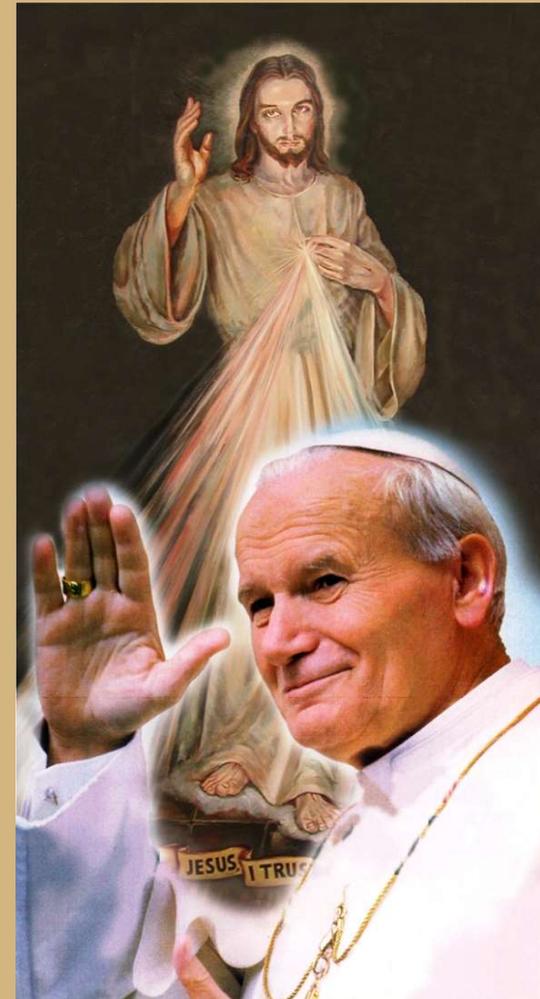


Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity. Everything that exists has come forth from the very depths of My most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. (Diary 699)



Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to My mercy. (Diary 300)

You will prepare the world for My final coming (Diary 429)



**Icon of Merciful Jesus  
Christ the King Roman Catholic Parish  
Los Angeles**



LIBRARY OF THE LAY INSTITUTE OF DIVINE MERCY  
Volume XII

Book Compiled by: Fr. George J. Bobowski, Ph.D.  
Lelis Cruzata

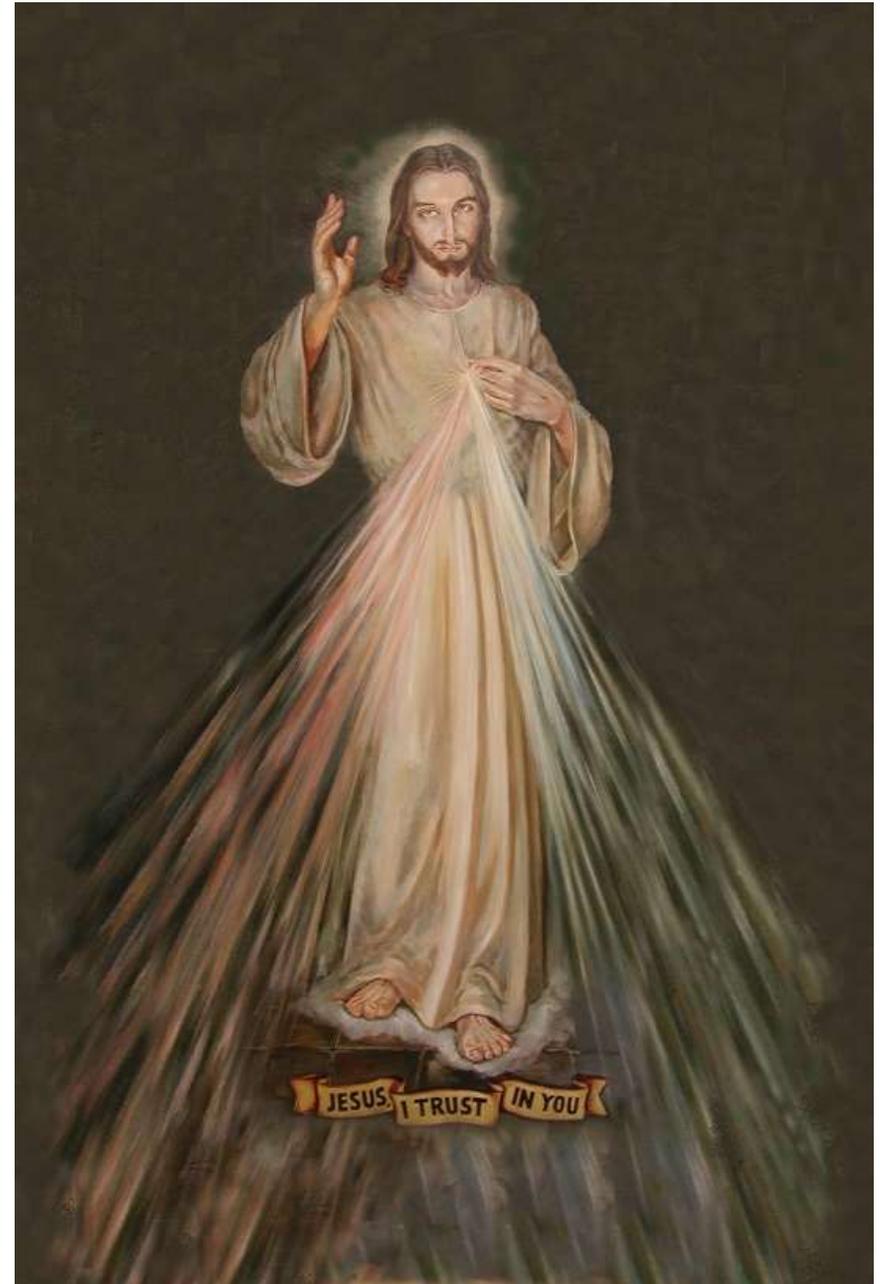
Proof reading: Lelis Cruzata

Computer typesetting:  
Moises Garcia  
Benny Wantah

The Lay Institute of Divine Mercy,  
Los Angeles, California  
Tel. 323/393-4144

e-mail: [faustinum@aol.com](mailto:faustinum@aol.com)  
Visit our websites at: [www.timeofmercy.com](http://www.timeofmercy.com)

This Booklet: Icon of Merciful Jesus  
is being published thanks to the generosity  
of Anita and Benny Wantah  
and is a gift from the Lay Institute of Divine Mercy





## Everything is the work of God's Mercy

Saint Sister Faustina, accidentally being a witness of a group of people talking aimlessly, she wrote in her Diary: "My Jesus, how little these people talk about You. They talk about everything but You, Jesus. And if they talk so little [about You], it is quite probable that they do not think about You at all. The whole world interests them; but about You, their Creator, there is silence.

Jesus, I am sad to see this great indifference and ingratitude of creatures. O my Jesus, I want to love You for them and to make atonement to You, by my love". (Diary 804)

To pray, because others do not pray, to pray for those who do not pray — it is especially pleasing to God. The same way it pleases God all efforts made to reach out with His word, there, where generally it is not designed to provide room for Him.

Since 17 years ago, in the worldwide known place of entertainment, capital of the movies, world-famous Hollywood, known as a vanity fair, the Devotion to the Divine Mercy is spreading. The teaching of John Paul II is an important element of the devotion in the parish community, especially among the devotees to God's Mercy. In the Encyclical Letter "Dives in Misericordia", which is very often studied by Parishioners, the Holy Father wrote: "The Church of our time, constantly pondering the eloquence of these inspired words, and applying them to the sufferings of the great human family, must become more particularly and profoundly conscious of the need to bear witness in her whole mission to God's mercy, following in the footsteps of the tradition of the Old and the New Covenant, and above all of Jesus Christ Himself and His Apostles. The Church must bear witness to the mercy of God revealed in Christ, in the whole of His mission as Messiah, professing it in the first place as a salvific truth of faith and as necessary for a life in harmony with faith, and then seeking to introduce it and to make it incarnate in the lives both of her faithful and as far as possible in the lives of all people of good will. Finally, the Church - professing mercy and remaining always faithful to it - has the right and the duty to call upon the mercy of God, imploring it 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." (DM VII)

The Pastor, Father Antonio Cacciapuoti, with the assistance of Fr. George J. Bobowski, Fr. John-Paul Gonzalez and his parishioners, took various measures to spread the Devotion to the Divine Mercy through annual congresses, monthly formation, celebration of the Feast and prayers. Guests from around the world: Poland, Philippines and Russia were invited as speakers. Archbishop Kondrusiewicz from Belarus, Bishop Bacani from the Philippines and others. Specially from Bialystok - City of Mercy, Poland, Archbishop Stanislaw Szymecki and Bishop Professor Edward Ozorowski were present. Bishop Ozorowski had a

series of homilies and lectures, answered questions asked by parishioners. The answers were published by Oficyna Wydawnicza "Wybor" in a separate book "Dialogues on Divine Mercy" in the series of Library of Mercy. The Library of Mercy was initiated under the supervision of His Excellency Archbishop Edward Ozorowski, Reverend Monsignor Zenon Jarzabek from the Vatican Congregation for the Clergy, Ewa Bobowska President of the Editorial House "Wybor" and Lelis Cruzata. Because of these, important publications related to the Divine Mercy was created. This book is a very practical reference to Divine Mercy, it is like a Catechism of the Divine Mercy. In the introduction Archbishop Ozorowski, explained the nature of the whole project: "This book was created in response to questions received from the parish of Christ the King in Los Angeles, as well as questions asked in various occasions by people in Poland.





The questions are divided into three categories: God in His Mercy, Worship of Divine Mercy and Acts of Mercy. These three categories comprise the spectrum of knowledge of God's Mercy which is helpful in the finding and contemplation of God's closeness". Thanks to the Lay Institute of Divine Mercy this book was given to all Parishioner of Christ the King in English and Spanish languages.

This very new center dedicated to the Divine Mercy has made a considerable contribution to the spreading of devotion to the Divine Mercy — the Highest Attribute of God. The devotion to the Divine

Mercy occupies an important place in the ministry of the Priests serving at Christ the King Parish. Divine Mercy is a way of Life for the parishioners. I strongly believe that it was God's Will to bring the Devotion to His Mercy to Hollywood. Now is the Time of Mercy, Divine Mercy. This is the time to bring God's mercy to all, and I am very grateful to those who supported this idea from the beginning, to those who helped me share the time of Divine Mercy with the faithful in Los Angeles. First, I like to give thanks to Merciful Jesus who allowed us to be instruments of His mercy. My gratitude and thanks to all the Priests serving at Christ the King Parish in Los Angeles, who continuously spread the Divine Mercy in their community.

Thanks to the parishioners of Christ the King Roman Catholic Parish who embraced Divine Mercy in this specific place. Specially my thanks to the leaders of the Divine Mercy Ministry. Also, my gratitude goes to the "Faustinum" Members.

