

HOM 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Easter Divine Mercy 2019 C Apr 28

This second Sunday of Easter is also officially called Divine Mercy Sunday, declared to be so on April 30, 2000 by Pope St. John-Paul II. This was the result of private revelations given by Jesus to Sister Marie Faustina Kowalski who was born in Poland in 1905 and died in 1938 at the age of 33. The Church has accepted these private revelations as authentic, including the Lord's request that a feast for Divine Mercy to be celebrated on this day.

Helen Kowalski entered religious life at age 20 after hearing the Lord say to her during a local dance, "*How long are you going to keep me waiting?*" He then appeared to her in a vision – covered with lacerations and crowned with thorns – and told her, "*The bride must come to resemble her groom.*"

She spent 13 years as a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, working in simple jobs as a cook, gardener, and porter. She was known for her prayerfulness, obedience, diligence, and concern for the poor. She had a deep love for Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament and a special devotion to Mary as the Mother of Mercy.

Her years in the convent were filled with extraordinary mystical gifts that included bilocation, prophecy, the hidden stigmata, and the reading of souls. Our Lord appeared to her in visions and spoke to her in locutions, as did the Blessed Mother, and some of the angels and saints. Under obedience, she wrote a Diary of some 600 pages, recording the revelations she was receiving about God's Mercy. She has thus become known as the Apostle and Secretary of Divine Mercy.

In the official handbook on Divine Mercy titled *The Divine Mercy Message and Devotion*, by Fr. Seraphim Michalenko, Vinny Flynn, and Robert Stackpole – published by the Congregation of Marians of the Immaculate Conception in Stockbridge, Massachusetts – it states that:

The message of mercy is that God loves us – all of us, no matter how great our sins. He wants us to recognize that His mercy is greater than our sins, so that we will call upon Him with trust, receive His mercy, and let it flow through us to others. (p. 26)

The handbook on Divine Mercy continues: "*It is a message we can call to mind simply by remembering ABC.*"

**A - Ask for mercy.** God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world. (27) In the words of Jesus to Sister Faustina: '***Souls that make an appeal to My mercy delight Me. To such souls I grant even more graces than they ask. I cannot punish even the greatest sinner if he makes an appeal to My compassion (1146). Beg for mercy for the whole world (570). No soul that has called upon My Mercy has ever been disappointed.***' (1541)

**B - Be merciful to others.** God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. God wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us. (29) In the words of Jesus to Faustina: '***I demand from you deeds of mercy which are to arise out of love for Me.***

*You are to show mercy to your neighbors always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse yourself from it...Even the strongest faith is of no avail without works (742). If a soul does not exercise mercy in some way, it will not obtain My mercy on the day of judgment (1317).*

C - Completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent on our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive. (31) In the words of Jesus to Faustina: *'I never reject a contrite heart (1485). Sooner would heaven and earth turn into nothingness than would My mercy not embrace a trusting soul.'* (1777) And as explained further by the writers of the Handbook: *'Trust means that...we agree that God can write the script of our lives instead of insisting on our own script. It means that we agree with the great pledge we make in the Our Father: Your will (not mine) be done on earth as it is in heaven'. It means that even in our moments of agony we agree with the cry of Jesus in the Garden, 'Not my will, but Yours be done' (Lk 22:42)*

When talking about Divine Mercy, it is important to define it in order to understand what it is. In general, to be merciful means *to seek the true good of another person, or persons, even when they do not deserve it i.e., even when justice does not require it.* This true good includes their temporal or earthly good, and *most especially, their eternal good which is their salvation.*

The corporal works of mercy, for example, are mostly for a person's earthly good. They are feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, comforting the imprisoned, visiting the sick, and burying the dead. When we put these into practice, however, particularly when these are done in the name of the Lord – people are helped with their earthly needs and the goodness of God is made manifest to them. So, their hearts can be inclined toward God, and to salvation in oneness with Him.

In our first reading, the apostles were curing people in Jesus' name, a corporal work of mercy that also demonstrated that Church would now be carrying on His mission of salvation.

The spiritual works of mercy are admonishing sinners, instructing the uninformed, counseling those with doubts about the faith, comforting the sorrowful, being patient with those in error, forgiving offenses against oneself, praying for the living and the dead. These are more directly related to a person's eternal well-being, but of course, they benefit earthly life, too.

Divine Mercy includes all of this and more. At a deeper level, Divine Mercy can be seen as the *time, the opportunity and the means* which God gives a person to be united and conformed to His Son, apart from Whom one cannot be saved and earthly blessings come to not.

Now the means for being united and conformed to Jesus is the *grace of the Holy Spirit* which is the most essential element of Divine Mercy. This is given by Jesus' obedient life Death and Resurrection i.e., His saving Sacrifice made present in the Mass. It is poured out to the Church and through the sacraments to its members. As beneficiaries of this, we are then to extend Divine Mercy to others.

In today's Gospel reading, the Risen Jesus appears to the Apostles and breathes on them, saying, "*Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, And whose sins you retain are retain.*" He thus gives His authority to forgive sins to the Church in the sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession which is thereby instituted. Confession and the other sacraments give or restore or strengthen the grace of the Holy Spirit in us and are therefore channels of Divine Mercy by which we are united and conformed to Jesus.

The Divine Mercy image is an artist's rendition of St. Faustina's vision of Jesus, Two rays emanate from His heart, The white ray represents the sacrament of Baptism by which the grace of the Holy Spirit washes away original and personal sins and all temporal punishment due to sin. I would just note here what Jesus told Faustina in regard to anyone who goes to confession and properly receives Holy Communion on Divine Mercy Sunday. "The soul that will go to confession (*one week before or after*) and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment."(48) That's the equivalent of a plenary indulgence.

The red ray coming from the heart of Jesus in the DM image represents the sacrament of Jesus' Body and Blood by which the grace of baptism and confirmation, matrimony and holy orders, is renewed in a person and brought to perfection. It is also the sacrament by which we communicate the grace of the Holy Spirit to others outside the sacraments as we learn to offer ourselves to and with Jesus to the Father for them.

St. Faustina was called to and instructed in this by Jesus. In her Diary (nos. 135-138) she writes:

The Lord gave me to understand that I should offer myself to Him so that He could do with me as He pleased. .... At that very moment my intellect was strangely illumined. A vision passed before my soul; it was like the vision Jesus had in the Garden of Olives. ..My name is to be 'sacrifice.'

... the Lord gave me to know that the whole mystery depended on...my free consent... when I had consented to the sacrifice...My soul became immersed in God and ...I felt that His Majesty was enveloping me.... And the Lord said to me,

**You are the delight of My Heart; from today on every one of your acts, even the very smallest, will be a delight to my eyes, whatever you do.**

It was by her self-offering to Jesus, that Faustina became in full measure a co-mediatrix of God's grace i.e., of Divine Mercy, to others.

Brothers and sisters, you and I are also called to this. By our Eucharistic Self-offering Divine Mercy will be extended through us to those for whom we offer ourselves. The words to pray silently and sincerely at Holy Communion are these: I AM ALL YOURS O MOST LOVING JESUS THROUGH MARY YOUR MOTHER.