed his studies in Philosophy and Theology in the Archdiocese's Seminary in Bialystok in 2001, from 2002 to 2006 special studies in History of Theology at the Pontifical University of Saint Anselm in Rome. He is the author of several articles in different Catholic Magazines. Currently he is the personal secretary of Archbishop Metropolitan Edward Ozorowski.



**Mr. Robert Martinez,** Parish Ministry and Youth Minister Coordinator at Christ the King Parish – Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Involved in Youth Ministry for over ten years, Retreat Director, Scripture Teacher, and Writer. Currently completing Master's Thesis on Evangelization and Culture from Loyola Marymount University





## Holy Father Benedict XVI

# Have faith, he tells us, in Divine Mercy!

The Holy Father, John Paul II, wanted the *Second Sunday of Easter* to be celebrated as the Feast of Divine Mercy: in the word “mercy”, he summed up and interpreted anew for our time the whole mystery of Redemption. He had lived under two dictatorial regimes, and in his contact with poverty, neediness and violence he had a

profound experience of the powers of darkness which also threaten the world of our time.

But he had an equally strong experience of the presence of God who opposed all these forces with his power, which is totally different and divine: with the power of mercy. It is mercy that puts an end to evil. In it is expressed God’s special nature – his holiness, the power of truth and love.

Two years ago now, after the First Vespers of this Feast, John Paul II ended his earthly life. In dying, he entered the light of Divine Mercy, of which, beyond death and starting from God, he now speaks to us in a new way.

Have faith, he tells us, in Divine Mercy! Become day after day men and women of God’s mercy. Mercy is the garment of light which the Lord has given to us in Baptism. We must not allow this light to be extinguished; on the contrary, it must grow within us every day and thus bring to the world God’s glad tidings.

[...] In this Sunday’s First Reading we are told that at the dawn of the newborn Church, people used to take the sick out into the squares so that when Peter passed by his shadow might fall on them: to this shadow they attributed a healing power. This shadow, in fact, was cast by the light of Christ and thus in itself retained something of the power of divine goodness.

From the very first, through the community of the Catholic Church, Peter’s shadow has covered my life and I have learned that it is a good shadow – a healing shadow precisely because it ultimately comes from Christ himself.

Peter was a man with all the human weaknesses, but he was above all a man full of passionate faith in Christ, full of love for him. It was through his faith and love that the healing power of Christ and his unifying force reached humanity, although it was mingled with all Peter’s shortcomings. Let us seek Peter’s shadow today in order to stand in the light of Christ!

Birth and rebirth, an earthly family and the great family of God: this is the great gift of God’s multiple mercies, the foundation which supports us. As I continued on my path through life, I encountered a new and demanding gift: the call to the priestly ministry.

On the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul in 1951, as I faced this task, when we were lying prostrate on the floor of the Cathedral of Freising – we were more than 40 companions – and above us all the saints were invoked, I was troubled by an awareness of the poverty of my life.

Yes, it was a consolation that the protection of God’s saints, of the living and the dead, was invoked upon us. I knew that I would not be left on my own. And what faith the words of Jesus, which we heard subsequently on the lips of the Bishop during the Ordination liturgy, inspire in us! “No longer do I call you servants, but my friends...”

I have been able to experience this deeply: he, the Lord, is not only the Lord but also a friend. He has placed his hand upon me and will not leave me.

These words were spoken in the context of the conferral of the faculty for the administration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and thus, in Christ’s Name, to forgive sins. We heard the same thing in today’s Gospel: the Lord breathes upon his disciples. He grants them his Spirit – the Holy Spirit: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven...”

The Spirit of Jesus Christ is the power of forgiveness. He is the power of Divine Mercy. He makes it possible to start all over again – ever anew. The friendship of Jesus Christ is the friendship of the One who makes us people who forgive, the One who also forgives us, raises us ceaselessly from our weakness and in this very way educates us, instils in us an awareness of the inner duty of love, of the duty to respond with our faithfulness to his trust.

In the Gospel passage for today we also heard the story of the Apostle Thomas’ encounter with the Risen Lord: the Apostle is permitted to touch his wounds and thereby



recognizes him – over and above the human identity of Jesus of Nazareth, Thomas recognizes him in his true and deepest identity: “My Lord and my God!” (Jn 20: 28).

The Lord took his wounds with him to eternity. He is a wounded God; he let himself be injured through his love for us. His wounds are a sign for us that he understands and allows himself to be wounded out of love for us.

These wounds of his: how tangible they are to us in the history of our time! Indeed, time and again he allows himself to be wounded for our sake. What certainty of his mercy, what consolation do his wounds mean for us! And what security they give us regarding his identity: “My Lord and my God!”. And what a duty they are for us, the duty to allow ourselves in turn to be wounded for him!

God’s mercy accompanies us daily. To be able to perceive his mercy it suffices to have a heart that is alert. We are excessively inclined to notice only the daily effort that has been imposed upon us as children of Adam.

If, however, we open our hearts, then as well as immersing ourselves in them we can be constantly aware of how good God is to us; how he thinks of us precisely in little things, thus helping us to achieve important ones.

(from the homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI,  
St Peter’s Square  
Second Sunday of Easter, April 15, 2007)





## God's Servant John Paul II

# THE MYSTERY OF MERCY

The psalm Miserere is possibly one of the most beautiful prayers that the Church inherited from the Old Testament. The circumstances of its origin are well known. It was born as the cry of a sinner, King David, who took for himself the wife of the soldier Uriah, committed adultery with her, and then, in order to conceal the traces of

his crime, arranged for her rightful husband to die on the battlefield. In a striking passage from the Second Book of Samuel, the prophet Nathan points an accusing finger at David, declaring him responsible for a great crime before God: 'You are the man!' (2 Sam 12:7). The king experiences a kind of revelation, and is overcome with profound emotion which finds expression in the words of the Miserere. This psalm probably occurs more often in the liturgy than any other:

Miserere mei, Deus,  
secundum misericordiam tuam;  
et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum  
dele iniquitatem meam.  
Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea,  
et a peccato meo munda me.  
Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco,  
et peccatum meum contra me est semper.  
Tibi, tibi soli peccavi  
et malum coram te feci,  
Ut iustus inveniaris in sententia tua  
et aequus in iudicio tuo...

There is a particular beauty in these gently flowing Latin words and in the gradual unfolding of thoughts, feelings and emotions. Clearly the original language of the psalm Miserere was different, but our ear is accustomed to the Latin version, perhaps more than to the vernacular translations, although these too are melodious and evocative in their own way:

Have mercy on me, o God, in your kindness,  
In your compassion blot out my offence.  
o wash me more and more from my guilt,  
and cleanse me from my sin.  
My offences truly I know them;  
my sin is always before me.  
Against you, you alone, have I sinned,  
what is evil in your sight I have done.  
That you may be justified when you give sentence,  
and be without reproach when you judge,  
o see, in guilt I was born,  
a sinner was I conceived.  
Indeed you love truth in the heart;  
then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.  
o purify me, then I shall be clean;  
o wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.  
Make me hear rejoicing and gladness,  
that the bones you have crushed may revive.  
From my sins turn away your face  
and blot out all my guilt.  
A pure heart create for me, o God,  
put a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence  
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.  
Give me again the joy of your help;  
with a spirit of fervour sustain me,  
that I may teach transgressors your ways  
and sinners may return to you.

o rescue me, God, my helper,  
and my tongue shall ring out your goodness.  
o Lord, open my lips  
and my mouth shall declare your praise.

(Psalm 50/51:3-17)

These verses require practically no comment. They speak for themselves, revealing the truth about man's moral fragility. He accuses himself before God because he knows that sin contradicts the holiness of his Creator. At the same time sinful man knows that God is infinite mercy, always ready to forgive and to restore the sinner to righteousness.



Where does the Father's infinite mercy come from? David is a man of the Old Covenant. He knows the One God. We, as people of the New Covenant, are able to recognize in the Davidic Miserere the voice of Christ, the Son of God, treated by the Father as sin for our sake (2 Cor 5:21). Christ took upon himself the sins of us all (Isa 53:12), so as to make satisfaction for justice wounded by sin; in this way he maintained a balance between the justice and the mercy of the Father.