Although Sister Faustina lived in Poland, we found so many devoted people to the Divine Mercy here in Los Angeles. I believe that the shrine of Divine Mercy at Christ the King Parish, is not only a place of silence, prayers and contemplation of the Divine Mercy – the most important truth of our faith, in the "Noisy" Hollywood, but the steps to heaven, where we will always venerate God in His Mercy.

In 2019 Father Juan Ochoa become Administrator of Christ the King Parish. From the beginning of his ministry, Father Juan embraced the Devotion to Divine Mercy and committed himself to have declared Christ the King Church as the Archdiocese Sanctuary of Divine Mercy.

Fr. George J. Bobowski



## Divine Mercy Image in Christ the King Church

The Shrine of Divine Mercy has its origin in the image of the Divine Mercy, which was enthroned in a chapel within the Church of Christ the King on September 13, 2003. Since its installation, the image has attracted parishioners and members of the wider community who not only come to seek divine assistance but who also are reminded that they themselves are called to be instruments of mercy to others. The veneration of this specific sacred image is one of the elements of the authentic forms of devotion to Our Lord, the Divine Mercy Incarnate, revealed to Saint Faustina Kowalska on February 22, 1931

In 2003, three years after the canonization of Sister Faustina, the Image of the Merciful Jesus came from Poland to the local parish of Christ the King and is venerated in a particular section of the church, which also includes the paintings of Saint Faustina and Blessed Father Michael Sopocko. The Image was blessed in Rome by Holy Father John Paul II. The Pope, himself a great devotee to Merciful Jesus, upon the request of Father Zenon Jarzabek and Father George J. Bobowski, blessed and signed the Image on Aril 30, 2003 during an audience in the Vatican. This 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. Looking carefully at this Image, you will see his signature. Today, the Image of Merciful Jesus is the only one Icon in the United States signed by Saint John Paul II. This makes this Icon a relic.

The Image of Merciful Jesus, Saint Faustina and Blessed Michael Sopocko were painted by Dymitr Grozdeu. He is a well-known Artist who paints religious images. He is also a graphic artist, and sculpture. His Divine Mercy Paintings had traveled as far as the Philippines and Brazil. He is the author of many other religious paintings.

The modest nun has heard the words repeated today in uncountable languages: "Tell to the world about my mercy" (Diary 699). Thanks to devotees to God's Mercy, and especially Father Antonio Cacciapuoti and



Father George J. Bobowski, the echo of these words of Jesus became much louder even in the world's movie capital – Hollywood.

For many years, the devotion to Divine Mercy has encountered serious difficulties in the Church and only the commitment of the contemporary Bishop of Krakow Cardinal Karol Wojtyła made possible for these

obstacles to disappear. From the beginning the mysticism had been very close to Saint John Paul II, whom as early as in his youth has been interested in the work of Saint 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*", written in Latin Language.



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 II's Petrine Ministry. 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 Saint Faustina's Diary appear to be an special Gospel of God's Mercy written from the 20th Century's 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 devotees of the 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 Parish of Christ the King led spiritually by their pastor Father Antonio Cacciapuoti and Father George J. Bobowski prepared themselves for the enthronement of the Image in a separate chapel with prayers and deep reflection during special days of retreat conducted by 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?" Also, he blessed a smaller image of the Merciful Christ, which soon after begun its peregrination through the households of the families of the parish which continues until now. As of today, approximately one thousand families were blessed to have the Icon in their homes for one week. The main celebration took place one week later, on September 13 and 14; presided by Archbishop Stanislaw Szymeki from Bialystok, Poland. On the first day's conference he taught about the "Divine Mercy according to the teachings of John Paul II" and celebrated Holy Mass. The following day, during the solemnly concelerated Holy Mass, Archbishop Szymeki blessed the Chapel of Divine Mercy in Christ the King Church. This is where the Image of the Merciful Christ found its place. Jesus is really present; miracles had happened and continue to happen touching people's lives.



On September 14, the day the Chapel was blessed coincides with the Solemnity of the Elevation of the Cross, the worshippers of God's Mercy remember this day as the day when Christ dictated to Saint Faustina the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy.

On April 11, 2010, during the Divine Mercy Sunday, after 7 years, since the Chapel's initial blessing, and thanks to the generosity of the Chen Family, the altar in the Chapel of Merciful Christ, built by Mr. William Gonzalez, has been completed and solemnly blessed by Father Antonio Cacciapuoti, Father Charles Chaffman, Father George J. Bobowski and Father

John-Paul Gonzalez with the assistance of Deacon Ricardo Villacorta.  
Lelis Cruzata



## DIVINE MERCY MINISTRY IN CHRIST THE KING PARISH

The fact that God is merciful should not surprise us. The Holy Bible has over 400 direct references to the Mercy of God and there are many more indirect references. Fifty-five of the Psalms praise God's Mercy. Belief in a Merciful God became one of the characteristics of the Jewish religion. **We could call the Holy Bible the DIARY OF GOD'S MERCY toward mankind.**

The most comprehensive statement by the Magisterium on the meaning of Divine Mercy can be found in Pope John Paul II's Encyclical Letter "Dives in Misericordia" (Rich in Mercy, 1981). In that Encyclical, the Holy Father made two very important statements about mercy. First, he wrote, "Mercy is love's second name." Secondly, he taught that mercy is "the greatest attribute of God."

### Forms of the Devotion to Divine Mercy

The *Diary* of Saint Faustina contains several beautiful passages which reveal the greatness and depth of the mystery of the mercy of God as well as prayer for various situations arising out of different needs of both body and soul. Yet, a special role in the Apostolic Movement of the Divine Mercy is played by those forms of the cult to which the Lord Jesus had attached His promises addressed to everybody, and not just to Sister Faustina. Having accepted this criterion, after a detailed theological analysis of the Diary, the chief theologian in Sister Faustina's beatification process, Rev. Prof. Ignacy Różycki, had distinguished five forms of the devotion to the Divine Mercy, these are:

- 1- The Image of the Merciful Jesus
- 2- The Feast of the Divine Mercy
- 3- The Chaplet to the Divine Mercy
- 4- The Hour of Mercy
- 5- Spreading the Divine Mercy Devotion

The Divine Mercy Ministry at Christ the King was instituted on September 13, 2003 with the participation of many volunteers having as the coordinator Ms. Lelis Cruzata. The main goal of the Ministry is to work with the Parish to spread the devotion and to teach about the devotion to the Divine Mercy. Our vision is that the Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Christ the King Church in Hollywood becomes one of the regular places to visit for all the people who come to Hollywood. Our Parish practices all the forms of the Devotion to the Divine Mercy.

## 1- THE IMAGE OF THE MERCIFUL JESUS

Jesus said to Saint Faustina: *"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). "By means of this Image I shall be granting many graces to souls; so, let every soul have access to it." (Diary 570)*



### → THE DIVINE MERCY PILGRIM IMAGE AT CHRIST THE KING "FAMILIES TAKE THE IMAGE HOME FOR ONE WEEK"

10:30 A.M. MASS  
12:30 P.M. MASS

## 2- THE FEAST OF THE DIVINE MERCY

Jesus said: *"I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the Fount of My Mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain Complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day all the divine floodgates through which graces flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet." (Diary 699)*



The Feast of Divine Mercy, celebrated on the Octave of Easter (**The Second Sunday of Easter**), is a relatively new addition to the Roman Catholic Liturgical Calendar. Celebrating the Divine Mercy of Jesus Christ, as revealed by Christ Himself to Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska and was extended to the entire Catholic Church by Pope John Paul II on April 30, 2000, the day that he canonized Saint Faustina.

**A plenary indulgence** (the forgiveness of all temporal punishment resulting from sins that have already been confessed) is granted on the

Feast of Divine Mercy to all the faithful who go to Confession, receive Holy Communion, pray for the intentions of the Holy Father, "in any church or chapel, in a spirit that is completely detached from the affection for a sin, even a venial sin, take part in the prayers and devotions held in honor of Divine Mercy, or who, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed or reserved in the tabernacle, recite the Our Father and the Creed, adding a devout prayer to the merciful Lord Jesus (e.g. 'Merciful Jesus, I trust in you!')."

**A partial indulgence** (the remission of some temporal punishment from sin) is granted to the faithful "who, at least with a contrite heart, pray to the merciful Lord Jesus a legitimately approved invocation."

### → THE FEAST OF THE DIVINE MERCY at Christ the King

10:30 AM - Solemn Mass  
Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament  
Divine Mercy Chaplet  
Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament



2:30 PM - Gather to celebrate Divine Mercy Feast

### 3:00 PM - The Great Hour of Mercy

- Chaplet of Divine Mercy
- Reflection - "Divine Mercy in My Soul"
- Stations of the Cross with the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament
- Veneration of the Relics of St. Faustina, Saint John Paul II the Great and Blessed Michael Sopoćko



*At Christ the King Church in preparation for the DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY we start the Divine Mercy Novena on Good Friday.*

## 3- THE CHAPLET TO THE DIVINE MERCY

Jesus Said to Saint Faustina: *"My Daughter, encourage souls to say the chaplet. It pleases Me to grant everything they ask of Me by saying the chaplet" (Diary 1541) ... "Through the chaplet you will obtain everything, if what you ask for is compatible with My will" (Diary 1731)... "Even if there were a sinner most hardened, if he were to recite this chaplet ONLY ONCE, he would receive grace from My infinite mercy..." (Diary 687)*

### → CHRIST THE KING CHAPLET PRAYER TIMES:

- Daily at 7:10 AM, before the 7:30 A.M Mass.
- Every Tuesday during the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, 7:00 to 9:00 PM. One Heart and Mind in Christ Community (OHOM)
- At the Mass for the School Children (Sing One Decade)
- First Fridays Divine Mercy Devotion

#### 4- THE HOUR OF MERCY: prayed daily individually

**“O blood and Water, which gushed forth from the hearth of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You.”**  
(Diary 187)

Jesus said to Saint Faustina: **“I remind you, My daughter, that as often as you hear the clock strike the third hour, immerse yourself completely in My mercy, adoring and glorifying it; In this hour you can obtain everything for yourself and for others for the asking; it was the hour of grace for the whole world – mercy triumphed over justice”** (Diary 1571)



#### 5- SPREADING THE DIVINE MERCY DEVOTION

Jesus said: **“Souls who spread the honor of My mercy I shield through their entire lives as a tender mother her infant, and at the hour of death I will not be a Judge for them, but the Merciful Savior”** (Diary 1075)

At Christ the King we have the opportunity to learn more about the Divine Mercy Devotion by joining and participating in the following:

##### →A. DIVINE MERCY MINISTRY MONTHLY MEETINGS

Our Ministry meets regularly every Second Saturday of the Month from 5:00 to 6:00 PM in the Library. To Contact the Divine Mercy Ministry, please call the Parish office at (323) 465-7605 or Lelis Cruzata at (323) 449-9014



##### →B. DIVINE MERCY MONTHLY FORMATION

*This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world. In the mercy of God, the world will find peace and mankind will find happiness! I entrust this task to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, [...] and to all the votaries of Divine Mercy. **May you be witnesses to mercy!*** (Saint John Paul II)

The main emphasis in the Apostolate of Divine Mercy activity is placed on formation, which aims at introducing Faustinum members into the spirituality and apostolic mission of Saint Faustina in order to prepare the apostles of Divine Mercy to lead independent interior lives and properly understood apostolic work. The basic formation program lasts 4 years and consists of 3 cycles:

- The biblical cycle,
- The interior life,
- And the spirituality and mission of Saint Faustina, Blessed Michael Sopocko, Saint John Paul II. Besides the monthly conferences and lectures, there is also a Practice exercise relating to the interior life.