It is significant that Sister Faustina saw this Son as the merciful God, yet she contemplated him not so much on the Cross but rather in his subsequent state of risen glory. She thus linked her mystical sense of mercy with the mystery of Easter, in which Christ appears triumphant over sin and death (Jn 20:19-23)

I have chosen here to speak of Sister Faustina and the devotion to the merciful Christ which she promoted, because she too belongs to our time. She lived in the first decades of the twentieth century and died before the Second World War. In that very period the mystery of Divine Mercy was revealed to her, and what she experienced, she then recorded in her Diary. To those who survived the Second World War, Saint Faustina's Diary appears as a particular Gospel of Divine Mercy, written from a twentieth-century perspective. The people of that time understood her message. They understood it in the light of the dramatic build-up of evil during the Second World War and the cruelty of the totalitarian systems. It was as if Christ had wanted to reveal that the limit imposed upon evil, of which man is both perpetrator and victim, is ultimately Divine Mercy. Of course there is also justice, but this alone does not have the last word in the divine economy of world history and human history. God can always draw good from evil, he wills that all should be saved and come to knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4): God is Love (1 Jn 4:8). Christ, crucified and risen, just as he appeared to Sister Faustina, is the supreme revelation of this truth.

Here I should like to return to what I said about the experience of the Church in Poland during the period of resistance to Communism. It seems to me to have a universal value. I think that the same applies to Sister Faustina and her witness to the mystery of Divine Mercy. The patrimony of her spirituality was of great importance, as we know from experience, for the resistance against the evil and inhuman systems of the time. The lesson to be drawn from all this is important not only for the Poles, but also in every part of the world where the Church is present. This became clear during the beatification and canonization of Sister Faustina. It was as if Christ had wanted to say through her: 'Evil does not have the last word!' The Paschal Mystery confirms that good is ultimately victorious; that life conquers death and that love triumphs over hate.

(Pope John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*)



## God's Servant Father Michael Sopocko

# The Eucharist is a Sacrament of Love and Mercy

### I – The Eucharist as Sacrament of Love

The Eucharist is above all, the Sacrament of Love. In it is revealed the Love of God through the manifestation of Wisdom, Mighty Power, Goodness and Mercy.

It is a manifestation of Wisdom that the Lord Jesus returned to the Father, not leaving us alone. He hides the radiance of His glory, giving us the possibility to exercise in faith, learn humility, simplicity and modesty. It is a manifestation of the mighty power in the miracle of the transformation through the words of the priests. It is a manifestation of power of the living presence on all the altars and in every Host separately, as well as in the smallest particle of the Host.

It is a manifestation of Goodness and Mercy of God that Christ not only had given us his graces, but He has given Himself to be with us always and unites us with Himself, to transform us into Himself.

The Eucharist is also a sign of love to the Church. She always possesses the presence of the Groom. The Church governs over the real Body of Christ, preserves it and consumes it, as well as continuously offers it to God. The Eucharist is also the manifestation of love towards every member of the church, bestows itself to each one, and desires to be the food in their spiritual life.

This is why It became food to be closer to us, to penetrate every inch of our heart to elevate us, to console us, to enrich us, giving itself as anticipation, foretaste of the future happiness.

Even the material spices – bread and wine – the Savior brings to the sphere of his love, using them and making them part of His sacramental existence, elevate them in His Body to highest perfection. This is a totally new link connecting the material world with God.

The Eucharist is an act of the highest love of our Lord Jesus as the Man, the crown of all His creation. It is like a big solar system in which love moves everything with its rays, reaching the end of centuries and bringing all the creatures to the illuminated road that leads to God.

“Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father, he loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end” (Jn 13: 1) Always He is with us; He is ready to listen to us and always prays with us to the Heavenly Father. Always

meditates with us on the Father's Perfection, and on our behalf gives glory to Him, adores, and humble Himself. Always gives thanks to God for us, begging for forgiveness of our sins, recompense God for our sins and always offers himself as the Mediator and covers us against the blows of justice.

(...) We talk about Jesus' love in the Eucharist as if he is the Man, since as God, He gives us His Mercy, because God's love towards people is Mercy. Eucharist is the confirmation, sense and an expansion of all what was created by the Mercy of God for the people. Through this Sacrament continuously exists divine contact between, heaven, earth and the Purgatory. On one side the Savior in the Sacrifice of the Mass gives himself to the Heavenly Father for the Humanity, on the other side, Heavenly Father gives to us His Son in the Holy Communion.

The Eucharist extends its effect to the living and the dead. For the living it gives power and joy, for the souls suffering in the Purgatory, through our prayers, gives relief and consolation in their suffering.

### II – Eucharist a Sign of the Unfathomable Mercy of God

God's mercy is the descending of the Creator to the creatures for the purpose of bringing them out from misery and imperfection.

In the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the Eternal Word through which everything became, not only descends, but gives Himself as the most perfect gift to the people, continuously giving Himself in His Wisdom and Power. Take and eat, this is my body, (Mat 26: 26) says the Savior. Oh, what an incredible expression, to eat God, to incarnate God in ourselves, to become a living tabernacle of God. To eat the Body

of Jesus, which was laid in the tomb, died on the cross, ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father, where He is the joy of the Angels, the glory of heaven and the admiration of the blessed souls. Together with the Body is His Blood, Soul and Divinity, which are inseparable from Him. “Do this in memory of Me” – (Lk 22: 19) – this means, take the bread and say like me “This is my body” and in this particular moment the bread will become my Body in the hands of all priests, without exception, because the power of my Words are independent from the merits of the person who says the words.

This will be my Body for always, for every place, I will multiply on millions of altars and, for billions of Hosts and





particles of hosts, and in every particle I am a whole, alive, present with humanity and divinity.

How to express the perfection of this merciful gift and compare it to other gifts? All other gifts from God, including the sacraments, are transient, only the Blessed Sacrament is an unceasing gift, exists in every moment of the day and night until the end of the world. Is always with us and is ready to hear us, pray for us to the Heavenly Father, and always meditates on God's perfection. Thanks Him and begs for the forgiveness of sins and offers himself as the Mediator before the Heavenly Father, to beg for His Mercy. When our hemisphere plunges in darkness and sleepiness, on the second hemisphere, the priests holding in their hands the sacrifice for the sins of the world, this way the Heavenly Father has always before him a Mediator who is between heaven and earth, covering the sinful world by His wounds – as Sister Faustina saw in her revelation. We forget about him, but he remembers us. We offend Him, but He offered Himself for us. Very often we are sad, but He consoles us. When we fall under the pressures of temptation, He elevates us, strengthen us and cries: "Come to me, all of you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mat 11: 28). (...)

(...)The power of God is revealed in the miracles which are continuously repeated in the Blessed Sacrament: miracle of Transformation of the bread to the body of Christ and the transformation of the wine to His Blood, miracle of his presence on our altars, and at the same time His presence in heaven, miracle of His whole presence in every Host and even in every particle, (...) miracle of the power of the words said by the priest in the altar.

When Saint Augustine meditated on the omnipotent power of God in the Sacrament of the Altar he said:

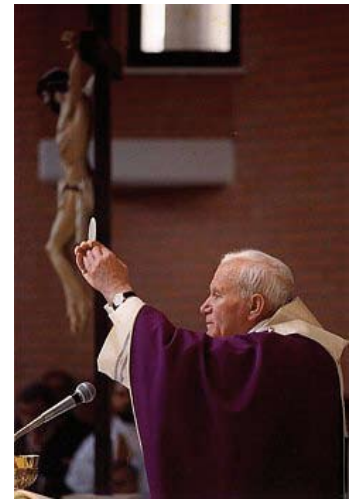
**God you are the wisest,  
But you can not make anything better.  
You are omnipotent,  
But you can not make anything more perfect.  
You are the richest,  
But you don't have anything that is more beautiful  
than the most Blessed Sacrament.**

Saint John Apostle in his gospel from the beginning talks about the Eternal Word which became flesh and dwelt among us and on the beginning of the story about the Last Supper, during which the Blessed Sacrament was instituted, he reminded us that God the Father gave to the Son's hands the same great power.

Generosity is recognized after a gift is given to a beloved person, especially when there is no need to give and when we don't expect anything in return. From Jesus Christ nothing is owed to us but He is given us not only his graces, He is given Himself, He is given himself through the miracle which is contrary to the nature. He humbles himself, because of His Mercy. (...)

What does He expect from us? He knows that mankind, in the big part, will be lukewarm, cold, that He will be abandoned and insulted, but in His Mercy he accepts this. Through the Sacrament of altar there is a constant divine relation between earth, heaven and purgatory. Let me repeat one more time: On one side the Savior in the sacrifice of the Mass gives Himself to the Heavenly Father for mankind, on the other side Heavenly Father gives us his Son in the Holy Communion.

(...) How sad would be the world without the Blessed Sacrament. In the church we would not have anybody to talk to our hearts (like in Protestant churches for example), the world would be like an exile because there would be no consolation in the suffering. The world would be in darkness. The Blessed Sacrament changes everything to Joy. The church became a paradise where we anticipate the taste of the heavenly kingdom and together with the Psalmists we can sing: "how lovely your dwelling, o Lord of hosts. My heart and flesh cry out for the living God... My home is by your altars". (Ps 83, 2-4) We are happy, we are saved, and we are joyful in spite of our tears. God descended from heaven to visit us, to be our companion in our pilgrimage through life.



Because of His Mercy He repeats this descent and visitation every day in every church and other places where the Holy Mass is celebrated. He became a prisoner of solitude to give us easy access to Himself and to hear our prayers. This is the glory to us.

Through the Blessed Sacrament realize the communion of saints on earth in heaven and in the purgatory. All souls receiving the same body of the Savior united among themselves and become one in the Love to the Groom. They connect to each other regardless of the distance on earth and the different states after death. In Him we unite with the saints in heaven and take from them through Him all the necessary help.

In Him we unite with the souls in the purgatory and come to them with consolation and help. "per ipsum, et cum ipso, et in ipso" – through Him in Him and with Him realize the communion of saints which we confess in our creed. The saints in heaven venerate the humanity of Christ who stays in the Blessed Sacrament. They rejoice of his sweet face from which all beauty, goodness and happiness radiate. They rejoice of His hearth from which they experience His Mercy. They rejoice of His hand from which they read how big of a price He paid for their salvation. They are like people in a wrecked ship, ready in the port, with joy and gratitude leaning to his feet because He saved them and like John the Apostle in the Book of Revelations they sing the hymn: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing (...) to the One Who sits on the throne and the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever" (Rev 5,12-13). We, here, on earth also rejoice the presence of Christ's humanity on our altars. We don't see Him directly, but through the faith we recognize His face and the Divine Human perfections. Through Him we unite with the saints in heaven, and with the souls in purgatory, who are there under His justice, but we pray for mercy for them.



# Forms of the Devotion to the Divine Mercy and promises attached to this Devotion

## I. Veneration of the Image of the Merciful Jesus

The essential shape of this image was revealed in the vision which took place in Sister Faustina's cell in the convent at Plock on February 22nd, 1931. **"In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand was raised in a gesture of blessing, the other was touching the garment at the breast. From beneath the garment slightly drawn aside at the breast, there were emanating two large rays, one red, the other pale... After a while Jesus said to me, 'Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You'"**



Three years later in Vilnius Jesus explained what the rays meant: **"The two rays," He said, "denote Blood and Water"** (Diary 299).

### Promises attached to the veneration of the image

There are three promises for which Jesus gave very clear definitions:

- "I promise that the soul that venerates this image will not perish" (Diary 48) – in other words, Jesus gave a promise of eternal salvation,
- "I also promise victory over its enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death" (Diary 48) – this means the enemies of salvation, and the making of considerable progress on the road to Christian perfection,
- "especially at the hour of death I Myself shall defend it as My own glory" – this is the promise of the grace of a happy death.

Jesus' generosity does not stop at these three particular graces. Since He said, **"I am offering people a vessel with which they are to keep coming for graces to the fountain of Mercy"**, (Diary 327) this means that He set no boundaries either to the extent or to the magnitude of those graces and temporal benefits which may be expected by those who venerate the image of Mercy in a spirit of unwavering trust.

## II. The Feast of Mercy

Jesus first told Sister Faustina of his wish to have the Feast of Mercy instituted at Plock in 1931, when He was telling her about His desire to have a painting made: **"I desire that there be a Feast of Mercy. I want this image, which you will have painted on canvas, be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter; that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy"** (Diary 49).

**"Yes, the first Sunday after Easter is the Feast of Mercy," Jesus said, "but there must also be acts of mercy, and I demand the worship of My mercy through the solemn celebration of the Feast and through the veneration of the image which has been painted"** (Diary 742).

The greatness of the Feast is manifested in the following promises:

**"Whoever comes to the Fount of Life on this day will be granted complete remission of sins and punishment,"** (Diary 300) Jesus said. Thus there is a special, exceptional grace attached to Holy Communion received in a state of grace on that day: it is the grace of **"complete remission of sins and punishment."** It is a grace which, is much more than just a plenary indulgence. A plenary indulgence entails merely the remission of temporal punishment, for sins committed... This grace is basically also greater than the grace of the six Sacraments other than Baptism, since the remission of sins and punishment is the sacramental grace only of Holy Baptism. **In these promises, Jesus has attributed the power to remit sins and punishment to Holy Communion received on the Feast of Mercy, thereby elevating it to the rank of a 'second baptism'.**

## III. The Chaplet to the Divine Mercy

The general promise is: **"It pleases Me to grant [souls] everything they ask of Me when they say the chaplet"** (Diary 1541). **"Through the chaplet," Jesus said, "you will obtain everything, if what you ask for is compatible with My will"** (Diary 1731).

The specific promises concern the hour of death: **“Whoever recites [the chaplet] will receive great mercy at the hour of death. Even the most hardened of sinners, if he recites this chaplet just once will receive graces from My boundless mercy”** (Diary 687).

The same grace – of conversion and forgiveness of sins – will be granted to any dying person at whose death bed other people say the chaplet.

**“When this chaplet is said by others at the bedside of a dying person,” Jesus said, “God’s anger will be placated and unfathomable mercy will envelop the soul”** (Diary 811).

The third specific promise concerns the temporal aspect of death (whereas the two former ones relate to its eternal outcome). There are two alternatives here:

- When the dying person himself says the chaplet; **“When hardened sinners say [this chaplet], I will fill their souls with peace, and the hour of their death will be a happy one”** (Diary 1541).
- When others say the chaplet around the person’s deathbed: **“...when they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the merciful Savior”** (Diary 1541).

#### IV. The Hour of Mercy

**“In this hour,” Jesus said, “I will refuse nothing to the soul that makes a request of Me in virtue of My Passion”** (Diary 1320).

Jesus pointed out that there were three necessary conditions which had to be met for prayers at this hour to be heard:

- The prayers were to be addressed to Jesus;
- The prayers should be said at three o’clock in the afternoon;
- The prayers were to refer to the values and merits of His sorrowful Passion.



#### V. The Propagation of the Worship of Mercy

The fifth component of the devotion to the Divine Mercy is the propagation of the worship of Mercy, since there are promises attached also to this devotional form.

**“I shield souls who spread the honor of My mercy through their entire life as a tender mother protects her infant, and at the hour of death I will not be a Judge for them, but the Merciful Savior,”** (Diary 1075) said Jesus, **“they will not experience terror at the hour of death; My mercy will shield them in the final battle”** (Diary 1540).

#### Our responsibilities as the Apostles of the Divine Mercy

A more profound analysis of the Dairy leads to the conclusion that what Jesus requires is not so much a new religious congregation, but a large-scale movement of religious revival in the spirit of devotion to the Divine Mercy. The aim of this movement is to be the carrying out of these tasks at the present stage in the Church’s and world history.

Jesus himself made the plan of what He wanted as far as the spirit and tasks of the Apostles of Divine Mercy Jesus asked:

- **Jesus first demand:** **“By your entreaties you and your companions shall obtain mercy for yourselves and for the world”** (Diary 435) He said, **“through love you will reconcile earth with heaven, you will soften the just anger of God”** (Diary 531).
- **Jesus second demand:** **“Penetrate My mysteries and you will know the depth of My mercy towards creatures and My unfathomable goodness – and this you shall make known to the world”** (Diary 438).
- **Jesus third demand:** For the mercy of God to be recognized and disseminated throughout the sinful world, Jesus wanted special prayer for priests and religious. **“I place in your care two pearls very precious to My Heart,”** He said, **“these are the souls of priests and religious. You will pray particularly for them; their power will come from your diminishment”** (Diary 531).
- **Jesus forth demand:** **You will prepare the world for My final coming.** (Diary 429).



## Cardinal Justin Rigali

### Mercy – indispensable dimension of love

“God is rich in mercy; because of his great love for us, he brought us to life with Christ when we were dead in sin” (Eph 2:4-5). As we approach the Sacred Triduum of Easter, celebrating our salvation in Jesus Christ, I draw your attention to this passage from the Letter to the Ephesians and invite you to reflect with me on the mercy of God.

In his 1980 encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in Mercy), Pope John Paul II rehearses the sacred history of God’s revelation of himself as mercy, a revelation culminating in Jesus Christ. The Pope teaches, “Making the Father present as love and mercy is, in Christ’s own consciousness, the fundamental touchstone of his mission as the Messiah.” This mission passes on into the Church, who “must consider it one of her principal duties – at every stage of history and especially in our modern age – to proclaim and to introduce into life the mystery of mercy, supremely revealed in Jesus Christ.”