We invite all to join us at the Divine Mercy formation sessions held at Christ the King Roman Catholic Parish every second Saturday of the month to learn more about the Divine Mercy Spirituality. Divine Mercy is the core of our faith. Devotion to Divine Mercy is a way of Life.

To register for the formation please call:  
The Lay Institute of Divine Mercy  
Tel: 323/449-9014 - Ms. Lelis Cruzata, Coordinator  
Website: [www.timeofmercy.com](http://www.timeofmercy.com) E-mail: [faustinum@aol.com](mailto:faustinum@aol.com)



##### →C. DIVINE MERCY RETREAT

The first Divine Mercy Retreat took place in Christ the King Parish in the Advent Season of 2006. Father Simon Stefanowicz, OSPPE was our Master of Retreat. In the first Conference he preached: “It is a real pleasure and an honor for me to be with you today. These special days of prayer and reflection in the life of our Parish Community which provides us with an opportunity for spiritual enrichment. [...] While it is not possible to exhaust — or even to touch upon — every aspect of the richness of the Divine Mercy devotion, I hope that my series of reflections will help you to understand better as well as to appreciate more and hopefully

implement in your lives the very practical, attainable, and powerful spiritual richness of the Divine Mercy devotion”. The Divine Mercy Ministry sponsored and organized annual Lenten retreat under the supervision of the pastor.

→D. DIVINE MERCY CONGRESS

**History of Southern California Divine Mercy Congress at Christ the King Parish in Los Angeles**



In 2006, in memory of the One Hundred Anniversary of Saint Faustina Kowalska's birthday, in commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the Encyclical Letter "Dives in Misericordia," and the Death Anniversary of Blessed John Paul II – Father Antonio Cacciapuoti, Father George J. Bobowski and Father John-Paul Gonzalez, convoked the first Southern California Congress of Divine Mercy at

Christ the King Parish. The first to respond to the call were the parishioners of Christ the King, supported by the Lay Institute of Divine Mercy and One Heart One Mind in Christ Community with Rosalind Diego.



Under the auspices of The Lay Institute of Divine Mercy, bishops from all over the world have presided over the annual Congress these included: Most Rev. Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, Archbishop of Minsk-Mahilyow, Belarus; Most Rev. Edward Ozorowski, Archbishop of Bialystok, Poland; and Most. Rev. Edward Clark, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles. Other bishops who have taken part in the annual congress are Most Rev. Oscar Solis, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles and Most Rev. Teodoro Bacani from the Philippines.

The Annual Congress at Christ the King gathers hundreds of faithful Catholics

throughout the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. From the beginning our congresses are bilingual: English and Spanish. Our inspiration were the words of Blessed John Paul II: "To entrust the world to Divine Mercy... so that the message of God's Merciful love proclaimed through Saint Faustina, may be made known to all the people of the earth... May the binding promise of the Lord Jesus be fulfilled: from here must go forth, the spark which will prepare the world for His final coming" (Homily of Pope John Paul II, Krakow, 2002).



**2006 First Divine Mercy Congress - "Divine Mercy, Transform Us to Be Your Vessel of Hope" (April 28 – 29 – 30, 2006)**

Three-Days Congress took place on April 28- April 30, 2006 at Christ the King Parish. Most Reverend Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, Archbishop Metropolitan of Moscow presided over our Congress. The 2006 Southern

California Divine Mercy Congress was a success! Our heartfelt thanks go to Merciful Jesus. He is the Lord.

**2007 Second Divine Mercy Congress - "Divine Mercy: The answer to a troubled World" - (September 14-15-16,2007)**

The 2007 Southern California Divine Mercy Congress was a special call to be a Witness of Divine Mercy. Most Reverend Edward Ozorowski Archbishop Metropolitan of Bialystok, Poland presided over our Congress. Archbishop Ozorowski is a well-known Theologian, Professor and Writer. He is the author of 1500 books and publications.

**2008 Third Divine Mercy Congress - "Christ, the King of Mercy"**

**(November 21- 22 - 23, 2008)**



Saint Faustina wrote in her Diary: "He desires everyone to know this before He comes again as Judge. He wants souls to come to know Him first as King of Mercy" (Diary 378). His Excellency Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, Archbishop of Minsk and Mahilyow, Belarus, presided over the Congress. Among our speakers where His Excellency

Bishop Teodoro C. Bacani, Jr. from Philippines, Ms. Nancy Reeves, Sister Caterina Esselen, OLM, Fr. John-Paul Gonzalez, Deacon Eudoro Benalcazar, Ms. Ana Maria G. Guzman, Sister M. Teresa de la Fuente, OLM, Fr. George J. Bobowski and others.

**2009 Fourth Divine Mercy Congress "Divine Mercy - The Source of hope for the Modern Family" - (November 20 - 21 - 22, 2009)**

The Congress was organized by Christ the King Roman Catholic Parish under the supervision of the Pastor Father Antonio Cacciapuoti and the Lay Institute of Divine Mercy with Fr. George J. Bobowski.

The Congress theme was focused on the Modern Family. His Excellency Bishop Edward W. Clark, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles opened the Congress. Among our speakers were: His Excellency Bishop Teodoro C. Bacani, Jr., D.D. from the Philippines, Deacon Ricardo Villacorta, Dr. Nancy Reeves, the Sisters from the Congregation of Sisters of Merciful Jesus, Fr. John-Paul Gonzalez, Fr. George J. Bobowski and other speakers. The Conferences during the Congress were in two languages English and Spanish. The Holly Masses and prayer services were in Bilingual.



**2010 Fifth Divine Mercy Congress**  
**“Is there a need to talk about God’s Mercy these days?” (November 19 - 20 - 21, 2010)**

At a time when there is so much anxiety and confusion over economic affairs and global conflict, only in Divine Mercy will the world find refuge and the light of hope. We Christians believe that our reason and our hope for existing are to be found only in the heart of God’s Mercy. Saint Faustina, wrote in her Diary: “In Your mercy, O Lord, You have given us everlasting life. You admit us to Your everlasting happiness and grant us to share in Your interior life. And You do this solely out of Your mercy” (Diary 1743)

Our Speakers: Most Reverend Oscar A. Solis, D.D., Father Rodel G. Balagtas, Sister Paula Vandegaer, SSS, LCSW, Father Leo Ortega, Father John-Paul Gonzalez, Deacon Salvador Ramirez, Father George J. Bobowski, Father Jose Cruz Mendez Garcia, CORC and Father John Meyer MS, STD.



**2011 Sixth Divine Mercy Congress -**  
**“Towards a new creativity of mercy. The message of merciful love needs to resound forcefully anew”- November 19 - 20, 2011)**

Jesus said to saint Faustina: “Souls who spread the honor of My mercy I shield through their entire lives as a tender mother her infant, and at the hour of death I will not be a Judge for them, but the Merciful Savior. At that last hour, a soul has nothing with which to defend itself except My mercy. Happy is the soul that

during its lifetime immersed itself in the Fountain of Mercy, because justice will have no hold on it”. (Diary 1075) Among our speakers were: Bishop Oscar A. Solis, D.D., V.G., Monsignor Charles Chaffman, S.T.L., J.C.D., Fr. Leo Ortega, Fr. John-Paul Gonzalez, Fr. George J. Bobowski, Fr. Maurice Harrigan, Dn. Salvador Ramirez, Dn. Felix Rac and Fr. Michael Sears.

**2012 Seventh Divine Mercy Congress - “Mercy as the Expression of Mature Faith. The New Evangelization – Building the Civilization of Faith and Mercy” – (November 24 - 25, 2012)**



It is time once again to celebrate our Faith and Trust in God’s Mercy, when we celebrate THE YEAR OF FAITH Like the apostles after Christ’s Ascension, the Church must gather in the Upper Room “together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus” (Acts 1:14), in order to pray for the Spirit and to gain strength and courage to

carry out the missionary mandate. We too, like the apostles, need to be transformed and guided by the Spirit.

Our Speakers: Msgr. Loreto (Mac) Gonzalez, Fr. Ben Vivian Lima, Bishop, Oscar Solis, Fr. George J. Bobowski, Fr. John-Paul Gonzalez, Sister Carmen Maldonado, S.S.C. and Msgr. Paul Montoya

**2013 Eighth Divine Mercy Congress - “We Have Found Mercy” (September 14 - 15, 2013)**



We celebrated The Tenth Anniversary of the Dedication of the Divine Mercy Sanctuary in Christ the King Church. Pope Francis said: Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed. At all times and in all places blessed are those who, through the Word of God proclaimed in the Church and witnessed by Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the incarnate

love of God, Mercy Incarnate. And that goes for all of us. His Excellency Bishop Teodoro C. Bacani, Jr., D.D. presided over the Congress. Bishop Teodoro Bacani is the Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Novaliches, Quezon City, Philippines. He was a professor of Sacramental Theology and Ecclesiology at the University of Saint Tomas and Loyola School of Theology in Manila.

**2014 Ninth Divine Mercy Congress - "The Priest, Minister of Divine Mercy in the Church of Mercy. We Have Found Mercy"  
(September 13 – 14, 2014)**



His Holiness Pope Francis to Priests on May 11, 2014, said: "Never grow tired of being merciful. Please! You have the capacity to forgive, as did the Lord, who did not come to condemn, but to forgive! Have mercy, a lot." "If you come to have concerns about being too much of a 'forgiver,' think of that saintly priest ... who went before the tabernacle and said,

'Lord, forgive me if I have forgiven too much. But you have given me the worst example. [...] The conclusion and consequence of God's covenant of mercy and our partnership in it is that, for priests, devotion to The Divine Mercy is not an option. Devotion to The Divine Mercy is of the very nature of the priesthood. "Among our speakers were Fr. Samuel W. Ward, Fr. Luke J. Mata, Father Maksym Podhajski, Msgr. Charles J. Chaffman, Msgr Lorenzo Miranda, Fr. Carlos Blanco, Mr. Louis Velasquez, Dr. Ross Porter, Fr. Nivardo Quezada, Fr. John-Paul Gonzalez, Msgr. Paul M. Montoya, Fr. George J. Bobowski.