The Holy Father tells us that focusing on the mercy of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, is especially important in the present moment of history, and that doing so constitutes a timely challenge to the Church

The truth, revealed in Christ, about God the “Father of mercies,” enables us to “see” him as particularly close to man, especially when man is suffering, when he is under threat at the very heart of his existence and dignity. And this is why, in the situation of the Church and the world today, many individuals and groups guided by a lively sense of faith are turning, I would say almost spontaneously, to the mercy of God. They are certainly being moved to do this by Christ himself, who through his Spirit works within human hearts. For the mystery of God the “Father of mercies” revealed by Christ becomes, in the context of today’s threats to man, as it were, a unique appeal addressed to the Church. [...]

The Holy Father explains this link: The more the human conscience succumbs to secularization, loses its sense of the very meaning of the word “mercy,” moves away from God and distances itself from the mystery of mercy, the more the Church has the right and the duty to appeal to the God of mercy, “with loud cries.” These “loud cries” should be the mark of the Church of our times, cries uttered to God to implore his mercy, the certain manifestation of which she professes and proclaims as having already come in Jesus crucified and risen, that is, in the Paschal Mystery. It is this mystery which bears within itself the most complete revelation of mercy, that is, of the love which is more powerful than death, more powerful than sin and every evil, the love which lifts man up when he falls into the abyss and frees him from the greatest threats. [...]

The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy – the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and of the Redeemer – and when she brings people close to the sources of the Savior’s mercy, of which she is the trustee and dispenser. Of great significance in this area is constant meditation on the word of God, and above all conscious and mature participation in the Eucharist and in the sacrament of penance or reconciliation. [...]

“Mercy,” says Pope John Paul, “is an indispensable dimension of love; it is, as it were, love’s second name and, at the same time, the specific manner in which love is revealed and effected vis-a-vis the reality of the evil that is in the world, affecting and besieging man, insinuating itself even into his heart.” In the face of all the manifestations of physical and moral evil, before all the threats that cloud the whole horizon of the life of humanity today, the Church – professing mercy and remaining always faithful to it – has the right and the duty to call upon the mercy of God. [...]

*(Cardinal Justin Rigali, Letter to Archdiocese of St. Luis, April 01, 1998)*



## Cardinal Philippe Barbarin

### Mercy is what makes the Church beautiful

In today’s society, the word “mercy” can seem old fashioned, because it was used in a syrupy way. I truly think we must give it all its power and deepness. When I accompanied John Paul II to Krakow, in August 2002 for the dedication of the Divine Mercy

Sanctuary, I was much touched by what the Pope said then, on proclaiming a Merciful God. Until then, I had thought mercy was just an adjective qualifying God. John Paul II explained that, no, more than that, it was in fact God’s name. And that there was no other source of hope, for mankind, than mercy. It’s a wonderful doorway for us as Christians, and a meeting ground, I think, with Muslims. Muslims often criticize us for calling God “Father”, but they call Him the “Merciful”.

**But why God full of mercy?** Mercy, in its Latin form *misericordia*, comes from two words, *miseria* and *cor*. This is the real reason of Jesus’ coming in the world: God, on seeing how great the sufferings and sadness of humanity, stuck His heart in the deepest of our miseries. André Chouraqui, in his translation of the Bible, uses the

word “entrails”: “Happy the merciful” becomes “Happy the entrained”... It may seem awkward, but it shows quite well how God loves us from the depth of His entrails. The God full of mercy is a Father who just couldn’t stand the sufferings of humankind and decided to save it. So mercy is the conviction, that in the midst of all our miseries, God’s love is always present and not be discouraged.

Mercy makes the Church beautiful, when she takes care of others, especially the poorest of the poor. Reminding the presence of God’s mercy helps to dig out a recurring default of the Catholic Church, when she’s too busy with herself, or her organization, when her apostolate becomes a question of marketing or propaganda.. In France, the clergy is having a difficult time. The fall in its numbers, not knowing where this will lead it, in terms of reorganization and time table, causes great anxiety. In Lyon, there will be no ordination this year, and it’s a great suffering for our diocesan church. The risk, because of the dwindling numbers, would be that priests become super-manager, managing the different groups of lay people in charge of catechism, funerals... Well, all of us, disciples of Jesus, we are missionaries of mercy. It is important that we ask the Lord to “reformat” in a way our apostolate.





**Lelis Cruzata**

## **The Image of the Merciful Jesus in the Church of Christ the King in Los Angeles**

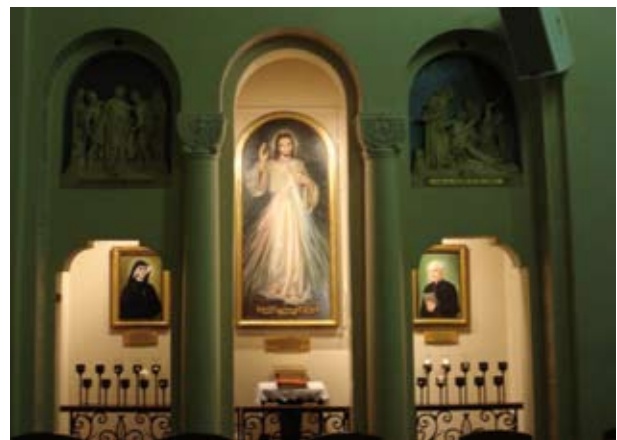
Since four years ago the parish of Christ the King in Los Angeles owns its Sanctuary of Divine Mercy – the image of the Merciful Christ is venerated in a separate chapel. The image traveled a long way from Poland, St. Faustina's country, through the Vatican to find its place here in Hollywood, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. The modest nun has heard the words repeated today in uncountable languages: "Tell to the world about my mercy". Thanks to worshippers of God's Mercy, and especially to Fr. Antonio Cacciapuoti and Fr. George J. Bobowski, the echo of this mercy became much louder even in the world's movie capital – Hollywood.

The image at the Church of Christ the King, one of the contemporary copies of the countenance known through Saint Faustina's revelations, deserves special attention, for it has been blessed by the Holy Father on April 30, 2003 – during a special audience in the Vatican; John Paul II has placed his signature on it. Thus, the image has been blessed by the Vicar of Christ and together with the simple message of mercy has reached the faithful in Los Angeles. Looking carefully to this image, you will see this exceptional signature.

For many years the devotion to God's Mercy has encountered in its way in the Church with serious difficulties and only the commitment of the contemporary Bishop of Krakow Cardinal Karol Wojtyła made possible for these obstacles to disappear. From the beginning the mystics had been very close to God's Servant John Paul II, whom as early as in his youth has been interested in the work of St. John of the Cross. He has dedicated to the Spanish Mystic both his greatest literary work, the poem *The Song of the hidden God*, and his doctor's thesis – *Doctrina de fide apud S. Joannem de Cruce*.

No wonder that he was interested in a contemporary mystic, humble, uneducated nun, who has been chosen by Christ as the Apostle of His mercy. Once again the word of God's Son has been accomplished: "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him." (Mt 11, 25-27).

The teachings about God's Mercy are one of the foundations of John Paul's teachings. In his book "Memory and Identity" there is a separate chapter titled "The Mystery of Mercy"; He wrote: "I recall here Sister Faustina and the devotion to the Merciful Christ initiated by her, I do it also because she belongs to our age ... words written in St. Faustina's Diary appear to be an special Gospel of God's Mercy written from



the 20<sup>th</sup> Century perspective. The people of this century understood this message. They have comprehended it though this dramatic compiling of the evil, which has been brought by the Second World War and later, by cruelties of totalitarian systems. It is just like Christ wanted to show that the measure of evil, in which the casualty was the man, is finally the Mercy of God."

Thus, in such light we should see the initiative of the believers of Divine Mercy, whom – with the Image of Jesus painted for the parish of Christ the King in Los Angeles – first made a trip to the Vatican.

The faithful from the Church of Christ the King led spiritually by their pastor Fr. Antonio Cacciapuoti and Father George J. Bobowski prepared themselves for the enthronization of the image in a separate chapel with prayers and deep reflection during meetings with bishops from Bialystok, City of Mercy. First, on September 6 and 7, 2003, they have met Bishop Edward Ozorowski, who delivered the lecture titled "Is there a need to talk about God's Mercy these days?" Additionally, as a guest from Poland, he blessed a smaller image of the Merciful Christ, which soon after begun its peregrination through the households of families of the parish which continues until now. He also gave as a gift, to all who attended, his book *Dialogues on Divine Mercy*; published by the Publishing House "Wybor".