**2015 Tenth Divine Mercy Congress  
"There Is No Limit to The Divine Mercy"  
(September 12 – 13, 2015)**

"The act of Jesus by which He raised Lazarus demonstrates the end to which the power of the Grace of God can arrive, and the end, therefore to which our conversion, our change can arrive. But listen well: there is no other limit to the divine mercy offered to all! There is no other limit to the divine mercy offered to all! Remember this phrase. And we can all say it together: "There is no other limit to the divine mercy offered to all!" The Lord is always ready to take away the tombstone of our sins, which

separate us from Him, the light of the living." (Pope Francis) Among our speakers were: Bishop Oscar Solis, Fr. Jack Stoeger, Fr. Luke Mata , Fr. Mariano de Blas, L.C , Msgr. Charles J. Chaffman , Msgr. Antonio Cacciapuoti, Sr. Alicia Hernandez, CVD, Sra. Guillermina Fabian, Deacon Carlos Ortega, Fr. John-Paul Gonzalez, Msgr. Paul M. Montoya, Fr. George J. Bobowski.



**2016 Eleventh Divine Mercy Congress - Jubilee of Mercy - "Merciful like the Father" - (September 10 - 11, 2016)**

"Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life... All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love." (Pope Francis, *"Misericordiae Vultus"*, April 11, 2015).

Christ the King Church has an established history of following the devotions to the Divine Mercy and because of this history, His Excellency Archbishop Jose H. Gomez designated and declared Christ the King Church as a church of Pilgrimage for the Year of Mercy, where the Door of Mercy was opened and the Jubilee Indulgence can be obtained. Our Speakers: Bishop Oscar Solis, Fr. Agustín De La Vega, L.C, Sra. Guillermina Fabián, Deacon Carlos Ortega, Fr. George J. Bobowski Fr. John-Paul Gonzalez, Fr. Luke Mata, Fr. Joseph Fox, OP and Mr. Robert Martinez. The Holly Masses and prayer services also were in Bilingual. 10:30 AM Holy Mass on Sunday – September 11, 2016 presided by His Excellency Bishop Edward Wm. Clark.



**2017 Twelfth Divine Mercy Congress - Days of Individual Consecration to Jesus Christ through Mary "Mary: God's Yes to Man"**

**(October 14 – 15, 2017)**

This Congress was entirely dedicated to Our Holy Mother and was the culmination of the 100th anniversary of the apparition in Fatima. For us these were the days of our consecration to Jesus through Mary. Crist the King Parish was consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Congress included conferences, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction, Reconciliation, Masses and Lunches.

Speakers: Monsignor Timothy O'Connell, Fr. Slawomir Szkredka, Fr. Jose Rueda, Fr. Luke Mata, Fr. Don Woznicki, Fr. Joseph Choi, Dn. Marco Antonio Garcia, Sra. Guillermina Fabian, Fr. Agustín de la Vega, L.C., Fr. Domenico Di Raimondo, M.Sp.S., Fr. George Bobowski and Fr. John-Paul Gonzalez.

The Mass on Saturday, October 14 at 5:30 p.m., with Bp. Edward Clark presiding. The Mass with consecration and dedication of the new chapel of Our Lady of Mercy was on Sunday, October 15, 2017 at 11:00 with Bishop Joseph M. Sartoris presiding. On this Occasion the Lay Institute of Divine Mercy prepared the Parish Payer Book “Totus Tuus”, which was given to all participants.



**2018 Thirteenth Divine Mercy Congress - “Hope for a World Trying to Hold on to its Humanity: God’s Mercy as Expressed through Saint John Paul II’s Theology of the Body”**

**(November 24 – 25, 2018)**

Our Special Guest Speaker was Bill Donaghy from the Theology of the Body Institute. Bill’s presentations were “riveting” and “life –changing.”

In October of 2000, he was chosen to represent the USA in a special tribute for the Jubilee of Missionaries in Rome. He was given a simple cross by St. John Paul II and called to “bring Jesus back to your country.” He holds an Associate’s degree in Visual Arts, a Bachelor’s in Philosophy and a Master’s in Systematic Theology. He currently is at Immaculata University outside Philadelphia, PA. Other Speakers: Fr. Donald Woznicki, Fr. George J. Bobowski.



**2019 Fourteen Divine Mercy Congress - “Man is the Way of the Church, and Christ is the Way of Man”**

**(November 23 - 24, 2019)**

Holy Father Francis said: “Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life... All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to

the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love.” (Pope Francis, “Misericordiae Vultus”). Among our speakers were: Father Juan Jose Ochoa, Administrator of Christ the King Parish, Father Agustín de la Vega, L.C, Father Luis Espinoza, Father Luke Mata, Monsignor Paul Montoya, Father Parker Sandoval, Father John-Paul Gonzalez, Father George J. Bobowski.

**2020 Fifteenth Divine Mercy Congress  
“Saint John Paul II the Great Apostle of Mercy”**

**The Centennial Anniversary of Saint John Paul II The Great’s Birth  
(April 18 – 19, 2020) – Congress was canceled because of COVID-19.  
Congress was transferred to Divine Mercy Sunday, 2021**

St. John Paul II taught the world that truly great faith and holiness dwell in “the normality of a person who lives in profound communion with Christ. Precisely because he allowed people to see he was a human being - whether skiing or praying, hiking or suffering - “every gesture of his, every word, every choice he made always had a much deeper value and left a mark”

(Pope Francis, *San Giovanni Paolo Magno, 2020* )





## Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy at Christ the King Church

### Our Lady of Mercy

Within the Church, Our Lady of Mercy has been venerated under this title for a long time; however, theological literature on this subject is scarce. Our Lady of Mercy is first and foremost the One who gave the Son of God, Mercy Incarnate, to the world and continuously does so, leading all believers to Him. Today's most complete justification for this title of Mary is given by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, where he writes that Mary is first of all the One who obtained God's mercy in an

exceptional way, when she was preserved from original sin and endowed with the fullness of grace, to become the Mother of the Son of God. She consented at the time of the Annunciation, and in Bethlehem she gave birth to the Son of God in human flesh and, throughout her life, participated in His revelation of the mystery of God's mercy until the sacrifice which she made at the foot of the cross. "Mary, then, is the one who has the deepest knowledge of the mystery of God's mercy. She knows its price; she knows how great it is" (DM 9).

She also proclaims God's merciful love from generation to generation since the day when she sang the Magnificat at the threshold of her cousin Elizabeth. Mary leads people to the sources of the Savior's mercy. The merciful love of God in the history of the Church and the world continues to manifest itself in Her and through Her. John Paul II writes that "this revelation is especially fruitful because in the Mother of God it is based upon the unique tact of her maternal heart, on her particular sensitivity, on her particular fitness to reach all those who most easily accept the merciful love of a mother" (DM 9).

Mary is also Mother of Mercy because by her intercession God's mercy comes into the world in the form of all graces. Her motherhood towards all people lasts without interruption. The Second Vatican Council emphasizes that "being assumed into heaven she has not laid aside this office of salvation but by her manifold intercession she continues to obtain for us the graces of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she takes care of the brethren of her Son who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home." (LG 62).

Mary is called the Mother of Mercy, Our Lady of Mercy, or Mother of Divine Mercy, and in each of these titles, as Pope John Paul II writes, there is a deep theological meaning. These titles in fact "speak of her principally, however, as the Mother of the Crucified and Risen One; as the One who, having obtained mercy in an exceptional way, in an equally exceptional way "merits" that mercy throughout her earthly life and, particularly, at the foot of the cross of her Son" (DM 9). She proclaims and implores it for the whole world.

The title 'Mother of Mercy' first appeared in the devotion to Mary, in the spirituality of the Church, and only afterwards in theology. The prayer "We fly to your patronage", known since the fourth century, in the original version began with the words "Beneath thy mercy we take refuge, O Mother of God". The anthem "Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy" has also enjoyed great popularity in the history of the church. The theology of Mary, the Mother of Mercy, has appeared not only in prayers but also in sermons. In the eleventh century St. Fulbert believed that Mary is the Mother of Mercy because she brought forth Christ, "the very Source of mercy, who washes away all faults of our lives." However, she exercises her mercy towards people by an extremely powerful intercession. St. Fulbert is the author of the phrase used up to this day, "Mater Misericordiae et pietatis", Mother of Mercy and Compassion, which according to St. Fulbert, refers to the interior predispositions of the Mother of God (*Mater Misericordia*) as well as the acts she performs; in the language of the time *pietas* meant 'deeds of mercy'.

Devotion to the mercy of Mary in its devotional and theological aspects was developed in the teaching of St. Anselm of Canterbury (+1109). He wrote no strictly theological treatise on mercy of Our Lady, but at that time prayers and sermons served as theological works, because they presented the mysteries of the faith as if directly, namely at the level of the practice of the faith. St. Anselm wrote three prayers that call on the mercy of Our Lady, these three corresponding to different stages of a human being striving after perfection. The content of these prayers indicates that the source of the mercy of Mary is Christ Himself. He "for mercy's sake became the Son of a Woman; she for mercy's sake became the Mother of God." Both of them exist "for the salvation of sinners." In the third prayer St. Anselm turns to Mary as a son to his Mother and to Jesus as a brother to his Brother, Jesus. St. Anselm says that the Mother of God is our Mother also. He closely connects Mary with Christ, Her mercy with the mercy of Her Son, and Her part in our salvation and sanctification as completely subordinate to Jesus.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux (+1153) contributed to the widespread consolidation in the Church of the devotion to Mary as the Mother of Mercy. He rested his teaching of Mary's mediation on the notion of mercy. St. Bernard preached that the Mother can plead everything of the Son and that Her heart is extremely sensitive to people's needs. St. Bernard wrote that "What we thus need is a mediator with the Mediator and no one is more useful to us than Mary."

In the history of devotion to the mercy of Mary in prayers, songs and sermons, there are threads which oppose the mercy of Our Lady to the righteousness of Christ and God the Father, and in the extreme form, which concede mercy only to Mary. Anselm of Lucca claimed that after the Ascension, Christ passed the whole heritage of mercy to his Mother and that He left to Himself justice. This view, through the writings attributed to St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, became common among theologians of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and continued in Mariology for a long time. Sometimes such views went so far as to deny Christ all mercy, which is totally contrary to the Scriptures because He came into the world to save what was lost.

The naming of Mary as the Mother of Mercy appeared quite late in the teaching of popes, only in the sixteenth century, initially in the context of titles of related or similar meaning. Pius VIII wrote that “She is the Mother, the Mother of pity and grace, the Mother of mercy, to whom we were entrusted by Christ dying on the cross, so that as He intercedes for us before the Father, so she may intercede for us with her Son.” His successors wrote about the Mother of Mercy in a similar way. It was not until Pope Leo XIII, who developed the teaching on the spiritual motherhood of Mary, that the situation changed. He considered her mercy as one of the manifestations of her motherhood to people. Pope Pius XII also associated Mary’s mercy with her motherhood of God and her participation in God’s mercy.