It is worth mentioning that Bishop Edward Ozorowski is the first bishop nominated to his seat by the newly chosen (in 1978) Pope John Paul II. He is a son of the Bialystok region, the professor of the Archdiocesan High Seminary, where for many years, God's Servant Fr. Michael Sopotko, Saint Faustina's confessor and the initiator of her Diary, lectured. It is hard not to notice God's gifts here, which we need so much to recognize our Lord's intentions for us and the world.

The main celebration took place one week later, on September 13 and 14; presided by Archbishop Stanislaw Szymek. On the first day he delivered the lecture "Divine Mercy according to teachings of John Paul II" and celebrated Holy Mass. The following day, during the solemnly concelebrated Holy Mass, Archbishop Szymek blessed the Chapel of Divine Mercy in Christ the King, first sanctuary in Los Angeles. This is where the image of the Merciful Christ found its place. On September 14 which coincides with the solemnity of the Raising of the Cross and the worshippers of God's Mercy recall this day as the day, when Christ dictated to Saint Faustina the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy.

Since then this sanctuary has become a Shrine of the Divine Mercy, Jesus is really present, miracles had happened and continues to happen, touching people's lives.



**Robert Martinez**

## God is near

Saint Augustine said: "There is no people so great as the Christian people; none of them has a God so close to them as our God is to us." However, we need the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the community of the faithful, the scriptures, the

model of the Saints, the devotion of the Rosary, and the immense power of Jesus' Divine Mercy to remind us of this. As someone once said, "Ours is a culture of forgetting." I do not believe that we intentionally forget that, "God has not withdrawn from the world" and he is near; we forget because today more than ever- we are overwhelmed. The pressures of earning a living, family obligations, sickness, relationship issues, personal insecurities, and the overall havoc between nations and communities can blind our spiritual vision. In addition, attempting to be a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ can sometimes be an added pressure. Although, if we keep our eyes fixed on the "Christ" we can overcome any storm because he reminds us: "Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5). Jesus is near, God is near.

Trust plays an important role in apprehending this important message. Although, as mentioned previously, we are faced with a deluge of adversity that depletes our trust in God and the healing hands of Jesus. Therefore, we must cling to the master and teacher: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient till death." Sr. Melanie Svoboda explains that being a follower of Jesus costs us something. "It costs us precisely what it costs Jesus, especially during his final days on earth. It required courage under duress, faith amid ambiguity and doubt, forgiveness in response to betrayal and absolute trust in Abba amid darkness and pain" (Living Faith, April). Today, perhaps more than ever, as someone once phrased, we harbor "fear of death, the dark, the unknown, and fear of each other." Divine Mercy is the answer to fear, uncertainty and darkness, trust in Jesus is the essence of the message of mercy.

In repeated revelations to St. Faustina, our redeemer makes it clear that the fountain is his heart, the water is his mercy, and the vessel is Trust: "I have opened my heart as a living fountain of mercy. Let all souls draw life from it. Let them approach this sea of mercy with great trust (Diary, 1520). On the cross, the fountain of my mercy was opened wide by the lance for all souls- no one have I excluded! (Diary, 1182). I am offering people a vessel with which they are to keep coming for graces to the fountain of mercy. That vessel is this image with the signature: 'Jesus, I trust in you' (Diary, 327). The graces of my mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is - trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive" (Diary, 1578). Trust is built through prayer, humility, submission, and obedience

to the Blessed Trinity. These are some of the means that will enable us to trust that Jesus and the Godhead are accessible, as well as his living fountain of mercy.

As someone once said, "Life is a storm, sometimes you're basking in the sun and other times you're shattered on the rocks"; how do we recognize that "It is the Lord" in proximity (as Peter did when he recognized the risen Lord on the seashore), when our trust that "God has not withdrawn from the world" has diminished? Today, there is war, strife, violence, and natural disaster on a daily basis. The conflict in the Middle East will not subside soon. Plato once said, "Only the dead have seen the end of war." Army Specialist Joe Schaffel, 24, who is being treated for posttraumatic stress disorder after serving his second deployment in Iraq (and attended Catholic school in Sleepy Hollow, Ill), explains the real life challenges to his faith: "I had faith until I got to Iraq. I haven't gotten it back since. Once you get there, you wonder how God could allow anyone to go through that" (Newsweek, May 7, 2007, pg. 28). We, who live in the comfort of our safe cities, must pray fervently for those who have lost their faith and trust in the God of Mercy. It is up to us who trust in the message of Divine Mercy to somehow convey to the world, amidst suffering and darkness that "God is always and everywhere near to man." The Gospel of John testifies,

"And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory as of the Father's only son, full of grace and truth."

Msgr. Guardini, the Italian theologian, offers our soldiers and the world words of consolation and hope: "God is always and everywhere near to man. But to man by himself, his presence is inaccessible, blocked off. God alone can open up this channel.

We believe he did this. The presence of the Father was all around Jesus. The Father was completely open with him, one with him in an infinity of love. We have listened to the words whence this presence can be heard speaking out. Heaven surrounded Jesus, the accessible presence of the Father. And Jesus has brought this presence to us" (Magnificat, April 2007, pg. 263). And we must bring this *eu angelos* (good news) to others- Jesus is near, God is near, his mercy is accessible to all in need.

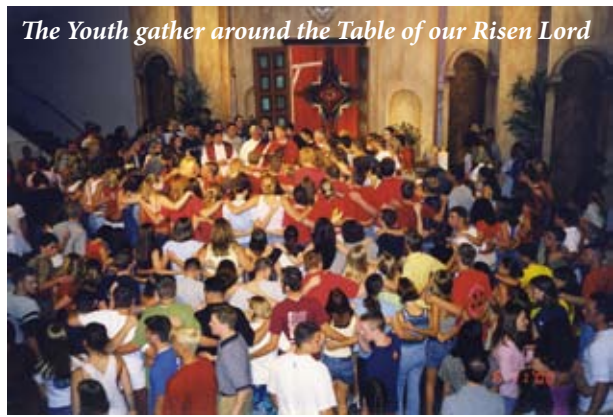
The "Theotokos," the God-bearer can play a part in drawing us closer to her son, as Fr. Peter Cameron explains, "The Blessed Virgin Mary comes to us at the Visitation so that the closeness with Christ that she shares will be our life as well." Further, he says, "Mary visits us to bring us Christ's nearness. By the birth she will soon bear, we are reborn." (Magnificat, May 2007, pg. 3). In the Visitation, says Louis Lavelle, the believer responds "with total confidence and joy to one who would draw him towards an invisible presence, a presence from which he draws strength; for when another makes him aware of it, that presence ceases to be an illusion, a fiction, or a mere hope, and becomes the very presence of the living God" And the Holy Father writes, "Essential to the heart of faith is the joy in the Word become man, the dance before the Ark of the covenant, in self-forgetful happiness, by one who has recognized God's salvific nearness. Transcending





all problems...” Jesus calls us near, just like he called out to Zacchaeus in the tree long ago, “Hurry down... I mean to stay with you today.”

Finally, as previously mentioned, “Trust in Jesus is the essence of the message of mercy.” We must trust that our risen Lord has come, he is coming, he is present, and he will come again. “Oh, the depth of the riches, wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways!” It is also important to trust that we are loved deeply by the triune God: By the Father, our creator, who is the source and sum of love; by the son, our redeemer, who is the evidence and proof of love; and by the Holy Spirit, our sanctifier, who is the energy and agent of God’s love. Once again, Msgr. Guardini poignantly explains: “We know that the Father loves us in Jesus. We have confidence in the grace of his love for us; we know that his eyes see us, his heart is turned toward us, and his hand leads us. We believe that heaven is around us... Perhaps it can be said that heaven is on its way to us as long as we do not keep it at a distance by our own actions...” But



all coldness, indifference, slothfulness, weakness, pride, covetousness – everything that sin is called – forces him back, bars the road to him. And heaven fights. Heaven wants to come to us. For heaven is only God’s love coming home” (Magnificat, April 2007, pgs. 263-264). Jesus I trust in you!



## Archbishop Raymond Leo Burke

### “My Lord and my God!”

In our Lord Jesus Christ, we have been adopted by the Father. God chose us, as His own sons and daughters, in our Lord Jesus, His only-begotten Son, Who suffered and died for us on Calvary, rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of the Father in glory, so that He may share His divine life with us always through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 1:26-31; and Eph 1:3-14). Our Lord Jesus is the victor who conquers the world of sin and death. We are victors with Him, if only we remain in His company, drawing our life from Him in the Church.[...]