Chapter 9 of Saint John Paul II’s encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, entirely devoted to the Mother of Mercy, is particularly remarkable. Although this chapter is quite short, it is extremely rich in theological topics which justify giving this name to Our Lady. For Saint John Paul II states that on the one hand she obtained the mercy of God in a complete, particular and exceptional way, which she expresses in Her Magnificat, but she also “made possible with the sacrifice of her heart her own sharing in revealing God’s mercy. This sacrifice is intimately linked with the cross of her Son, at the foot of which she was to stand on Calvary” (DM 9). Mary, “through her hidden and at the same time incomparable sharing in the messianic mission of her Son, was called in a special way to bring close to people that love which He had come to reveal” (DM 9). She, being the mother of all people, also mediates with God to implore mercy for the world.

Therefore, in *Dives in Misericordia* John Paul II emphasizes the mercy of Mary implicit in the Redemption accomplished by Jesus, her Son. However, in the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (written thirteen years later), the pope gives new threads for the title of Our Lady of Mercy: God is being in our midst and the gift of the Holy Spirit obtained for us. Saint John Paul II writes that Mary is the Mother of Mercy because she gave Jesus—the Incarnate revelation of God’s mercy (VS 118) to the world. This mercy does not only consist in the liberation of man from sin, but also in God’s presence among us. Finally, “this mercy reaches its fullness in the gift of the Spirit” who makes

all things new: renews the face of the earth, which in practice means that the Holy Spirit enables man to do good and to do the will of God, and above all gives man the power to become, like Mary, “immaculate,” that is to say, the power to sin no more.



### Image of Our Lady of Mercy at Christ the King Church

The original of the holy image of Our Lady Mather of Mercy is housed in the chapel of the Dawn Gate of Vilnius, Lithuania. The painting is an unusual portrayal of Mary since she is depicted without the infant Jesus. Her head is gently leaning to her right, her eyes are half closed, her hands are crossed in devotion. This reminds us that she is a virgin, humble servant of the Lord, merciful mother and patron of the people. At the same time, her head is surrounded by sun rays. These are the symbols of her divine and majestic role as the Queen of Heaven.

On October 15, 2017 thanks to the Divine Mercy Ministry at Christ the King Parish and the Lay Institute of Divine Mercy under the supervision of Fr. Don Woznicki, the exact copy of the Icon of Our Lady of Mercy was enthroned in a separate chapel in Christ the King Church in Hollywood. Archbishop Jose H. Gomez, on November 26, 2017, solemnly blessed the chapel with the Image of our Lady of Mercy.

Fr. George J. Bobowski



## APOSTLES OF DIVINE MERCY

This spark needs to be lighted by the grace of God. This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world. In the mercy of God, the world will find peace and mankind will find happiness! I entrust this task to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to the Church in Kraków and Poland, and to all the votaries of Divine Mercy who will come here from Poland and from throughout the world. May you be witnesses to mercy! (Saint John Paul II, Krakow, August 17, 2002)



### SAINT FAUSTINA (HELENA KOWALSKA)

“And you, Faustina, a gift of God to our time, a gift from the land of Poland to the whole Church, obtain for us an awareness of the depth of divine mercy; help us to have a living experience of it and to bear witness to it among our brothers and sisters. May your message of light and hope spread throughout the world, spurring sinners to conversion, calming rivalries and hatred and opening individuals and nations to the practice of brotherhood. Today, fixing our gaze with you on the face of the risen Christ, let us make our own your prayer of trusting abandonment and say with firm

hope: Christ Jesus, I trust in you! Jezu, ufam tobie!” (Saint John Paul II, Homily, April 30, 2000)

Saint Faustina is “a gift from God for our times”, who reminded the biblical truth about merciful love of God for every human being and calls to proclaim it to the world through the testimony of life, deed, word and prayer.

She is an Apostle of Divine Mercy, Prophet of Our Times, Great Mystic, Mistress of Spiritual Life – these are the epithets usually appended to the name of Sister Faustina Kowalska of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. She is one of the Church’s most popular and widely known saints and the greatest mystics in the history of the Church.

Sister Faustina was born on August 25, 1905 in Głogowiec, Poland to Marianna and Stanisław Kowalski as the third of ten children. Two days later she was baptized with the name Helena in the parish church of Świnice Warckie. At the age of nine, she made her first Holy Communion. She attended elementary school for merely three years and then she went to work as a housekeeper in various well-to-do families in Aleksandrów and Łódź. From the age of seven, she had felt the calling for religious vocation, but her parents would not give her permission to enter the convent. Impelled by the vision of the Suffering Christ, in July 1924 she left for Warsaw to find a Congregation.

For another year she worked as a housekeeper to save some money for a modest monastic dowry. On August 01, 1925 she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Warsaw.

She lived in the Congregation for thirteen years, staying in many houses, the longest time she spent in Kraków, Płock and Vilnius; working as a cook, shop assistant in the bakery shop, gardener, and portress. She suffered from tuberculosis of the lungs and digestive system and that is why for over 8 months she stayed at the hospital in Kraków – Prądnik. Her sufferings caused by tuberculosis, she offered as a voluntary sacrifice for sinners and as an Apostle of Divine Mercy. She also experienced many extraordinary graces such as: apparitions, ecstasies, the gift of bilocation, hidden stigmata, reading into human souls, the mystical betrothal and nuptials.

Sister Faustina’s principal task was to pass on to the Church and the world the Message of Mercy, a recapitulation of the Biblical truth of God’s Merciful Love for every human being, and to call each one of us to entrust our lives to Him and to actively love our neighbor. Jesus not only revealed the depth of His Mercy to St. Faustina, but also gave her new forms of devotions: the image inscribed *Jesus, I trust in You*, the Feast of Divine Mercy, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and the Prayer in the Hour of His Death on the Cross, the Hour of Mercy. To each of these forms of devotions, as well as to the propagation of the message of Mercy, Jesus attached great promises, on condition that we care about the attitude of trust in God that is to fulfill His will and show mercy to our neighbors.

Sister Faustina died in Krakow on October 5, 1938, at the age of thirty-three. Out of her charism and mystical experience grew the Apostolic Movement of the Divine Mercy which continues her mission, proclaiming the message of Mercy to the world through the testimony of life, deed, words and prayer. On April 18, 1993, Saint John Paul II raised her to the glory of the altars and on April 30, 2000, numbered her among the saints of the Church. Her relics are in the Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Łagiewniki, Kraków.

Saint John Paul II wrote that in the age of totalitarianisms Sister Faustina became the ambassador of the message that the only power strong enough to counteract their evil is the truth of God’s Mercy. He called her *Diary* “a Gospel of Mercy written from a 20<sup>th</sup> - Century perspective”, which has helped people to survive the extremely painful experiences of these times. Pope Benedict XVI has said, “the message of Mercy as the Divine Power, as God putting a check on all the world’s evil, is indeed the chief message of our times”.

## Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul

The *Diary* is one of the gems of mystical literature. Saint Faustina Kowalska wrote it in Vilnius and Kraków in 1934-1938 as Jesus had commanded her to do so directly. Her confessors, Father Michael Sopoćko and Father Joseph Andrasz S.J. had also ordered her to write it and the superiors of the Congregation had given her their consent. The earliest notes that have remained were written in July 1934. It is known that Sister Faustina burnt the first ones because when Fr. Michael Sopoćko was not in Vilnius she yielded in to the persuasion of an alleged angel who was Satan. Later the spiritual director from Vilnius ordered her to reconstruct what had been destroyed. Therefore, the chronology in the present *Diary* is distorted, especially in the first notebook: the author intersperses current events and experiences with the description of those that happened before.

Sister Faustina wrote all the notes in secret when she was not carrying out her monastic duties. She also wrote them in the hospital, where she had more time and, at Fr. Michael Sopoćko's request, she underlined all Jesus' words with a pencil. "Although I am feeling weak and my nature is clamoring for rest, she admitted honestly, I feel the inspiration of grace telling me to take hold of myself and write, write for the comfort of souls, whom I love so much and with whom I will share all eternity. And I desire eternal life for them so ardently that that is why I use all my free moments, no matter how short, for writing in the way that Jesus wishes of me" (*Diary* 1471). The last notes were taken in June 1938, so Sister Faustina ceased writing the *Diary* three months before her death. She wrote six notebooks altogether, which were published along with a small notebook entitled: "My preparation for Holy Communion".

In the *Diary* Sister Faustina described her spiritual life, which was especially deep, reaching the summit of union with God in the mystical betrothal. She depicted how deeply she came to know the mystery of the Divine Mercy and how she contemplated it in her daily life. She also wrote about the struggle against the weaknesses of human nature and difficulties pertaining to the prophetic mission. Above all, the *Diary* contains the message of God's merciful love for man, which Sister Faustina was to pass on to the Church and the world.

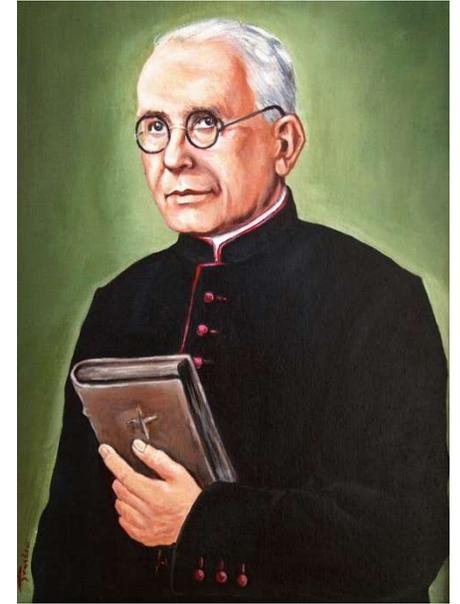


## BLESSED FATHER MICHAEL SOPOĆKO

In June 1933, Fr. Michael Sopoćko met Sister Faustina Kowalska for the first time. It was in Vilnius, where he was the regular confessor of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. "At the very beginning she told me that she knew me because of a vision. She also told me that I was to be her spiritual director, who was to fulfil some of God's plans which were to be conveyed by her" – he recalled years later. Father Sopoćko was Sister Faustina's confessor and spiritual director till March 21, 1936, that is, till she left Vilnius. Later he corresponded with her many times and, in this way, he gave her advice and directions for her spiritual life and the fulfilment of the mission, while he was in Cracow he visited her in the convent or in the hospital in Prądnik. At his request, Sister Faustina started to write the *Diary*.

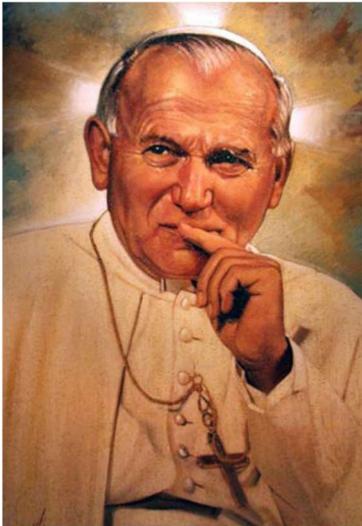
He was the person who took care of painting the first image of the Merciful Jesus in Vilnius in 1934 and of the public veneration, which took place during the celebrations of the Jubilee Year of the Redemption on April 26 -28, 1935 in Ostra Brama (the "Dawn Gate"). Still before World War II he made efforts to get the Church authorities to institute the Feast of Divine Mercy. He wrote a number of works on the truth of the Divine Mercy. Until the end of his life he strove for the institution of the feast and approval of the Divine Mercy Devotion.

Father Michael Sopoćko was born in Juszewszczyzna, in Oszmiański district, on November 01, 1888. In 1910 he entered the Seminary in Vilnius. In 1914 he was ordained and for four years he worked as a curate in Taborzski. From 1919 to 1924 he was a chaplain in the army in Warsaw and, at the same time, he did specialty studies at the University of Warsaw's Faculty of Theology and at the Institute of Education. In 1924 he was moved to Vilnius, where, until 1932 he served as a chaplain in the army. Since 1928 he worked as an Assistant Professor in Pastoral Theology at the Faculty of Theology of Stefan Batory University. From 1927 to 1932 he served as a spiritual director in the Vilnius Seminary. In 1947 he came to Białystok and from that time till 1962 he gave lectures in the Seminary.



It is astonishing how diverse his ministry was: he was a parish priest, a religious education teacher, he organized educational courses, served as a teacher, a lecturer in the University and the Seminary, a spiritual director, a confessor of seminarians, priests, and nuns. He was also a chaplain in the army, an activist who promoted sobriety and a builder of churches.

He died in Białystok on February 15, 1975. In 1987 the diocesan process towards the beatification of Fr. Sopoćko was inaugurated and in 1993 the acts of the case were handed over to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. In 2004 Saint John Paul II promulgated a decree on the heroic virtues of the Servant of God and a decree regarding a miracle attributed to his intercession. He was beatified in Białystok on September 28, 2008 and his relics repose in the Divine Mercy church in Białystok, which has been raised to the rank of a diocesan sanctuary.



## SAINT JOHN PAUL II

Karol Józef Wojtyła, elected Pope on October 16, 1978, was born in Wadowice, Poland, on May 18, 1920. He was the third of three children born to Karol Wojtyła and Emilia Kaczorowska, who died in 1929. His elder brother Edmund, a physician, died in 1932, and his father, Karol, a non-commissioned officer in the army, died in 1941. He was nine years old when he received his first communion and eighteen when he received the Sacrament of Confirmation. After completing high school in Wadowice, he enrolled in the Jagellonian University of Krakow in 1938.

When the occupying Nazi forces closed the University in 1939, Karol worked (1940-1944) in a quarry and then in the Solvay chemical factory to earn a living and to avoid deportation to Germany.

Feeling called to the priesthood, he began his studies in 1942 in the clandestine Major Seminary of Krakow, directed by Archbishop Adam Stefan Sapieha. During that time, he was one of the organizers of the “Rhapsodic Theatre”, which was also clandestine.

After the war, Karol continued his studies in the major seminary, newly reopened, and in the school of theology at the Jagellonian University, until his priestly ordination in Krakow on November 01, 1946. Father Wojtyła was then sent by Cardinal Sapieha to Rome, where he attained a doctorate in Theology (1948). He wrote his dissertation on faith as understood in the works of Saint John of the Cross. While a student in Rome, he spent

his vacations exercising pastoral ministry among Polish emigrants in France, Belgium and Holland.

In 1948, Father Wojtyła returned to Poland and was appointed a curate in the parish church of Niegowic, near Krakow, and later at Saint Florian in Krakow. He was a university chaplain until 1951, when he again undertook studies in Philosophy and Theology. In 1953, Father Wojtyła presented a dissertation at the Jagellonian University of Krakow on the possibility of grounding a Christian Ethics on the Ethical System developed by Max Scheler. Later he became professor of Moral Theology and Ethics in the Major Seminary of Krakow and in the Theology Faculty of Lublin.

On July 4, 1958, Pope Pius XII appointed Father Wojtyła auxiliary bishop of Krakow, with the titular see of Ombi. Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak consecrated him in Wawel Cathedral (Krakow) on September 28, 1958.

On January 13, 1964, Pope Paul VI appointed Bishop Wojtyła as Archbishop of Krakow and subsequently, on June 26, 1967, created him a cardinal. Bishop Wojtyła took part

in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and made a significant contribution to the drafting of the constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. He also took part in the five assemblies of the Synod of Bishops prior to the start of his Pontificate.

On October 16, 1978, Cardinal Wojtyła was elected Pope and on October 22 he began his ministry as universal Pastor of the church.

Saint John Paul II made 146 pastoral visits in Italy and, as the Bishop of Rome, he visited 317 of the current 322 Roman parishes. His international apostolic journeys numbered 104 and were expressions of the constant pastoral solicitude of the Successor of Peter for all the churches.

His principal documents include 14 Encyclicals, 15 Apostolic Exhortations, 11 Apostolic constitutions and 45 Apostolic Letters. He also wrote five books: *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (October 1994); *Gift and Mystery: On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination* (November 1996); *Roman Triptych, meditations in poetry* (March 2003); *Rise, Let Us Be on Our Way* (May 2004) and *Memory and Identity* (February 2005).

On May 13, 1981, an assassination attempt was made on Saint John Paul II's life in Saint Peter's Square. Saved by the maternal hand of the Mother of God, following a lengthy stay in the hospital, he forgave the attempted assassin and, aware of having received a great gift, intensified his pastoral commitments with heroic generosity.

Saint John Paul II also demonstrated his pastoral concern by erecting numerous dioceses and ecclesiastical circumscriptions, and by promulgating codes of canon Law for the Latin and the Oriental churches, as well as the Catechism of the Catholic Church. He proclaimed the Year of Redemption, the Marian Year and the Year of the Eucharist as well as the Great Jubilee Year of 2000, in order to provide the People of God with

particularly intense spiritual experiences. He also attracted young people by beginning the celebration of World Youth Days.

No other Pope met as many people as Saint John Paul II. More than 17.6 million pilgrims attended his Wednesday General Audiences (which numbered over 1,160). This does not include any of the other special audiences and religious ceremonies (more than 8 million pilgrims in the Great Jubilee Year of 2000 alone). He met millions of the faithful in the course of his pastoral visits in Italy and throughout the world.

### **John Paul II – Prophet of the Divine Mercy**

On November 30, 1980, on the first Sunday of Advent, in the third year of his pontificate, Saint John Paul II promulgated his second encyclical on God's mercy *Dives in Misericordia*. On the same day, during the prayer of Angelus the Holy Father presented the main reasons for preparing this document, "I wanted very much to connect the promulgation of the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, its main aim being to remind people of the Father's love revealed in the entire messianic message of Christ, from his coming to the world till the paschal mystery of his cross and resurrection. The Church and the world need mercy that means love stronger than sin and all evil that man and his earthy living are entangled in."

### **Dedication of the world to the Divine Mercy**

Canonizing Sr. Faustina on April 30, 2000 Saint John Paul II instituted the Feast of the Divine Mercy in the whole Church, asking God through the intercession of the Saint from Krakow, "And you, Faustina, a gift of God to our time, a gift from the land of Poland to the whole Church, obtain for us an awareness of the depth of Divine Mercy; help us to have a living experience of it and to bear witness to it among our brothers and sisters."

Saint John Paul II completed this act by solemn dedication of the world to the Divine Mercy, made on August 17, 2002. Then he reminded the community of the Church of the universal truth about the Divine Mercy and in the newly consecrated sanctuary in Lagiewniki, which he called the "World Center of the Devotion to Merciful Christ", he dedicated the fate of the world and every individual to God the Merciful Father who revealed his love in the Son, Jesus Christ, and poured it upon us in the Holy Spirit the Comforter. Saint John Paul II died in the Apostolic Palace at 9:37 p.m. on Saturday, April 02, 2005, the vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday, which he had instituted. On April 08, his solemn funeral was celebrated in Saint Peter's Square and he was buried in the crypt of Saint Peter's Basilica.

John Paul II was beatified in Saint Peter's Square on May 01, 2011 by Pope Benedict XVI, his immediate successor and for many years his valued collaborator as Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He was canonized by Pope Francis on April 27, 2014, on Divine Mercy Sunday.

## **Spreading of Devotion to The Divine Mercy**

*Souls who spread the honor of My mercy I shield through their entire lives as a tender mother her infant, and at the hour of death I will not be a Judge for them, but the Merciful Savior* (Diary 1075). This is what the Lord Jesus promised to everyone who will proclaim His Mercy, spread its honor in any way. Priests can rejoice at His additional promise: *Hardened sinners will repent on hearing their words when they speak about My unfathomable mercy, about the compassion I have for them in My Heart. To priests who proclaim and extol My mercy, I will give wondrous power; I will anoint their words and touch the hearts of those to whom they will speak* (Diary 1521).

These promises show how important it is to spread the honor of the Divine Mercy since Jesus promises His maternal care, during the lifetime and at the hour of death, to everyone who will undertake this task. Therefore, apart from the Image, Feast, Chaplet and Hour of Mercy, spreading honor of the Divine Mercy is also a form of the Devotion, because Jesus also attached promises to it and the promises pertain to all people.

Spreading honor of the Mercy, that is, proclaiming the mystery of the Divine Mercy, most fully revealed in the crucified and risen Christ, by the testimony of life, deeds, words and prayer is not only to show the road to a beautiful and happy life on earth but also, and maybe first of all, it is to serve the work of salvation and sanctification of the world as well as it is to prepare humanity for Christ's second coming to earth: The Lord Jesus said to Sister Faustina:

- *Secretary of My mercy, write, tell souls about this great mercy of Mine, because the awful day, the day of My justice, is near* (Diary 965). *Do not tire of proclaiming My mercy* (Diary 1521).

- *Tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy* (Diary 699). *Let all mankind recognize My unfathomable mercy. It is a sign for the end times; after it will come the day of justice* (Diary 848).

- *Write: before I come as a just Judge, I first open wide the door of My mercy. He who refuses to pass through the door of My mercy must pass through the door of My justice* (Diary 1146).

Therefore, the Lord Jesus' urgent call directed to Sister Faustina and, through her, to the entire Church and the whole world, can be found so many times in the "Diary".

The task of preaching the message of Mercy arises from the gift received as early as during the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. It is also a right and duty of the Church and, thus, of all the faithful. In 2002 Holy Father John Paul II said in Błonia Park in Krakow: *The hour has come when the message of Divine Mercy is able to fill hearts with hope and to become the spark of a new civilization: the civilization of love.*

## 1. Coming to know the mystery of the Divine Mercy

In order to preach God's merciful love and make it present in the world in various manners (by the way we live, by deed, word and prayer), first of all, it is necessary to come to know this most beautiful mystery of our faith – by reading the Bible – and it is essential to search for signs of this love in our life and in the world continuously. This is what Sister Faustina did. Obeying the monastic rule, first she pondered on God's goodness in the work of creation, salvation, in the Holy Church, in the word of God and in the sacraments, in man's vocation to union with God already on earth and throughout eternity... Every day, in everything that happened, she tried to see the loving hand of God. Coming to know the mystery of the Divine Mercy in this way led her to the conclusion that in man's life everything that is good comes from God and is a gift of His merciful love. In the "Diary" she wrote: *Your mercy runs through our life like a golden thread and maintains in good order the contact of our being with God. For He does not need anything to make Him happy; so, everything is solely the work of His mercy. My senses are transfixed with joy when God grants me a deeper awareness of that great attribute of His; namely, His unfathomable mercy* (Diary 1466).

She came to know the Divine Mercy by means of her natural powers of intellect and will, which God strengthened by the gift of contemplation. Thanks to this, she was able to penetrate the mystery extremely deeply – in order to proclaim it to the world successfully.

As Sister Faustina's testimony of life shows, intellectual knowledge of this truth of faith does not suffice to preach about the mystery of the Divine Mercy to the world effectively – it is necessary to live on this truth every day. Therefore, while teaching Sister Faustina, many times the Lord Jesus encouraged her not only to meditate on His merciful love and goodness, but also, above all, to imitate His merciful attitude towards people. He said: *My daughter, look into My Merciful Heart and reflect its compassion in your own heart and in your deeds, so that you, who proclaim My mercy to the world, may yourself be aflame with it.* (Diary 1688).

Obedient to Jesus' words, she wanted to be completely transformed into Mercy and be its living reflection. *Each of Your saints reflects one of Your virtues – she wrote – I desire to reflect Your compassionate heart, full of mercy; I want to glorify it. Let Your mercy, O Jesus, be impressed upon my heart and soul like a seal, and this will be my badge in this and the future life. Glorifying Your mercy is the exclusive task of my life* (Diary 1242).

## 2. Preaching the message of mercy

Above all, Sister Faustina spread the honor of the Mercy by the testimony of her life in the spirit of trust in God and mercy towards neighbor. Solicitude for growing in this spirit every day requires that we work on ourselves properly, nurture our spiritual life, make efforts to fulfil the will of God faithfully

and do good to neighbor at every opportunity. A person who trusts God (fulfills His will) and performs acts of mercy, is a living image of the Divine Mercy because everyone who looks at this sign knows that God is good, that it is worth trusting Him and imitating His merciful love for people. Being merciful towards neighbor, whether a matter is of little or great importance, is a sign that is especially powerful. This is the strongest argument by means of which the honor of the Divine Mercy is preached successfully. The testimony of one's life in this spirit is the first, fundamental way of spreading honor of the Divine Mercy.

However, the testimony of one's life only does not suffice. What is necessary is also to proclaim the Divine Mercy by word. Sister Faustina took every opportunity to speak about God's goodness and to encourage people to trust Him whenever she was with them. She preached the Divine Mercy message not only by the spoken word but also by writing. At the Lord Jesus' command, she kept her diary in which she wrote down mighty works of God which He had done in her life and in the world. By means of her "Diary" she has been telling the world about the Divine Mercy mystery: how good God is, how much He cares about man, his earthly and eternal happiness; she has been calling us to trust God's mercy and to live in the spirit of mercy.

The task of proclaiming the Divine Mercy by word is usually associated with 'public' works it is associated with a sermon, religious instruction at school, radio or TV broadcasts, books, press articles etc. However, most frequently we have opportunities to do that in the daily life, when we meet, speak with a person. We proclaim the Divine Mercy whenever, like Sister Faustina, we try to discern God's goodness when we converse with someone or interpret facts and events. We do that whenever we can see everyday situations in the light of faith – when we can discern God's loving hand in them, even in painful trials and great suffering. Such an apostolate – in the daily life – bears great fruit.

Prayer, especially the forms of the Devotion to the Divine Mercy, which Jesus conveyed by Sister Faustina, is another manner of spreading honor of the Divine Mercy. Every day we can worship God in the mystery of His mercy, spread His honor and entreat mercy for the world by taking part in the Liturgy of the Church, by personal veneration of the Image of the Merciful Jesus, by saying the Chaplet or praying at the Hour of Mercy.

The Lord Jesus also says how this task can be carried out in the daily life. He told Sister Faustina: *You will join prayers, fasts, mortifications, labors and all sufferings to My prayer, fasting, mortification, labors and sufferings and then they will have power before My Father* (Diary 531). Suffering plays a special role in entreating God's mercy. The Lord Jesus told her: *There is but one price at which souls are bought, and that is suffering united to My suffering on the cross* (Diary 324). *Every conversion of a sinful soul*

*demands sacrifice* (Diary 961). He asked: *I have need of your sufferings to rescue souls* (Diary 1612). *Help Me, My daughter, to save souls. Join your sufferings to My Passion and offer them to the heavenly Father for sinners* (Diary 1032). He told her that she would save more souls through prayer and suffering than would a missionary through his teachings and sermons alone (cf. Diary 1767).

Sister Faustina and everyone who accepts the Divine Mercy message should entreat for graces first of all for sinners, since they are the poorest and need God's mercy most. Therefore, the Lord Jesus frequently asked her to pray for them. He said: *Beg for this grace for them, so that they too may glorify My mercy* (Diary 1160) and, some other time: *The loss of each soul plunges Me into mortal sadness. You always console Me when you pray for sinners. The prayer most pleasing to Me is prayer for the conversion of sinners. Know, My daughter, that this prayer is always heard and answered* (Diary 1397), because it is compatible with God's will. What the Lord God desires most is the salvation of all people because He has created everyone out of love, Jesus laid down His life for all people and He wants to be with everyone in the Father's house forever.

The second group of those privileged as regards the prayer of apostles of the Divine Mercy comprises priests and religious, thus those who lead the People of God along the roads of salvation and who are in the first front line of the battle for souls. They also need to be helped by prayer a lot. The Lord Jesus said to Sister Faustina: *I place in your care two pearls very precious to My Heart: these are the souls of priests and religious. You will pray particularly for them; their power will come from your diminishment* (Diary 531).

In Saint Faustina's "Diary" the Lord Jesus asks to pray for the dying. *By your entreaties, obtain for them trust in My mercy* – He said – *because they have most need of trust, and have it the least. Be assured that the grace of eternal salvation for certain souls in their final moment depends on your prayer* (Diary 1777). He also told Sister Faustina to enter often into purgatory, because she was needed there (cf. Diary 1738), thus, He ordered her to pray for the dead, to be merciful towards them – by means of prayer and sacrifice. Although the Lord Jesus does not mention other groups of people, He commands her to pray for everyone because He speaks about entreating God's mercy for the whole world.

*However - wrote Holy Father John Paul II - at no time and in no historical period-especially at a moment as critical as our own-can the Church forget the prayer that is a cry for the mercy of God amid the many forms of evil which weigh upon humanity and threaten it. Precisely this is the fundamental right and duty of the Church in Christ Jesus, her right and duty towards God and towards humanity.* (Dives in Misericordia 15)

### 3. Proclaim the Divine Mercy correctly

What is essential for spreading honor of the Mercy is to preach the message correctly, which also requires solicitude for the purity of the Divine Mercy devotion in the forms conveyed by Sister Faustina. It is known that nowadays the Divine Mercy devotion is very popular. Therefore, many publications that have appeared on the shelves spread the Divine Mercy devotion in a way that is oversimplified and often incorrect, which, as a result, leads to an incorrect practice of the devotion.

In his treatise on Sister Faustina's writings which was prepared for the needs of her beatification process, Rev. Professor Ignacy Różycki laid the theological foundations for this devotion. An abridged version of the treatise has been published in the booklet entitled: "The Divine Mercy. Essential Features of The Devotion to The Divine Mercy" whereas the whole text – in the book: "The Devotion to the Divine Mercy". In the light of the treatise, the attitude of trust in the Lord God (that is, the biblical attitude of trust) and the attitude of mercy towards neighbors are the essence of the Divine Mercy devotion. Only this foundation is the basis of the forms of the devotion: The Image of the Merciful Jesus, the Feast of the Divine Mercy, the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy, the Hour of Mercy and spreading honor of the Divine Mercy. The Lord Jesus attached promises to these forms of the devotion to the Divine Mercy which pertain to everyone (not only to Sister Faustina; for example, regarding the prayer "O Blood and Water" or the "Novena to the Divine Mercy", He attached some promises only to her). If there is no foundation, that is, if one's Christian life is not shaped in the spirit of trust in God and mercy towards neighbor, none of the forms will be a true act of the Devotion and no desired results will be obtained by means of it. *Therefore* – writes Rev. I. Różycki – *for instance, if someone says the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy, however, he does it without trust, he will not receive anything that Jesus has attached to the Chaplet said with trust.*

Regarding the spreading and practicing the Devotion to the Divine Mercy, the most frequent mistakes result from the fact that only excerpts from the "Diary", analyzed out of context, are disseminated and also from the fact that the devotion is practiced incorrectly.

Certain sentences are taken out of the "Diary" and disseminated; however, the entire work is not analyzed, and a sentence (statement) is considered an axiom or the entire truth about something. Examples:

- *I desire that there be a congregation which will proclaim God's mercy and, by its prayers, obtain it for the world.* Anybody who has read this sentence thinks that the Lord Jesus wants a concrete religious congregation to be founded, a congregation which will undertake certain tasks. However, the analysis of the entire "Diary" shows that the Lord Jesus does not mean one congregation but a great work in the Church which today we call the Apostolic Movement of the Divine Mercy (cf. Diary 1155).

- *The soul that will venerate this image will not perish* (or other promises quoted without the conditions). This promise as well as other promises of the Lord Jesus will be fulfilled if man meets certain conditions and, regarding the Devotion to the Divine Mercy, the conditions are the following: trust in the Lord God and the attitude of an active love towards neighbors. *The soul that will venerate this image ...* that is, the soul who prays with trust before it and also performs acts of mercy; it is not a person who, for instance, has the image in the wallet.

What is a frequent mistake is that the forms of the Devotion to the Divine Mercy, for instance the Chaplet, Novena or Litany, are propagated, however the essence of the Devotion to the Divine Mercy is not explained and the privileged forms of the Devotion are not differentiated from other prayers noted down in Sister Faustina's "Diary". The other group of mistakes has its origins in the incorrect practice of the Devotion to the Divine Mercy. Most frequently:

- The faithful are not inculcated with the Christian attitude of trust in God and mercy towards neighbors but they are taught devotions only, for instance – to say just the Chaplet,
- some of the words are added, changed or omitted when the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy is said,
- private revelations and devotions are combined,
- Sister Faustina's mission is analyzed without taking the Holy Scripture into consideration.

The message of Mercy, on which we are to live and which we are to share with others, is God's great gift for our times. This gift is a sign of hope, pledge of salvation and light on human paths in the third millennium of the faith. Therefore, those who spread this message need to do this very humbly and in accordance with Jesus' plan. As Holy Father Benedict XVI said: *This message really is a central message precisely for our time: Mercy as God's power, as a divine barrier against the evil of the world.* Therefore, there is a great need to share this gift as well as possible and very generously.