How easy it is for us to lose sight of the mystery of God’s love for us in our Lord Jesus Christ. The individualism and materialism of our culture blinds our minds and hearts to the selfless and enduring love of God for us in our Lord Jesus, in the Church. The individualism and materialism of our culture is so permissive, leading us away from the light of our life in Christ and into the darkness of a life of sin. It should not surprise us that the same culture, alienated from the mystery of God’s all-merciful love of us, is so unforgiving and merciless before anyone of us who gets in the way of its so-called progress. When man becomes aware of his own sinfulness and need of forgiveness and mercy, as surely he must, our culture leaves him in a state of despair, cut off from the only source of mercy, the glorious pierced Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. Seeking joy and peace, where they cannot be found, we engage in addictive behaviors which, uncorrected, lead to destruction of self and of others. How different our culture is from the culture of the first community of believers who were “of one heart and mind,” namely the Heart and Mind of Christ, sharing their gifts for the good of all, so that all might know God’s abundant and never-failing mercy and love toward them! [...]

Our Risen Lord appeared to the Apostles on the evening of the day of His Resurrection, showing them His glorious wounds, greeting them with the word of peace, and breathing upon the gift of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins. A week later, as the Gospel account tells us, our Risen Lord appeared again for the sake of the Apostles

Thomas who was absent at His first appearance and who doubted the truth of it. He showed Thomas His glorious wounds, so that he, too, might believe and become an example of faith to us all. Before our Risen Lord, Thomas made a most simple profession of faith, which expresses powerfully the mystery of God’s love for us in our Lord Jesus. He exclaimed: “My Lord and my God!”

Rightly, popular piety has taught us to make silently Thomas’ profession of faith, when the Sacred Host and the chalice containing the Precious Blood are elevated after each is consecrated during the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Every time, we participate in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, our Risen Lord makes new the offering of His life on Calvary for love of us. Our Lord Jesus comes to dwell with us, on the altar of sacrifice, dispelling our doubts and fears, the darkness of our selfishness and sin, and inviting us to receive Him and to remain in His company. Likewise, when we confess our sins to our Lord Jesus and receive His forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance, we encounter our Risen Lord Who frees us from the bondage of our sins and gives us joy and peace, new enthusiasm and new energy to meet Him in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and to receive Him in Holy Communion, and to set out once again, with Him, along the way of salvation. [...]

Pope John Paul II, understanding so profoundly the suffering of our time, caused by ignorance of the all-merciful love of God, poured out upon us from the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, made available to the universal Church all that our Lord Jesus had communicated about Divine Mercy through Saint Faustina. He also instituted the Feast of Divine Mercy.

Our Lord Jesus, Divine Mercy Incarnate, now comes into our midst. As we draw near to Him to be one with Him in His Eucharistic Sacrifice, may our minds and hearts be filled with the knowledge and love of God’s mercy in our lives. Before the great mystery of our faith, may we exclaim with Saint Thomas the Apostle: “My Lord and my God!” May we exclaim with Saint Faustina, “Jesus, I trust in You” (Diary, n. 327).[...]

*(Most Reverend Raymond Leo Burke  
Archbishop of St. Louis, Homily – April 23, 2006)*



# God's Servant Father Michael Sopocko Spiritual Director and Confessor of Saint Faustina

“This is the visible help for you on earth.  
He will help you to carry out My will on earth”  
(Diary, 53).

Divine Providence entrusted a very important role in Saint Faustina's mission to her confessor and spiritual director Father Michael Sopocko. During Saint Faustina's stay in Vilnius in the years 1933-1936, he was for her an irreplaceable help in discerning interior inspirations and visions. Obedient to his orders, she wrote a DIARY, which is now an extraordinarily valuable document of Catholic mysticism. In the DIARY one can also find evidence of Father Michael Sopocko's extraordinary character and his work in fulfilling the desires of the Lord Jesus.



„He is a priest after My own Heart  
(...) Through him it pleases Me to proclaim  
the worship of My mercy” (Diary, 1256)

„His thought is closely united with Mine,  
so be at peace about what concerns My work.  
I will not let him make a mistake,  
and you should do nothing without his permission”  
(Diary, 1408)

„Seeing Dr Fr. Sopocko's great sacrifice and effort in his work, I admired his patience and humility. This all cost a great deal, not only in terms of toil and various troubles, but also financially, as Dr Fr. Sopocko was taking care of all the expenses. I can see that Divine Providence had prepared him to carry out this work

of mercy before I had asked God for this. Oh, how mysterious are Your ways, O God! And how happy are the souls that follow the call of the Divine mercy!” (Diary, 422)

„O my Jesus, You see how very grateful I am to Father Sopocko, who has advanced Your work so much. That soul, so humble, has had to endure all the storms. He has not allowed himself to become discouraged by adversities, but has faithfully responded to the call of God” (Diary, 1586)



„Jesus, this is Your affair, so why are You acting this way toward him? It seems to me that You are making difficulties for him while at the same time ordering him to act.

Write that by day and by night My gaze is fixed upon him, and I permit these adversities in order to increase his merit. I do not reward for good results but for the patience and hardship undergone for My sake” (Diary, 86)



## PRAYER for the obtaining of graces through the intercession of the God's Servant Father Michael Sopocko

Oh Merciful God, you have made your servant Father Michael Sopocko, the apostle of your endless Mercy and the worshipper of Our Lady, the Mother of Mercy. Grant, through his intercession, that by praising your Mercy and arousing trust in your fatherly goodness, I will obtain the grace of .....  
I ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Our Father...  
Hail Mary...  
Glory be...



**Father John-Paul Gonzalez**

## **A Parish Devoted To Divine Mercy**

On Divine Mercy Sunday 2007, the priests and people of St. John of God Parish in Norwalk, California blessed and dedicated a new shrine to Divine Mercy.

It was a joyful and grace-filled moment in the life of the parish. The shrine was the vision of our pastor, Father Edward Dober. In order that the parishioners be spiritually prepared for this special moment, they participated in a five-day "Divine Mercy" retreat led in English by Father George J. Bobowski and in Spanish by our associate pastor, Father Alberto Ledesma. The retreats bore abundant fruits as many parishioners recognized greater need to make more frequent use of the Sacrament of Penance, as well as the need to be more merciful towards others.

Los Angeles artist Salvador Hernandez was commissioned to design the shrine using hand-painted tiles depicting Our Merciful Lord with Saint Faustina Kowalska. Enthusiastic and supportive of the parish's project of building the shrine, owners Jacques and Manix Delfino of Chagall Design, Ltd. based in Carson, California designed and donated a chasuble depicting the Merciful Jesus, in memory of their parents.

It is appropriate that the shrine occupies an space that once was used for the Sacrament of Penance. In this Sacrament we experience Christ's mercy by receiving His forgiveness. The shrine is a sanctuary honoring Christ's mercy. In looking for a location for the shrine, we discovered an old storage closet. This storage closet once was a confessional during an era when our parish had several priests available for confessions. Eventually this confessional became unoccupied and was being used as a storage space, until it was remodeled in order to build the shrine. So now the shrine sits next to the other confessionals in the church. On their own initiative, penitents visit the shrine in preparing themselves to receive the sacrament of penance and in thanksgiving afterwards.

Parishioners are delighted to have the new shrine, especially our youth. The evening of Divine Mercy Sunday, our high school youth ministry hosted an evening learning about the life of Saint Faustina and the message of Divine Mercy contained in her diary. Their parish priests taught them how to pray the

chaplet of Divine Mercy and each received his or her own "glow-in-the-dark" rosary to pray the chaplet, so they could even pray at night. Each classroom of our parish school now has an image of the Merciful Jesus and each student and teacher received his or her own holy card bearing the Divine Mercy image along with prayers of the chaplet.

When visiting the dying and their families, I encourage them to pray the chaplet of Divine Mercy for the intention of a happy and peaceful death. Those mourning the loss of their deceased loved ones find consolation in praying the chaplet for their intentions. Our shrine was built through the generosity of parishioners, many of whom donated in honor of the living who celebrated birthdays and anniversaries and in memory of the dead who now rest in the merciful Lord.

The parish retreats and dedication of the Divine Mercy shrine are now bearing fruits as the parish prepares to form a Divine Mercy Apostolate. The faithful visit the shrine daily and every Tuesday participate in a Divine Mercy chaplet and Novena following the evening mass. It is our hope that the shrine of Divine Mercy be a place of prayer, where people may be led to the mercy of Christ and desire to share Christ's mercy with others. Trusting in the Lord's mercy we can be strengthened in grace as instruments of mercy to a world aching and in need of the salve of God's mercy and love.