*Sr M. Elisabeth Siepak O.L.M.*



## Be Merciful as your Father is Merciful

In the Gospel we have many commandments that Jesus directs to his disciples: "do not judge," "do not condemn," "give," "love your enemies," "pray," "do not curse one another," etc. But there is one thing different from all, because it does not refer to what and how we are to do, but to what we are to be: "be merciful" (Lk 6:36). In another wording of the text it is expressed as "be perfect" (Mt 5:48). The commandment to be merciful clearly invokes another Old Testament commandment concerning being, namely: "be holy" (cf. Leviticus 11:44). And Jesus does not seem to want to separate them. The New Covenant command becomes an Old Testament exegesis. Holiness becomes concrete. It means being merciful, because this is what God wants from us: "I desire mercy" (Mt 12,7), "I want love, For it is loyalty that I desire, not sacrifice" (Hos 6: 6). The commands also have a specific model: in both cases is the Father: "be holy as I am holy" (cf. Lev 11: 44), "be merciful as your Father is merciful" (cf. Lk 6:36).

### The protagonist of the process

The words of the Gospel are not optional. If we are to be Jesus' disciples, we must accept them all as they are. However, a spontaneous question arises: Is it not too much to dictate a certain being and demand that it be as it is with the Father? Who among us can lay claim to being what the Father is? Yet Jesus requires it. It is worth noting that in the original Greek for "being", is used the word "express the process of becoming" (**γίνεσθαι-ginomai: to come into being, to happen, to become**). Literally, the commandment would be: "Become merciful" (Lk 6:26). This is reminiscent of the first pages of the Old Testament, the Book of Genesis, and the creation account. God created and things became. God breathed the breath of life into man's nostrils, and man became a living creature made in God's image (cf. Gen 2: 7). The making of man is therefore the work of God, not of man. This concrete becoming merciful commanded by Jesus does not belong to the sphere of human strength. Exceeds them. Why, then, is it commanded when man is incapable of it? We find the answer in another passage in St. Matthew: "let it be done to you according to your faith" (cf. Mt 8: 3), or "let it be done to you as you believed" (cf. Mt 8:13). Man cannot get it, but he will get it if he believes in God.

St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus, in her Act of offering herself to Merciful Love, addressed Jesus with these words: "I am sure that you will fulfill my desires, oh my God, the more you intend to give, the more you ask to desire" (Act of offering yourself to Merciful Love).

### Poor resources

Desire and trust in God are very meager but only necessary means. Any other measure taken by a person can help, but he will not achieve what Jesus commands: to be merciful. It is about a thorough transformation of man, not about undertaking acts of mercy. We can take such actions, but

they do not make us merciful. It is the Father who makes us like that. If anyone thinks that he himself can make himself holy, good, merciful, he is wrong like the Pharisees. They belonged to those who could boast long catalogs of deeds of godliness done but were not pious. That is why Jesus told them: "I never knew you" (Mt 7:23). The trouble faced by a man who hears Jesus' word about being merciful does not consist in undertaking the works of a colossus. Rather, it is about becoming small. It consists in accepting God's action as a child, and this is often much more difficult. More difficult, because it requires trust, recognition of one's own powerlessness, requires faith given to Someone I do not know, who is different from me, and whose thoughts do not necessarily align with mine. When Mary said, "let it be done to me according to your word" (cf. Lk 1:38), she became the mother of God. Without this trust, she would not be so, even if she had undertaken any human effort. She became what she was not through God's work. So, we need to become little, to become children. The child, in fact, does not take credit for himself, knows that all the good he has come from the goodness of a loving Father. This was beautifully expressed by St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus: "To be small is not to attribute to yourself virtues that are fulfilled, not to think that you are capable of anything, but to recognize that God gives his little child a treasure of virtues in his hand so that he can use it in his need; but it is always a treasure of the Good God "(St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, counsels and memories). To be small is to recognize that we do not make ourselves merciful, but that the Father makes us so.

God "who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us", wrote St. Paul (cf. Eph 3:20). And certainly, much more than we can do ourselves. Being merciful, as the Father is, is possible because this possibility is contained in the command itself. If it were not possible to be merciful like the Father, there would be no command. And since there is a commandment, there is also a possibility. Thus, this commandment opens a wide horizon for every disciple of Jesus: everyone can be as the Father is.

This commandment is given to us who live, and therefore it can be fulfilled already here, on this pilgrimage, but for those who do not become like the Father on earth, it will be fulfilled in his house, because we will become like him when "We will see him as he is" (cf. 1 Jn 3: 2) - this is what St. John the Evangelist ensure.

All the effort required, therefore, that we will undertake, is an effort of faith and trust, accompanied by specific attitudes. Faith in Jesus is not as simple as faith in Him, nor as any deeds undertaken by human effort. Because to believe in Him is only to recognize His presence, action, teaching, and to believe Him means to trust. It is much easier to live by repeating without obligation: God, I believe in You. It is much more difficult to trust and say responsibly: Jesus, I believe in You, I trust in You.

In trust it is necessary to leave self-sufficiency, to rely on the Other, to stand in the truth of one's own poverty. Trust is not an external acceptance of conditions, but the recognition of them as one's own, accepting them as guideposts. And it is much more difficult and requires a lot more to overcome yourself. If you have to lose your life (cf. Lk 9:24), you will certainly lose it here. Trusting the Other will be the loss of your own sufficiency, your own independence, your own comfort, your own will. This is what we are called to do, and that we must take care of, with all the weakness that everyone carries. And trust is certainly not passivity, because whoever trusts another will do what the other says, he will obey him. In turn, a lack of trust will be stagnation, or acting on your own, with no obligation.

In Sister Faustina's Diary there are no less than 34 instances when Jesus calls us to have a spirit of trust; and 9 occasions when He talks about trustfulness as the necessary condition for graces to be granted.

God first trusted in man; He expects the same attitude from him. Trust is an attitude of faith, of complete abandonment, which Jesus desired from His followers when He said, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you (cf. Mt 17:20).

Saint Paul and the whole of Christian theology call this attitude of life hope, which springs from living faith in the infinity of God's love and goodness toward us.

"I have come to know Him well. God is love (...). I have placed my trust in God and fear nothing. I have given myself over to His holy will; let Him do with me as He wishes" (Diary 589), declared Sister Faustina.

### **Unrequited love**

But one still has to ask: what does mercy mean? If we are to be merciful, what does this mean? Jesus chooses mercy as his commandment to be. He does not choose purity, poverty, obedience, or any other value. Why does he do that? What did this mercy deserve? We know that mercy is a form of love. It means the love that grows over those who are unable to return it. And this dependence of love towards those who are unable to reciprocate it is called mercy. We have many examples of such love in the Gospel: the prodigal son, woman taken in adultery, the blind man at Jericho, the thief on the Cross, etc. At the moment when they experienced this love, they were not able to reciprocate it. Mercy can only be received from the one who gives it or rejects it. If mercy were reciprocated, it would have to be called not so much mercy but love: spousal, friendly love ... Therefore, mercy is the type of love that in some way affects our misery the most and overwhelms it.

Perhaps for this reason there was no mercy for those who were self-confident, like the Pharisees. There was no, because they did not want to accept it, they did not want to acknowledge their poverty and weakness. Therefore, mercy is the type of love that can be described as disinterested, it is a gift of love. And that illuminates a lot. We touch the very mystery of

God. Selflessness is perhaps what we first associate with God's love. We believe that He loves each of us not for something, but simply loves us.

Whether sin or poverty or mistakes - they do not change His love for us. And this is God's mercy: God loved us "while we were yet sinners" (cf. Rom 5: 8), unable to respond to his love.

St. Thomas Aquinas says, "When love causes goodness in the beloved, it is love proceeding from mercy." And so, continues St. Thomas, God's mercy, "the root of divine love," is at the root of everything He does. St. John Paul II even called mercy "love's second name." The Holy Father wrote in "Dives in Misericordia" (no. 13): "the Bible, Tradition, and the whole faith life of the People of God provide unique proof... that mercy is the greatest of the attributes and perfections of God."

So, we are to become merciful. Jesus calls us to love, a love that has the special characteristic of being free and shown to those who cannot respond to it. This allows us to better understand the entire list of commandments before the one on whom we reflect together: "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (...) But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back;" (cf. Lk 6: 27-35). Jesus concludes the entire catalog of works with this one command, which sums it up and summarizes it: "Be merciful as your father is merciful" (cf. Lk 6:36).

### **The taste of Christians in the world**

Christians are to be the salt of the world and its light (cf. Mt 5: 13-14). What would salt be without its taste, Jesus' disciples would be without mercy. And just as salt is salty in itself, so Christians are to be merciful, not only performing acts of mercy. Mercy is to be what will define them, this is what Jesus wanted: love one another, "as I have loved you; that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another" (cf. Jn 13: 34-35). If this particular love, which we call mercy, had died out, then Jesus' words would actually become true: "Get away from me, I never knew you" (Mt 7:23). If the commandment includes being like the Father, it is about the identity of the disciples shared by all and shared with the Father. It is not surprising, then, that from this love depends us seeing God and remaining in his kingdom.

Jesus himself tells the recipient of this love: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me. (...). whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (cf. Mt 25: 35-36, 40).

Jesus has the faces of the sisters and brothers we live with. Therefore, the acts of mercy, born of a heart transformed by God's action, will be very concrete, shown to people with specific faces. It was beautifully expressed by Bl. Mother Teresa of Calcutta in one of her prayers: "Jesus is Hungry to

satisfy Him, He is Thirsty to give Him drink. Jesus is naked to dress Him, He is Homeless to receive Him. Jesus is sick to heal Him, He is Lonely to love Him. Jesus is blind to guide Him. Jesus is Mute to speak to Him, He is a Cripple to go with Him, the Prisoner, to visit Him, the Old Man to serve Him. Jesus is Unwanted to be wanted, He is a Leper to wash Him, He is a Beggar to give Him a smile, He is a Drug Addict to be His Friend, He is a Prostitute to be saved from danger and to be her friend in Christ ”.

So, we have been given the command to be merciful, which is at the heart of Christianity. Command, which is not in our power, but is not possible without us. God's action is fruitful when it touches the ground of trust and faith. A different ground will not ensure fertility. We are not making the growth, we are not sowers, but God. Our task is to care for good soil, to de-acidify it of selfishness and self-sufficiency. And we do not have to worry about the abundant harvest and good fruit, they will come at the time that the Lord of the garden wills. For whether we sleep or watch the seed sown by him sprouts (cf. Mk 4:27) and grows, transforming the environment of its growth, influencing it, making it more beautiful and better. Let Jesus, then, extend our hearts so that we may become what He wants to make us. May it broaden our hearts so that we may become merciful like the Father and be a leaven of new life and fruitfulness in our daily lives.

Fr. George J Bobowski