*Divine Mercy Chapel in Saint John of God Parish in Norwalk, Archdiocese of Los Angeles*

### **ONE HEART ONE MIND IN CHRIST COVENANT COMMUNITY**

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- LECTORS • EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS • USHERS • DIVINE MERCY DEVOTIONS
- PARISH CATECHESIS FOR ADULTS, TEENS, CHILDREN





**Ewa Bobowska**

## **One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church**

Whether or not you are Catholic, you may have questions about the Catholic faith. You may have heard challenges to the Catholic Church's claim to be the interpreter and safeguard of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Such challenges come from door-to-door missionaries who ask, „Are you saved?“, from peer pressure that

urges you to ignore the Church's teachings, from a secular culture that whispers „There is no God.“

You can't deal with these challenges unless you understand the basics of the Catholic faith. This conference introduces them to you.

In Catholicism you will find answers to life's most troubling questions: Why am I here? Who made me? What must I believe? How must I act? All these can be answered to your satisfaction, if only you will open yourself to God's grace, turn to the Church he established, and follow his plan for you (Jn 7:17).

Jesus said his Church would be „the light of the world.“ He then noted that „a city set on a hill cannot be hid“ (Mat. 5:14). This means his Church is a visible organization. It must have characteristics that clearly identify it and that distinguish it from other churches. Jesus promised, „I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it“ (Mat 16:18). This means that his Church will never be destroyed and will never fall away from him. His Church will survive until his return.

Among the Christian churches, only the Catholic Church has existed since the time of Jesus. Every other Christian church is an offshoot of the Catholic Church. The Eastern Orthodox churches broke away from unity with the pope in 1054. The Protestant churches were established during the Reformation, which began in 1517. (Most of today's Protestant churches are actually offshoots of the original Protestant offshoots.)

Only the Catholic Church existed in the tenth century, in the fifth century, and in the first century, faithfully teaching the doctrines given by Christ to the apostles, omitting nothing. The line of popes can be traced back, in unbroken succession, to Peter himself. This is unequalled by any institution in history.

Even the oldest government is new compared to the papacy, and the churches that send out door-to-door missionaries are young compared to the Catholic Church. Many of these churches began as recently as the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. Some even began during your own lifetime. None of them can claim to be the Church Jesus established.

The Catholic Church has existed for nearly 2,000 years, despite constant opposition from the world. This is testimony to the Church's divine origin. It must be more than a merely human organization, especially considering that its human members – even some of its leaders – have been unwise, corrupt, or prone to heresy.

Any merely human organization with such members would have collapsed early on. The Catholic Church is today the most vigorous church in the world (and the largest, with a billion members: one sixth of the human race), and that is testimony not to the cleverness of the Church's leaders, but to the protection of the Holy Spirit.

Over the last few decades many Catholics have left the Church, many dropping out of religion entirely, many joining other churches. But the traffic has not been in only one direction.

The traffic toward Rome has increased rapidly. Today we are seeing more than a hundred and fifty thousand converts enter the Catholic Church each year in the United States, and in some other places, like the continent of Africa, there are more than a million converts to the Catholic faith each year. People of no religion, lapsed or inactive Catholics, and members of other Christian churches are „coming home to Rome.“

They are attracted to the Church for a variety of reasons, but the chief reason they convert is the chief reason *you* should be Catholic: The solid truth of the Catholic faith.

Our separated brethren hold much Christian truth, but not all of it. We might compare their religion to a stained glass window in which some of the original panes were lost and have been replaced by opaque glass: Something that was present at the beginning is now gone, and something that does not fit has been inserted to fill up the empty space. The unity of the original window has been marred.

When, centuries ago, they split away from the Catholic Church, the theological ancestors of these Christians eliminated some authentic beliefs and added new ones of their own making. The forms of Christianity they established are really incomplete Christianity.

Only the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus, and only it has been able to preserve all Christian truth without any error – and great numbers of people are coming to see this.

Your tasks as a Catholic, no matter what your age, are the following three:

– Know your Catholic faith.

You cannot live your faith if you do not know it, and you cannot share with others what you do not first make your own (CCC 429). Learning your Catholic faith takes some effort, but it is

effort well spent because this study is, quite literally, infinitely rewarding.

– Live your Catholic faith.

Your Catholic faith is a public thing. It is not meant to be left behind when you leave home (CCC 2472). But be forewarned: Being a public Catholic involves risk and loss. You will find some doors closed to you. You will lose some friends. You will be considered an outsider. But, as a consolation, remember our Lord's words to the persecuted: „Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven“ (Mat 5:12).

– Spread your Catholic faith.

Jesus Christ wants us to bring the whole world into captivity to the truth, and the truth is Jesus himself, who is „the way, and the truth, and the life“ (Jn 14:6). Spreading the faith is a task not only for bishops, priests, and religious – it is a task for all Catholics (CCC 905).

Just before his Ascension, our Lord told his apostles, „Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you“ (Mat 28:19-20).

If we want to observe all that Jesus commanded, if we want to believe all he taught, we must follow him through his Church. This is our great challenge – and our great privilege.







## Deacon Eudoro and Eleana Benalcázar

# A Pilgrimage to the Threshold of Saint Peter

Time has passed by since our return from Rome the Eternal city, but the memories and experiences lived there are still fresh. This was not a business trip, pleasure or tourism it was a trip of Christians who went to meet with their roots and their spiritual identity. The exact word to describe it is "Pilgrimage".

To walk in the places that have hundreds of years of history and faith situates us in a different world. We visited Churches, monuments, ruins, buildings and many other famous places, that perhaps for many of us have not seen them but only in post cards or on a television documental. Now it was different. We were in the actual places, and we were part of them. Enchanted by their beauty, fascinated by their architecture and the form in which they were conceived and built, characteristics, that may be, are not perceived by the inhabitants of the modern Rome because they are used to seeing them everyday or because they had been part of all their lives.

When we arrived to Rome, we started the pilgrimage with a Eucharistic celebration in the church of Saint Alfonso, home to our Holy Mother of Perpetual Help.



*Los Angeles Deacons and relatives in Saint Peter's Plaza before their Papal Audience*

The second day we visited the Vatican Museum and the Sistine Chapel, where we simply were amazed by the work of art, paintings and sculptures, but not before we trembled to the core of our souls in front of the tomb of our beloved Pope John Paul II.

The memorable third day will never be erased from our memories. Was the day of our Papal audience and we were able to closely see Pope Benedict the XVI. Some of us had the fortune to hold Holy Father's hand at the end of the Audience. Is impressive to see a great human mass congregated in one place and to wait patiently for hours to acclaim the Vicar of Christ on the earth and get His blessing.

The subsequent days we visited San Juan Lateran Basilica, Quo Vadis Chapel, the Coliseum, The Forum Romanum, The Holy Steps, the mouth of the truth, where some of us or better say all of us were afraid to go through the test of the true. As the tradition tells, whoever puts the hand in the mouth of the mythic figure and looses it, that means that he or she is saying a lie. Thanks God we all passed the dreaded test and did not loose our limb.

When we visited the Catacomb of Saint Callixtus, for me, and I believe for the whole group was a very sacred moment to be underground, walking the narrow passages where we had to walk one behind the other. To be surrounded by the walls full of niches containing the bones of the first Christians who were buried there. To be in the places where these heroes of the faith lived and found refuge from the Roman soldier's persecution, filled our hearths

with indescribable feelings that only reflected in the faces expressions of each one of us and the personal communion with the surroundings. To be in the Catacombs is like going back in time and remain there. In our minds we can't even imagine that these narrow and cold alleys, where you are surrounded by earth that was carved by hands with rudimentary utensils, are the silent witnesses of the beginning of the Christianity. It was here where was born and grew the fire of the Love for Christ, and thanks to these men, women and children Martyrs of the faith who knew clearly that the true life is the life with God, we can enjoy now God's wonders of which each one of us is part of.

After two hours in the bus we arrived to Assisi. A city that keeps its medieval beauty. There you breath an aged air in the atmosphere. We could say that we were breathing the same air that Saint Francis of Assisi breathed when he strolled on the narrow and rocky streets, seems as if time stopped there.

From the hill where the city is located we can appreciate an impressive view of the region of Umbria. I ask my self, how many times was the Saint entranced contemplating the immensity and beauty of this peaceful valley that unites with the sky in the horizon?, and the times that he compared them with the infinite beauty, kindness, peacefulness and other attributes of God, which he described with one word "Peace". That peace that guided him to see the relation that should exist between all of us and the creation, and to treat like a "Brother" or a "Sister" to everything that came from the hands of the Creator.

I know we all had our own experiences and perceptions or something more to tell about our trip. I can only add that we enjoyed, we laughed and we shared like old friends.

I believe that the nine deacons who went in this Pilgrimage, will not forget the Eucharistic Celebrations presided by Father George in Saint Alfonso Church, Saint Peter Basilica, the Catacombs, as well as the ones celebrated in the chapel of the house where we stood. We all served as a diaconal family, dressed in our albs and stoles, we served sometimes as Altar Deacons or Deacons of the word and we had the privilege to say a short homily. We will also always remember that we did this Pilgrimage hand on hand with our wives, and as in our case with our daughter. We had the great opportunity to share with many new friends.

In these monumental places, Sacred sculptures and paintings conceived by men, some for the Glory of God, others to show to the future nations the greatness of the humanity, there is something present that emanates an inexplicable sentiment, that is perceived and is felt in the deepest core of our hearths. To me this means that God was present in the hearths, the minds and the hands of those who conceived them and made them real to honor humanity and through them to honor God.



*From left to right: Deacons, Pedro Rojas, Alfonso Castillo, Ricardo Villacorta, Roberto Vázquez, Raúl Molina, Arnaldo López, Eudoro Benalcázar, Manuel Chávez, Doroteo González in Saint Peter's Basilica*

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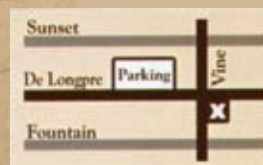


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**Fr. George J. Bobowski**

## What is Divine Mercy for me?

When I meditate on Divine Mercy, when I try to understand the sense of Jesus' Merciful actions, all the time I have in my mind two important Bible passages.

In the book of Isaiah God said to us:

"Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.

See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name (Is 49, 15-16) Even if our mother forgets us, abandon us, our names are written on the hand of God, He will never forget us.

The second important passage is the Gospel history about a woman who was not only accused of committing adultery but who was caught in the very act – making the case simple to prosecute. The scribes and Pharisees brought her to Jesus. The woman is clearly guilty of an offense that is punishable by death by stoning as prescribed by law.

Jesus must uphold the law; however he is surrounded by a crowd who has heard him speak with power and authority about the love, mercy, and forgiveness of the heavenly Father. What is he to do? What is he to say? If he endorses the Law he loses credibility with the crowds. If he refutes the Law he will be publicly shamed by the scribes and Pharisees...., Jesus **bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. They continued asking him. He straightened up and said to them; Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her... Silence... again he bent down and wrote on the ground.**

Jesus who is writing something on the sand. What is He writing? Jesus is writing our sins on the sand. When the wind comes, it will erase everything. This is Divine Mercy. Our names written on the hand of God, our sins written on the sand.

Today, we have to remember, that the world, more than anything, needs mercy — mercy from one another and mercy from God.

**"God redeeming us! This is mercy.  
Sanctifying us! This is mercy.  
Because God so love the world that He gave  
His only begotten Son to the world! This is  
total mercy. Total gift! Total love!"**

This message goes to the heart of the Gospel. I'm convinced of the reality that this is the message for our times, as John Paul said. The message of Divine Mercy is to prepare the world for the second coming of the Lord.

## Que Significa la Divina Misericordia para Mi?

Cuando medito acerca de la Misericordia Divina, cuando trato de entender el sentido de las acciones de Jesús, siempre mantengo en mente dos pasajes de la Biblia importantes. En el libro de Isaías Dios nos dice:

"¿Acaso una madre olvida o deja de amar a su propio hijo? Pues aunque ella lo olvide, yo no te olvidaré. Yo te llevo grabado en mis manos (Is. 49: 15-16).

Incluso si nuestra madre nos olvida, nos abandona, nuestros nombres están escritos en la palma de la mano de Dios, El nunca nos olvidará.

El segundo pasaje importante es la historia del Evangelio acerca de la mujer que no solo ha sido acusada de cometer adulterio sino que ha sido encontrada cometiendo el acto – haciendo que el caso sea simple de condenar. Los Escribas y los Fariseos la trajeron ante Jesús. La mujer es claramente culpable de una ofensa que es castigada con la muerte a pedrazos como lo mandaba la ley.

Jesús debe seguir la ley; sin embargo El está rodeado por una multitud que le ha escuchado hablar con poder y autoridad acerca del amor, la misericordia, y el perdón de nuestro Padre Celestial. ¿Qué debe hacer?, ¿Qué debe decir? Si soporta la ley pierde su credibilidad con las multitudes. Si refuta la ley El sería abochornado por los Escribas y los Fariseos...., **Jesús se inclina al suelo y empieza a escribir en el piso con su dedo. Ellos continúan preguntándole. El se para y les dice; deja que el que está entre ustedes sin ningún pecado que le tire la primera piedra... silencio... De nuevo se inclina al suelo y escribe en el piso.**

Jesús quien está escribiendo algo en la arena. ¿Qué escribe? Jesús está escribiendo nuestros pecados en la arena. Cuando viene el viento lo

borra todo... Esto es misericordia Divina... Nuestros nombres escritos en la palma de la mano de Dios, nuestros pecados escritos en la arena.

Hoy, cuando miremos a Jesús yendo a la casa de su Padre debemos recordar, que el mundo, mas que nada, necesita la Misericordia – Misericordia de unos a los otros y la Misericordia de Dios.

**"Dios Redimiéndonos – Eso es Misericordia.  
Dios Santificándonos – Eso es Misericordia.  
¿Por qué Dios amó tanto al mundo  
que dio al mundo su único Hijo Amado?...  
Éso es completa Misericordia.  
Completo regalo, Completo amor!"**

Este mensaje es el centro del Evangelio. Estoy convencido de la realidad de que éste es el mensaje para nuestros tiempos, como dijo Juan Pablo. El mensaje de la Divina Misericordia es para preparar al mundo para la segunda venida de nuestro Señor.



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# CONTEMPLATING JESUS

*The Gospel doesn't lie in the proclaiming that the sinners should become good, but, that God is good for the sinners"*  
(Fr. Michael Sopocko)

This reflection sprang out of admiration for Jesus, who is mercy. We shall be happy if you also fall in love with Him, and if you make your heart a valley of trust, which He will be able to flood with rain of Mercy.



*He is the image of the invisible God*

(Col 1:15)

**I believe that You come out of this image for me  
You do not want to be enfolded  
in the frame of any sort of perfection whatsoever  
You do not want to be simply „a memento portrait” of God  
You simply come out to meet me today**



*He follows the lost one until He finds it (Lk 15:4)*

*„With My mercy, I pursue sinners along all their paths”*

(Diary 1728)

**You are coming  
always first in love  
You are hurrying to love barefoot like a slave  
asking for acceptance of the Gift of Love  
Now there is only a question of the other that is of my step**



*The Light shines on in darkness (Jn 1: 15)*

*„At that moment, a ray of light illumined my soul, and I understood”*  
(Diary 1318)

**Terrifying darkness  
increasing before eyes  
already wide open out of fear  
in this darkness**

**the colors of our life are blended  
blue-gray everyday routine divided by stripes  
of green hope, pink joy, orange smile  
only now can I see that the colors of my life  
are nothing compared with You Who are the light  
of the world  
I invite You: enter into my life let the flame of mercy  
burn in me**



*He looked at him with love*

(Mk 10:21)

*„My gaze from this image is like My gaze from the cross”* (Diary 326)

**You search for me with your glance in a gaze full of love  
You look patiently, gently, jealousy, not seeking Yourself  
not getting angry  
not remembering last wrongs**

**You bear all things, believe all things  
continually put Your hope in me  
You look at me with love**



*Peace be with you (Jn 20:19)*

*„United with My right hand you will accomplish everything”*

(Diary 1374)

**You speak with gestures  
I don't have to reach up to a particular level, gain Your appreciation, delight You  
You approve of me such as I am  
You bless me constantly and constantly forgive me**



*Streams of live water will flow from His inside (Jn 7:38)*

*„For you I allowed myself to be nailed to the cross; for you I let my Sacred Heart be pierced with a lance, thus opening wide the source of mercy for you”* (Diary 1485)

**You reveal yourself to me  
You invite into the very midst**

**of love, here is my place  
You prepared this place for me and nobody can occupy it, You wrote me on Your hands  
I engraved myself with a wound in Your side  
You suffered from the love to me that is why I am so sure about it.  
I am anxious to lean against it. Hug me, God**



*Covered with light like an overcoat (Ps 104)*

*„Let My mercy act in you; let the rays of grace enter your soul: they bring with them light, warmth and life”* (Diary 1486)

**A tent of encounter  
beams of rays  
penetrating everything  
timidly entering locked hearts**

**through the hole streams of grace  
cheap gifts are not the thing  
You give Yourself, You are a gift  
I turn to You like a flower to the sun  
I want to draw life from Your rays and I beg You  
protect me with Your mercy like with a shield**

## JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU