

**T I M E**

**O F M E R C Y**

CZAS MIŁOSIERDZIA • TIEMPO DE LA MISERICORDIA



**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CONGRESS  
OF THE DIVINE MERCY  
2006**



**Christ the King Roman-Catholic Parish  
Hollywood, California**

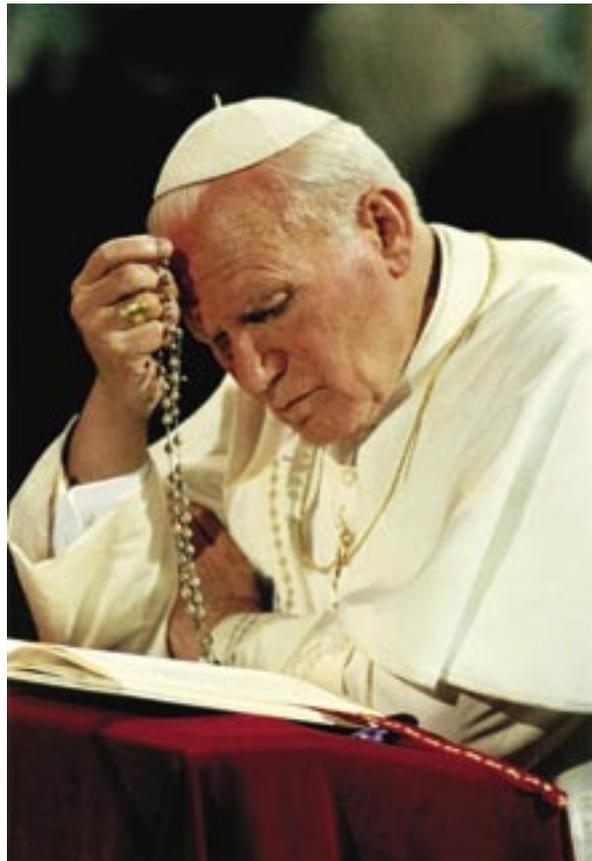


**His Holiness Pope John Paul II**

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

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

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



**“I leave you now with this prayer: that the Lord Jesus will reveal Himself to each one of you, that he will give you the strength to go out and profess that you are Christian, that He will show you that He alone can fill your hearts.”**

*Joannes Paulus PP II*

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

O Blessed Trinity,

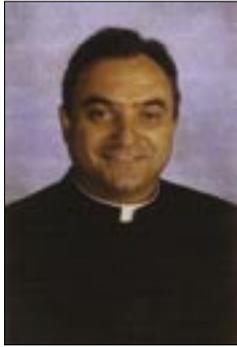
We thank You for having graced the Church with Pope John Paul II and for allowing the tenderness of your Fatherly care, the glory of the cross of Christ, and the splendor of the Holy Spirit, to shine through him.

Trusting fully in Your infinite mercy and in the maternal intercession of Mary, he has given us a living image of Jesus the Good Shepherd, and has shown us that holiness is the necessary measure of ordinary Christian life and is the way of achieving eternal communion with you.

Grant us, by his intercession, and according to Your will, the graces we implore, hoping that he will soon be numbered among your saints.

Amen.

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



*It is an honor for Christ the King Parish to enthrone the image of the Divine Mercy blessed and signed by Pope John Paul II in our Chapel and to welcome you, the participant to this Congress, who by your presence, express your devotion to Jesus, the King of Mercy, and your willingness to bring souls to the fount of His Mercy.*

*Fr. Antonio Cacciapuoti*

*Rev. Father Antonio Cacciapuoti  
Pastor, Christ the King Parish*



*After two great World Wars, the World has not yet found peace. It is especially at times of continuing unrest that the Divine Mercy's teachings bring us the most comfort. The Divine Mercy sustains us as we face both the greater problems of life as well as the small, mundane, every-day ones. The Divine Mercy fills the Universe "in all of its parts" and is ever with us.*

*Looking up at the countless stars in the sky, they seem to go on forever and the Universe appears so great. It is a humbling experience for the human being to thus contemplate the skies. One recognizes the enormity of the Universe, which like God's limitless Mercy can never be measured or contained.*

*Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has often taught that the contemporary person has either forgotten or taken for granted, God's Mercy. A concerted effort is necessary to have society reexamine its priorities and among other graces, discover the gift of life in our world. We must "Cast out into the Deep". The need to*

*proclaim and develop devotion to the Divine Mercy is obvious in this search. Society will regain the purpose of its existence the more this is done.*

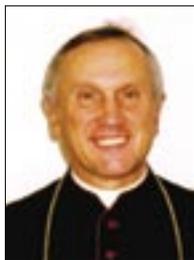
*In the revelations to Sister Faustina, Our Lord Jesus Christ, again reiterated that He is merciful. His mercy is a Love to be asked for, received and shared. As we all know, Sr. Faustina was herself Polish and her revelations took place in the cities of Plock, Vilnius and Krakow. However, the miracles which led to her Beatification and Canonization took place in the United States of America. In this way, Sister Faustina is an apostle of the Divine Mercy for both countries, Poland and America, linking the old and the new and symbolically showing that the Divine Mercy is boundless, crossing the frontiers of the nations of the world.*

*Yours sincerely in Christ,*

*James Francis Cardinal Stafford*

*J. Francis Cardinal Stafford*

*From the book "Dialogues on Divine Mercy"*



*Always, and particularly now, there is a need to speak to the contemporary man about God's Mercy, for in God lies the solution of all of the most difficult human problems. Man can live not through suppressing them but through struggling with them and solving them. Faith, as God's grace, strengthens human powers. The grace is given by the Merciful God, in order to help man to get to participate in the wholeness of God's love. Not every image of God satisfies man. If God*

*were only wise, where would a stupid man hide from Him, if God were only powerful, where would a weak man escape from Him. God is Wisdom, Omnipotence and Love. This is why He can be close to everybody and everybody can find shelter in Him. All these features together mean that He is also Mercy, and thus, Justice. The more people will believe in this, the safer place the world, in which they live, will be.*

*Bishop Edward Ozorowski*

*From the book "Is there a need to talk about God's Mercy these days?"*



## ***DIVINE MERCY, TRANSFORM US TO BE YOUR VESSEL OF HOPE***

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

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

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### **2006 THREE-DAYS CONGRESS SCHEDULE**

FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 2006	5:00 P.M. – 9:30 P.M.
SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 2006	8:00 A.M. – 9:00 P.M.
SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2006	9:00 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.

### **CONGRESS LOCATION AND INFORMATION:**

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

In the church of Christ The King there is a special chapel dedicated to the Divine Mercy. The Image of Merciful Jesus at the church of Christ the King, one of the contemporary copies of the countenance known through Saint Faustina's revelation, deserves your special attention. The Image has been blessed by the Holy Father John Paul II on April 30, 2003 during a special audience in the Vatican. Holy Father John Paul II – The Great Pope of Mercy placed His signature on this Image. This Image, Blessed by the Vicar of Christ and together with a powerful message of mercy is reaching the faithful in Los Angeles. Looking closely to the image, you will see this exceptional signature of God's Servant John Paul II. Come, pray and be healed.



***Most Reverend Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz  
Archbishop Metropolitan of the Archdiocese of the Holy Mother of God  
in Moscow, Russian Federation  
will preside our Congress***

April 28, Saturday, at 5:30 PM Healing Mass: Seven Intercessory Healing Prayers and Prayer for Family Tree Healing  
Celebrant: Fr. Simon Stefanowicz, OSPPE

### **GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIVIDUAL CONFESSIONS**

#### **GIFT STORE**

Religious articles will be available to purchase during the Congress.

#### **JESUS OF DIVINE MERCY PILGRIM IMAGE SIGN UP**

## CONGRESS SCHEDULE



### FRIDAY – APRIL 28, 2006

- 5:00 P.M.** Congress Check-In & Registration  
**6:00 P.M.** Welcome  
**6:15 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.** Opening Conference (bilingual: English and Spanish)  
 Towards Hope, transforming the world in God's Mercy  
**Speaker: His Excellency Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz**  
**7:00 P.M.** Opening Mass (bilingual: English and Spanish)  
**8:15 PM – 9:15 PM** Film: Saint Faustina  
**Location: Church**  
**9:15 PM – 9:25 PM** Review the program for the next two days event

### SATURDAY – APRIL 29, 2006

- 9:00 A.M.** Conference Check-In & Registration  
**9:30 A.M. – 10:00 A.M.** Opening/Welcome Remarks & Invocation  
 Fr. Antonio Cacciapuoti, Pastor of Christ the King Parish  
**10:00 A.M. – 10:45 AM** Conference **10:00 A.M. – 10:45 AM** Conferencia  
**Location: Church** **Lugar: Auditorio**  
 What is Divine Mercy? La Hermana Faustina y la Confianza sin Límites.  
 The Forms of Devotion and the Essence of the Devotion.  
**11:15 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.** Conference **11:15 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.** Conferencia  
**Location: Church** **Lugar: Auditorio**  
 Draw to the Throne of God's Mercy and Receive Graces. ¿Qué es la Divina Misericordia? Las formas de Devoción y la Esencia de la Devoción.

#### C.C.D

- 9:15 A.M. – 10:00 A.M.** Conference: What is Divine Mercy?  
 Speaker: Fr. Vic Robles and Fr. Simon Stefanowicz  
 Movie: Saint Faustina – **Location: Auditorium**  
**10:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.** Archbishop Kondrusiewicz Classrooms Visits

**12:00 P.M. – 1:00 P.M.** LUNCH BREAK

- 1:15 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.** Conference **1:15 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.** Conferencia  
**Location: Church** **Lugar: Auditorio**  
 “Responding to the Divine Mercy’s Call” Hay una Necesidad de Hablar Acerca de la Misericordia de Dios en Estos Días.  
 Personal Encounters and Sharing.

**2:00 P.M. – 2:45 P.M.** Open Discussion: Mercy in Deeds, Testimonies  
**Facilitator: Father Vic Robles**

**3:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.** **The Hour of Great Mercy – 3:00 O'clock Prayer Chaplet to Divine Mercy**

**3:30 P.M. – 4:15 P.M.** Conference (bilingual: English and Spanish)  
 “Deus Caritas est” – sence and program of christian life.  
**Speaker: Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz**

**4:15 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament Penance Service and Individual Confessions

**5:30 P.M.** Concelebrated Healing Mass:  
 Seven Intercessory Healing Prayers and Prayer for Family Tree Healing.  
 The Sacrament of the Holy Anointing

**7:30 P.M. – 8:30 P.M.** DINNER BREAK

**8:30 P.M.** Religious Music Concert

#### Life Teen Group

**3:45 P.M.** What is Divine Mercy  
 Speakers: Robert Martinez,  
 Deacon R. Villacorta,  
 Fr. George J. Bobowski

### SUNDAY – APRIL 30, 2006

- 10:00 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.** Conference **10:00 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.** Conferencia  
**Location: Church** **Lugar: Auditorio**  
 Is there a need to talk about God's Mercy these days? “Contestando el Llamado de la Divina Misericordia”  
 Divine Mercy: More Than a Devotion... a Way of Life! Experiencias Personales y Testimonios.

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CONGRESS OF THE DIVINE MERCY

<b>11:00 A.M.</b>	<b>Solemn Holy Mass</b> (bilingual: English and Spanish) <b>Celebrant: His Excellency Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz</b>	
<b>12:30 P.M. – 1:30 P.M.</b>	LUNCH BREAK	
<b>1:30 P.M. – 2:15 P.M.</b>	Conference	<b>1:30 PM – 2:15</b> Conferencia
<b>Location: Church</b>		<b>Lugar: Auditorio</b>
Divine Mercy – Seek It, Accept It, Spread It.		Divina Misericordia – Búscala, Acéptala, Propágala.
<b>2:15 PM – 2:45 PM</b>	Free will offering for Divine Mercy Deeds.	
<b>3:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.</b>	<b>3:00 O'clock Prayers The Hour of Great Mercy</b> <b>Procession of the Blessed Sacrament</b> <b>Singing the Chaplet of Divine Mercy</b> <b>Veneration of the First Class Relics of St. Faustina</b> <b>Conclusion of Healing</b> <b>Prayers and Service</b> <b>Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament</b> <b>with the biggest Monstrance in the USA.</b>	
<b>5:00 P.M.– 6:30 P.M.</b>	Closing remarks: your experience and testimonies Conclusion: Fr. Antonio Cacciapuoti and Fr. George J. Bobowski	
<b>6:30 P.M.</b>	Dinner	



### CONGRESS SPEAKERS



**Most Reverend TADEUSZ KONDRUSIEWICZ**, Archbishop Metropolitan of the Archdiocese of the Holy Mother of God in Moscow, Russian Federation will preside our Congress. Archbishop Kondrusiewicz was born in 1947 in the Byelorussian region of Odelsk. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1981, and became bishop of Gippono-Tsaritskyi and Minsk in 1989. He became the leader of Catholics in European Russia in April of 1991. Archbishop Kondrusiewicz was chosen to lead the Confederation of Russian Catholic Bishops in February 1999. He is Metropolitan of the diocese of the Holy Mother of God in Moscow.



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



**Reverend Father SIMON STEFANOWICZ**, OSPPE Order of St. Paul, the First Hermit. Fr. Simon Stefanowicz ordained as a Roman Catholic Priest on April 12, 1964. As a member of the Pauline Order, Fr. Simon belongs to the group of 115 monks whose principal task is the operation of the national Shrine of our lady of Czestochowa. Father Simon is Spiritual leader and preacher of Mission and retreats in the English and Polish languages, focusing on themes such as the Divine Mercy of Jesus, as revealed to Saint Faustina Kowalska.



**Reverend Deacon RICARDO VILLACORTA**. June 8th, 2002 Mr. Ricardo Villacorta, a Christ the King Parishioner, active in the Parish ministry for almost two decades was Ordained to the Sacred Order of Deacons by Cardinal Roger Mahony. Deacon Ricardo has been assigned to serve as a Deacon at the Parish of Christ the King.



**Sister CATHERINE ESSELEN and Sister GUADALUPE ROBLES**, The Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. The Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy was founded in Warsaw, Poland by Mother Teresa Eva Potocka on November 1, 1862. The Congregation is approved by the Holy See and has been in existence for over 137 years; it enjoys a proven tradition of religious life. The Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy has become more widely known in recent years because of one of its members: Sister Faustina Kowalska – the most "faithful daughter" of the Order (Diary 1130). Most of Sisters houses are located in

Poland. The Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy are now also represented in the United States, Italy, Russia, and Czech. Currently, there are about 400 professed sisters, 35 novices, and 22 postulants throughout the world. The Congregation has two novitiates: one in Poland and one in the United States for English-speaking candidates.

# One Heart One Mind in Christ Community

*Founded on July 4, 1992 at Christ the King Parish*

- FORMATION OF MEMBERS • LIFE IN THE SPIRIT SEMINARS
  - BASIC CHRISTIAN MATURITY SEMINARS • BIBLE STUDIES
  - INTERCESSORY MINISTRY • HEALING PRAYERS
  - MUSIC MINISTRY • YOUTH AND CHILDREN MINISTRY
  - PARISH SERVICES
- LECTORS • EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS • USHERS • DIVINE MERCY DEVOTIONS
- PARISH CATECHESIS FOR ADULTS, TEENS, CHILDREN



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

## **The Lay Institute of Divine Mercy**

5174 Clinton Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90004  
tel. 323/463-1333

E-mail: [divinemercury@opoka.org](mailto:divinemercury@opoka.org),  
[mercyinstitute@comcast.net](mailto:mercyinstitute@comcast.net)

Visit our website:  
[www.divinemercury.opoka.org](http://www.divinemercury.opoka.org)



## Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz

# The Catholic Church in Russia Its History, Present Situation, Problems, Perspectives

*Archbishop Kondrusiewicz was born in 1947 in the Byelorussian region of Odelsk. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1981, and became bishop of Gippono-Tsaritskyi and Minsk in 1989. He became the leader of Catholics in European Russia in April of 1991. Archbishop Kondrusiewicz was chosen to lead the Confederation of Russian Catholic Bishops in February 1999. He is Metropolitan of the diocese of the Holy Mother of God in Moscow.*

### A Short History of the Catholic Church in Russia

When we speak of Russia we often imagine a vast country with a very cold climate and many thousands of Orthodox churches. There is a certain truth to this mental picture; Russia was baptized in 988, more than one thousand years ago. And Russia really is an Orthodox country. But there are other elements in the full picture—for besides the Russian Orthodox Church, there are other Christian and non-Christian communities. Among them is the Catholic Church.

The first Catholic parishes in Russia were established in the twelfth century: one in Smolensk and two others in Novgorod. Seven centuries ago five Catholic parishes were established, one in Azov and four in Astrakhan. Finally, the Catholic Church's normal hierarchical structure was established in Russia in 1782, when the Mogilev Archdiocese was created to cover the largest territory in the world.

Thus before 1917 there were already two dioceses in Russia: Mogilev with its Episcopal See in St. Petersburg and Tiraspol with its Episcopal See in Saratov.

Two Major Seminaries were subsequently located in St. Petersburg and Saratov to cater for a large number of seminarians. For example, the number of seminarians in the St. Petersburg Seminary at the time was about 160. Sixty-two of its graduates became bishops and two became cardinals. One of them was Alexander Cardinal Kakowski of Warsaw and the other the first Cardinal in the former Soviet Union, Julian Vaivods of Riga. At that time also in St. Petersburg, there was the famous Theological Academy, the only Catholic Theological Academy, or University, as we would call it today, in Eastern Europe.

At the same time there were fourteen religious congregations of women and four of men working in Russia.

The Catholic Church played an important role and was well known in both the education system as well as in the field of charitable activity in Russia. For example, Catholic priests taught religion in 72 schools in St. Petersburg and in 27 schools in Moscow.

Before 1917, there were 150 Catholic parishes with more than 250 priests to serve half a million Catholic faithful in Russia. In spite of its absolute minority compared with the Orthodox, the Catholic Church was well known in the Russian society and played a notable role in it.

### The Time of Persecution

Unfortunately the year 1917 came. An incredible persecution of religion was organized. All religions and confessions were persecuted for 70 years which means for three generations. Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Jews, and Muslims alike suffered greatly. Churches, monasteries and seminaries were closed, destroyed or transformed into

offices, cinemas, theaters, factories, sport halls and so on. Many bishops, priests, religious, believers and people of good will were sentenced to death or to long periods of imprisonment. Even today we do not know exactly how many died in Gulags. Some researchers say it could be as many as 50 to 70 million people.

In the nineteen-thirties the Soviet regime declared a so-called "piatiletku bezbozhiya," that is a five-year plan of fighting against God. When this plan was introduced the regime wanted to stop the activity of the Church and to exclude the name of God from the collective memory of the people. The Church had to give up its public and legal existence. As a result, by the end of the nineteen-thirties, there remained in Russia only two functioning Catholic churches served by two old priests. They were the Church of St. Louis in Moscow and the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes in St. Petersburg. In the nineteen-sixties, Nikita Krushchev, then Prime Minister of the USSR, even promised to display, on television, the last Catholic priest in the Soviet Union.

Humanly speaking it seemed that the Gospel would no more be proclaimed in Russia and with the death of the last priest that would be the end of the Church in this country. But here I would like to remember the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Apostle Peter: "I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16,18). Also let us remember the apparitions of Our Lady in Fatima in 1917 when she foretold the development of communism in the world in the twentieth Century, especially in Russia, and predicted the conversion of Russia.

At present we are witnesses of such a process of conversion. The end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties was a time of political and social change in the Soviet Union and in Russia. We believe that all these changes happened by the power of the Almighty because of the intercession of Our Lady. Let me remind you of only two events of 1991. The leaders of Russia, Byelorussia, and Ukraine signed an agreement about the splitting up of the Soviet Union. But, please note the date, it happened on December the 8th—on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. I do not believe that leaders of Russia, Byelorussia, and Ukraine knew about this. And the second event, the Soviet Union ceased to exist on December 25, 1991, on Christmas Day. Christmas was the beginning of the new era in the history of humanity. Christmas Day 1991 was the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Russia and the newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union. The time of Russia's conversion and spiritual resurrection had begun.

### Present Situation

On April 13, 1991 the Holy See established two Apostolic Administrations – one for Catholics in the European part of Russia and one for Catholics in the Asian part.

At this time in the Russian Federation there were only 4 open churches, two chapels and 10 parishes, in which 8 priests were working, two of them over 80 years old.

After the registration of the statutes of the Apostolic Administration of European Russia with the Ministry of

Justice on July 31, 1991, with the goal of having legal status, the registration of parishes and other Church organizations began.

In 1999, the Holy Father created two other Apostolic Administrations in Saratov and Irkutsk. In 2002 all four Apostolic Administrations were raised to the status of full dioceses. At the present time there is the Metropolitan Archdiocese of the Mother of God in Moscow, a diocese of St. Clement in Saratov, a diocese of the Transfiguration in Novosibirsk and a diocese of St. Joseph in Irkutsk. The seemingly limitless expanse of Russia, the enormous distances priests must travel to serve the faithful simply required reorganization at the appropriate moment. More effective pastoral work will be the result. The four bishops of the above mentioned dioceses compose the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of the Russian Federation.

At present, there are 212 officially registered parishes and about 300 non-registered communities in Russia. About 270 priests are now working there; only 10% of them are Russian, the remainder from 22 different countries. There are about 250 nuns, of which also 10% are from Russia, the rest from 22 different countries. The number of Catholic faithful is approximately 600,000, but potentially it could be about 1,500,000. We discover previously unaccounted Catholic faithful all the time.

Unfortunately 27% of our parishes do not have their own churches or chapels. In these places the faithful must rent premises to celebrate the liturgy, or they must have Mass said in private apartments.

Since the fall of 1991, we have had a publishing center in Moscow: "Truth and Life," which publishes religious books

and a popular monthly journal of the same name. Other publishing houses were established later in the decade: In Moscow, one named after St. Francis, a "Spiritual Library" series; a Salesian operation located in Gatchina which is near St. Petersburg; in St. Petersburg one named after St. Peter; Kaliningrad, formerly Koenigsburg, has an operation named after St. Adalbert, the patron saint of the region.

The St. Thomas Institute of philosophy, theology and history has been active in Moscow and in 2 affiliated locations since the fall of 1991. The Institute offers a four-year study program for the laity, among whom are many of our Orthodox brothers and sisters. The total number of students is about 150.

The charitable organization "Caritas" has been active in Moscow as well as in the other regions of the Russian Federation. In cooperation with the Orthodox Church, "Caritas" helps the poor and needy, as well as displaced people, which, after the break up of the Soviet Union, have reached numbers in the millions.

There are two radio programs: one in Moscow that airs for one hour daily, and the second one in St. Petersburg for 24 hours per day.

Since October of 1994 a weekly newspaper "The Light of the Gospel" is published.

Since 1993 the Major Seminary, "Our Lady Queen of Apostles," has been functioning in St. Petersburg. 52 seminarians now prepare for the priesthood there. In 1999 I ordained three native Russian young men to the priesthood. All three had trained at this Seminary. They were the first native Russian priests ordained in 81 years.

The Liturgical and Catechetical Commissions work on the translation and preparation of liturgical and catechetical texts; however this process is very painstaking, primarily because there is practically no terminology in Russian for Catholic theology and liturgy; nor are there translators qualified in theology. Nevertheless, already more than 500 different titles have been translated and published, including the Roman Missal and the New Catechism.

Catechetical courses may be held in the parishes only, in so-called Sunday schools, since current legislation does not permit the teaching of religion in schools. There are a few exceptions, for example, when the principal of a school invites us to teach there. In Russia catechesis is vital, not only for children, but also for adults, who before now did not have the possibility of studying the faith.

One phenomenon of the Church in Russia is the great interest among the youth and intelligentsia in religion and in the Church. They often say, that after the fall of Communism, it was as though they were left without a goal in life. Before the fall, there was always a central idea around which they could organize all their other concepts. Today no one has suggested a replacement for the failed ideology of communism. Yet walking about the streets

of Moscow, these persons see churches – with crosses on their domes pointed up toward heaven. These men and women know how cruelly the Church was persecuted but also that she survived and is now reviving. They have heard about the Gospel, in which nothing has changed, and the contrast could not be more stark. Everything in their own lives changes so frequently – and usually in accord with those who at the moment hold power in government. They

want something constant. "Give us the Gospel!" they say. "Teach us how to believe!"

It is for good reason, then, that we place in the youth of Russia our hope for the spiritual regeneration of society and the growth of the Church.

### Problems

The Catholic Church in Russia now faces many problems. The most pressing are: how to recover confiscated ecclesiastical property, how to receive permission to construct new churches and ecclesiastical buildings, financial problems concerning the construction and renovation of churches, the shortage of priests and nuns, the unavailability of religious literature, difficulties in relations with the Russian Orthodox Church and with the State, and how to provide religious education especially for the young, and other problems.

As I have mentioned above it is extremely difficult to recover our former ecclesiastical property. Practically speaking everything depends on local authorities. In some places they do not create any problems. For example, in St. Petersburg we now have five of our former churches. In other places it is practically impossible to recover even one, Kaliningrad is a case in point. In some places churches have been sold off during the process of privatization and today there is no practical chance of recovering them.

The same situation goes for the construction of new churches. It is very difficult to obtain building permission.



In some regions the civil authorities place the decision in the hands of the local Russian Orthodox Church.

Russians in today's society are extremely divided financially. Mostly it is a very poor society with the exception of a small number of very rich people. It is clear that our possibilities are very limited and practically speaking we can service only because of the generous help of our sponsors, among whom Americans play a very important role.

As I have mentioned before practically all the clergy and religious working in Russia are from abroad, what also creates its own problems. Besides the difficulties with the Russian language and ways of thinking there is another great problem, that of receiving visas and registration. A few years ago it was quite easy for foreign priests and nuns to obtain registration and residence permits for one year. Today these are available only for three months. We cannot organize normal pastoral work in such conditions when every three months priests have to leave Russia and travel back again. And if we consider the costs of such travel it becomes clearer how serious and difficult the situation is. All of this explains why we pay very great attention to the promotion of priestly and religious vocations and to the training of priests. The future of the Church in Russia will depend very much on our ability to have Russian priests and sisters.

During the time of persecution, that is for three generations, not a single religious book was prepared or printed in Russia. Today we are facing serious difficulties with the preparation and publication of new theological, liturgical and religious books. First of all we are hampered by a shortage of good translators, qualified both linguistically and theologically.

This is compounded by a lack of ecclesiastical terminology in modern Russian. Today the Catholic Church has developed a new post-Conciliar vocabulary and this makes it difficult to fully adopt the historic vocabulary of the Russian Orthodox Church. But in spite of such difficulties about 160 titles of different liturgical, theological and religious books have been printed in the last six years. One of the most important is the new Catechism of the Catholic Church, the translation of which was sponsored by the Archbishop of New York, His Eminence John Cardinal O'Connor.

Three generations of Russians had no opportunity to receive any religious education. And at present time the Church has to pay great attention not only to the religious education of young people but also of the middle-aged and the elderly. On one hand, people are thirsty for God and the Gospel. They are looking for something eternal. But on the other hand, a spirit of materialism is beginning to affect the Russian society. And the Church faces very great problems in attracting people and helping them stay faithful to the Gospel and the Church's teaching. In our pastoral work we are adopting the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the best examples of pastoral practice from Western societies. Still we need well-prepared lay people who can help priests in pastoral work in parishes.

Our relationships with the Russia Orthodox Church present a special kind of difficulty for the Catholic Church in Russia. After the structures of the Catholic Church were restored in Russia in 1991, the Catholic Church was immediately accused of invading the canonical territory of

the Russian Orthodox Church and of engaging in what was described as "proselytism". The short account we have just heard of the history of the Catholic Church in Russia gives us an idea of just how long, varied and rich the history of the Catholic Church in this country has been. It is not the fault of the Catholic Church that during the persecution many members of the Catholic communities were interned and transferred far away to Siberia, to Kazakhstan and to other places, that churches were destroyed or closed, that people did not have any opportunity to attend public worship and so on. Now they want to return to their forefathers' religion, to confess their faith in the Catholic Church and to have the protection of the law to assembly and to worship God. This is their right.

Neither can I accept the charge of proselytism. Catholics never stand in front of Orthodox churches and never say: "Don't go to the Orthodox Church but come to the Catholic Church." We never organize religious services in stadiums or in other similar public places. We never try to buy believers with humanitarian aid. The Second Vatican Council has declared that the Orthodox Church is our Sister Church and has the same means for salvation. So there is no reason to have a policy of proselytism. But we have to leave to people the right of free choice. Everybody has the right to make a free decision about which Church to belong to. Freedom of religion is a fundamental principle of human rights.

We need to be clear that at the present time the ecumenical situation in Russia is quite difficult. But in spite of many

problems I do hope for a better future. An interconfessional consultative committee has existed in Russia for the last four years. Metropolitan Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church, Pastor Peter Konovachik, a Baptist, and I are the co-chairmen. Already we have organized two big ecumenical conferences. This is the sign that we are able to find common language and to work together to improve our relations.

Speaking about freedom of religion means that I must speak about the new Russian law on religious freedom which has provoked a lot of controversy.

The previous law came into effect in 1990. It was really very liberal. However in 1997, under pressure from the Russian Orthodox Church and from some nationalists, the Russian Parliament approved a new bill. Its character may be judged from the fact that the text of the new bill was prepared secretly. Many religious leaders were initially unaware of its existence. The Holy Father wrote to the Russian President, Mr. Boris Yeltzin, asking him not to sign the bill. The American Congress protested. Many religious leaders in Russia joined the protest. I myself sent two letters, to the President and to the President's Administration, asking for corrections to the text to bring it into line with the Constitution of the Russian Federation. As we know President Yeltzin refused to sign the bill in July 1997, but two months later in September, he changed his mind and signed a slightly revised text. The final draft of the bill on religious freedom scarcely improved from the first. It is practically the same text as in July, with small cosmetic changes.

Now we are expecting the rules of application of the new law being prepared by the Russian Government. We



have received only the draft of the rules. The first problem is the re-registration of all previously registered religious organizations. I hope we will be able to re-register all our parishes, activities and structures. It will not be easy, in particular there will be problems re-registering religious congregations. We must be grateful that the Government recognizes us as a "centralized religious organization." This will avoid the difficulties arising from the requirement that a religious organization must have been present in Russia for 15 years to be eligible to apply for registration.

The new law on religious freedom creates a lot of difficulties for Church activities. For example: it is impossible to teach religion to children in school without the permission of the school director and of the local government. It is forbidden to have religion instructions for children under the age of fourteen without the written permission of both parents. It will be impossible to have mission activities, and so on.

Of course I am worried about the conditions for the future activities of the Catholic Church in Russia, but I know well that in Russia it was never easy, and yet the Church has survived until today and I believe, with the blessing of God, we will continue to survive.

#### **Pastoral Activity and Its Perspectives**

After the three generations of persecution the Catholic Church, like her Orthodox Sister, is rising to new life. This process is not easy, as we have just seen, and the way of the Church in Russia is not sown with roses.

But we live in hope for the future. We are taking care not only of the renovation and construction of church buildings, but also exerting every effort for the spiritual resurrection of the Russian people. Therefore we must see to the organization of normal ecclesiastical structures to provide normal pastoral work.

The huge territory of European Russia is divided into four regions. Every month in these regions we have pastoral meetings with the priests, nuns and lay people.

Catechization is organized mostly in parish Sunday schools and are intended not only for children, but also for adults and even the elderly.

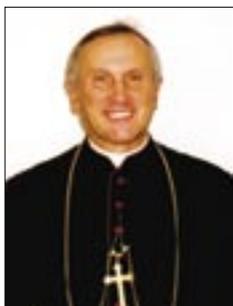
Catechetical and liturgical commissions have been preparing liturgical and catechetical literature. Lay councils have been helping with the religious animation of lay people, organizing pastoral work and also with the construction and renovation of ecclesiastical buildings.

There are about 300,000 believers in the European Part of Russia, 65,000 of whom live in Moscow.

The future of the Church in Russia will depend very much on the political situation and on relations between Catholics and the Orthodox. Nonetheless whatever problems we may have to face, the Catholic Church in Russia faces them as an integral part of Russian society. The Government, the Russian Orthodox Church and other confessions and religions recognize us as such. This gives us real hope for the future.

The second very important argument for the future of the Catholic Church in Russia is the great interest in Catholicism among young people, especially among the intelligentsia. Young people are one of the characteristics of the Church in Russia. They are very active especially in the re-founding of parishes. Youth in the Church in Russia is a clear sign that she has a future.

Today in Russia after seventy years of persecution we are working very hard to confront the spiritual vacuum which was created with the values of the Gospel. It will be the only foundation on which we will be able to rebuild the society. Russia will have its future if we will build it on the solid foundation of moral principles, given to humanity by God.



### **Bishop Edward Ozorowski**

## **What is God's Mercy?**

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

through his care for his sons allowing them independence and a share of his estate. The younger son did not value his father's love, which he abused. He took his share of the inheritance and left home. The young son squandered his money and lived recklessly, coming close to ruin. The father chose not to forbid his son to leave home, as that would have curtailed his freedom. Instead, he allowed him to go, while continuing to love him. The son never doubted his father's love and returned home. The father welcomed him back with open arms.

Fatherly love saved his young son from death. When the father embraced his prodigal son, placed a ring on his finger, draped a robe on his shoulders, and held a feast to celebrate his son's return, his love became mercy. The Latin word "misericordia" means to show a kind heart. The father showed the prodigal son a kind heart, saved his life, and restored the splendor of his lost dignity.

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

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

God's mercy should never be considered separately from His love and treated merely as pity. From a person's point of view, this love may indeed look like pity because a man does fall and commit sins. However, from God's side, it is always love. Moreover, this love for people has been merciful from the very beginning. In giving man free will, choice, God saw what a man did and knew what would happen as its consequences. Yet, He never abandoned His first love. He created the world with the idea that the Son of God will become man, and man will become God (St. Irenaeus).

This way, the merciful love of God was revealed in the act of creation and the act of salvation - sin that deserved punishment became a blessed sin (Exultet). This is and has always been the way. From the moment of conception and birth, every man is embraced by God's love. This love is greater than human weaknesses and sins. That is why man is alive. God's love to man is mercy.



## Archbishop Stanislaw Szymecki

# 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Encyclical Letter

## “Dives in Misericordia”

Divine Mercy is inherent at the core of Christian life. The theme of God’s mercy finds its place as much in the theology as in the life and ministry of the church. I was the bishop of a diocese which, before the Second World War, was part of the large Archdiocese of Vilnius. It was in there in Vilnius, that God’s servant, Michael Sopocko was the Spiritual Director of Sister Faustina Kowalska, and after the war, in Bialystok, he was the apostle of God’s mercy spreading its devotion. Bialystok, like many other religious centers, aspires to be a city where the devotions of God’s mercy find a privileged place.

The Archbishop of Krakow, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla held the theme of mercy dear to his heart as theologian and as shepherd of Krakow’s church. This is demonstrated by his predilection for Brother Albert (Adam Chmielowski, 1845-1916), the friend of the poor and the abandoned, the man of mercy. We know his drama “Brother of our God” where he wrote about Brother Albert.

Cardinal Karol Wojtyla also had knowledge of Sister Faustina Kowalska’s revelations. He inaugurated the beatification process of Sister Faustina in Krakow in 1965. The Archbishop of Krakow knew God’s Servant, Michael Sopocko, his writings, and his work as well as his dedication to Divine Mercy. He knew about all the difficulties connected with this devotion, which needed to be purified from all fatal interpretations associated to the devotion and caused displeasure to the Holy See.

In order not to expand the details, I will limit myself to only mention a text of the Archbishop of Krakow, extracted from the drama dedicated to Brother Albert Chmielowski. In fact, the issue of Divine Mercy appeared at the very beginning of the literary endeavor of Father Karol Wojtyla. In the drama “Brother of our God”, written in the first year after his ordination, the author, has the main protagonist of this dramatic theatre piece say a prayer. This prayer somehow defines God’s mercy personified in Jesus Christ.

“Adam is left alone. Sits in his chair without moving for a long period of time. After a while he rubs his forehead, straightens his hair. Unexpectedly stands up. Slowly he goes to the easels and indifferently passes several of them. Finally “Ecce Homo”. Isn’t this painting much more Adam’s image than the others? Standing in front of the painting slowly hunches his back as if in spite of himself. He appears to be crushed by the weight of the subject. Now he briefly lift his eyes to the painting. Then he starts to speak very slowly:

- It is terrible, you don’t look like yourself -  
You have worked so hard in every one of them.  
You are dying of fatigue.  
They have worn you out - This is called Mercy.  
In spite of that, you kept your beauty.  
The most handsome Son of Man,  
Such beauty has nevermore been replicated -  
How hard is this beauty, how very hard.  
This Beauty is called Mercy.”

It is not easy to understand, to comment, or to analyze the texts of John Paul II. The origin is not only the intellect of the author, but above all his soul and his heart. John Paul

II was a philosopher, a theologian, a shepherd. He was also a poet. The last charisma gives his words an incomparable intuition and adds freshness to his thoughts. His thoughts do not require any deep analysis, but rather a meditation on each of his written sentences. It is needed to approach this by heart. This is what John Paul II emphasized about the truth, which the revelation of Mercy gives to us. Mercy is lived. We must turn toward Mercy.

The teachings of John Paul II on God’s mercy are found in the encyclical letter, “Dives in Misericordia” in its completeness and with its rich novelty. The Pope engages himself on this subject with such emphasis for a fundamental reason: Mercy is essential to “The Good News”. Mercy gives God his true and authentic face. God is love. God is reach in mercy.

How to define mercy theologically? The Pope talks about it as a particular attribute of God. We have this knowledge thanks to the revelation. We discern it in an act of faith, accepting this revelation in the person of Christ. We accept this revelation in an existentialist way, which means, through our own experiences. John Paul II specifies: “I wish to draw from the eternal and at the same time – for its simplicity and depth – incomparable language of revelation and faith, in order through this same language to express once more before God and before humanity the major anxieties of our time.

In fact, revelation and faith teach us not only to meditate in the abstract upon the mystery of God as ‘Father of mercies’, but also to have recourse to that mercy in the name of Christ and in union with Him. Did not Christ say that our Father, who ‘sees in secret’, is always waiting for us to have recourse to Him in every need and always waiting for us to study His mystery: the mystery of the Father and His love?” (DM 2).

The revelation of the Father and his love! These two words: Father and Love give us the fulfillment of the revelation in Jesus Christ. Fulfillment in which mercy is the summit in the modern state of human sinfulness.

*The encyclical letter “Dives in Misericordia” (Rich in Mercy) was written by John Paul II during the third year of his pontificate. The Pope signed it in Rome on November 30, 1980, and it was published on December 2 of that same year.*



*In this encyclical, the Holy Father addresses the theme of divine mercy, with the hope that this document may be “a heartfelt appeal by the Church to mercy, which humanity and the modern world need so much.” He also underlines that God’s merciful love is his “most stupendous attribute”, stronger than all the evil there is in the world.*



**Roberto Martinez**

## Jesus is Absolute Mercy!

“The Lord is Gracious and Merciful, slow to anger and abounding in Love” (Psalm 145:8). The words of this Psalm are not mere words to me, nor is the icon of the “Divine Mercy” of Jesus.

For me, Jesus’ Mercy is a tangible reality. It is a reality that fills me with his Love, his Power, and Mercy towards others. Yes, I have been an active recipient of his Love and Mercy throughout my life and more profoundly when he allowed me to approach his throne of grace.

When my shortcomings brought me to my knees and I approached the confessional – I was forgiven, released from bondage, and set free. “Bless the Lord, my soul; do not forget all the gifts of God, who pardons all your ills. Delivers your life from the pit, surrounds you with Love and compassion, fills your days with good things; your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Ps 103:3-5). Yes, Jesus opened up the fount of his mercy to me and allowed me to see because God desires Mercy for all of his children- specifically, the troubled youth of our cities. Often times the “Divine Mercy” of Jesus is extended through people and the Master has allowed me to realize the depth of his mercy so that I could be the hand that extends it to others. Today, I marvel at the way our great king accomplishes his handiwork, the way he distributes his love and Mercy throughout our cities and streets – by using us! The call of Abraham, Moses, and David makes it evident that only God can “take the worst, turn it around, and make it the best.”

I, as Youth Minister and Scripture Teacher at Christ the King Church in Los Angeles, am not the best, but I am hopeful. I am hopeful as I recall an aphorism that someone once told me, “There is no Saint without a past and no sinner without a future.” I am deeply aware of this because of the Love and Mercy that I have received. Jesus speaks to us in the same way that he spoke to Mary Magdalene: “Has no one condemned you? Neither will I condemn you.” Therefore, I am confident because I have experienced the “Good News”: The Good News of God’s Love and Redemption! “Praise the Lord, who is good; God’s Love endures forever; Praise the God of God’s; God’s Love endures forever; Praise the Lord of Lord’s; God’s Love endures forever” (Ps 136:1-3). It is the knowledge and appropriation of Jesus’ salvific act that enables me to realize freedom from the weight of sin and hopelessness. “The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in Love.” This is a message that must be heard and one that I’ve attempted to hand on to our teenagers for the past eight years.

Another person once said, “Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of God we so blindly evoke?” For example, what immensity of the supreme benevolence of God is contained in the testimony of Matthew’s Gospel, where Jesus says, “But Blessed are your eyes, because they see, your ears, because they hear. Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it” (Mt 13:16-17). Amen, by the unsurpassing

providence of God, we, sinful creatures that we are, are allowed to see. “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and unsearchable his ways!” (Rom 11:33). By the grace of God we are able to see and to know that God desires mercy for all of his children, especially the marginalized.

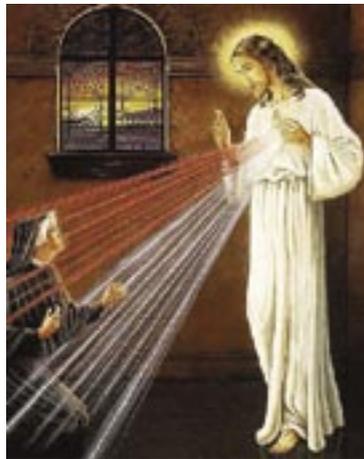
After I was delivered to the “throne of grace”, I was placed at the service of our youth (teens), which enabled me to penetrate the love and mercy of God even deeper. The Master has allowed me to reach beyond the exterior rough edges of our youth and peer into the interior grandeur of his handiwork: “For from the greatness and the beauty of created things their original author, by analogy, is seen” (Wisdom 13:5). I have seen in the teen potentiality – the potential to be great.

They are energetic, curious, restless, bold, intelligent, fragile, fearless, and hungry to be acknowledged and fed. Great destinies are opened to them, therefore it is important for us to stop what we are doing and feed them. On one particular night, while out on a social activity, I heard one of our teens (call me by name) from a distance, in a voice that seemed angelic, and say, “I’m hungry.” The echo of that request still resonates in my ears in the way Jesus’ followers were hungry for his healing presence. This is why Jesus commissioned Peter, “If you love me, feed my sheep” (John 21:17).

Our merciful redeemer knew the state of his people, as he looked with pity upon them and said, “they are like sheep without a shepherd.” The same holds true for our current generation of youth- they are like sheep without a shepherd. This situation brings to mind our Lord’s edict

in the Gospel of Matthew where he says, “Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14). The children of our world today (which encompass many categories) are hungry - they are hungry for a message of hope, pardon, and mercy: “Out of the depths I call to you, Lord; Lord, hear my cry! May your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy” (“De Profundis”, Ps 130:1-2). The “Good News” is that God desires mercy for his children- all of us! As St. Bonaventure said, “Jesus extended fatherly affection to the repentant, showing them the open bosom of divine mercy...to manifest the sweetness of supreme devotedness, the fountain of all mercy, the good Jesus, wept for us in our misery not only once but many times.” For the sake of your sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world. Further, the Franciscan Doctor of the Church says, “Jesus wept first over Lazarus, then over the city and finally on the cross, a flood of tears streamed forth from those loving eyes for the expiation of all sins. The savior wept abundantly, now deploring the misery of human weakness, now the darkness of a blind heart, now the depravity of obdurate malice.”

The Divine Mercy of Jesus is not a mere concept, but a living, breathing, reality that desires to engulf our lives when we are not aware of it, when we don’t deserve it, and providentially when we most need it. It comes to us



in various forms, through various people. In my own life, the Master's merciful touch has come through the loving gaze of a nurse (while bleeding on an ER table), through the fearless intervention of a petite girl (while outnumbered and being beaten upon), and most significantly through the absolution of one of God's priests (in the confessional). Fr. Mark Link, S.J. explains that Israel's spiritual history parallels our own spiritual history: "God calls us to greatness; we sin and fall from greatness; God recalls us to greatness." Kyrie, eleison, Christe eleison. St Paul reminds us that, "Just as you once disobeyed God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they now disobeyed in order that, by virtue of the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:29-32). Domine Fili unigenite, Iesu Christe, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

There is nothing more powerful than knowing, deep within the recesses of your heart, that you are forgiven. Forgiveness is freedom and the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ desires to feed all of his children with his Love, Forgiveness, and Mercy. "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17). Amen, our great and almighty Savior desires to free all of his children (especially our youth), from the rages of despair, loneliness, doubt, weakness, hopelessness, sinfulness, and emptiness. God is Love, Goodness, Holiness, Mystery, and Absolute Mercy. "For he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel, for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever" (Luke 1:53-55).

Indeed, our Lord has remembered his promise of mercy, "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness

for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name." (Is 49:15-16). Throughout history God has utilized spiritual giants to proclaim and demonstrate his merciful love and redemption: The Cure'd'ars, Padre Pio, Saint Faustina, Mother Teresa, God's Servant John Paul II and now Pope Benedict XVI.

Our new pontiff proclaimed to the world upon his installation, "The net of the Gospel pulls us out of the waters of death and into the splendor of God's light, the true life." It is this urgent message that must be proclaimed to a world that is hungry for "they know not what."

Our Catholic youth are continually setting an example of where our true food resides. The gathering of a million Catholic youth at the closing Mass of World Youth Day (Cologne, Germany), discloses to the entire world that our sustenance is embodied in the Holy Eucharist.

A cardinal who witnessed the event reported, "Our Catholic youth are returning to countries all over the world this week with a new awareness of Jesus in their lives, the conviction that God truly loves them, and a wonderful zeal to share this good news with others – especially their peers. They will be our best evangelizers when they get home" (The Tidings, Aug. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005). The "Magnificat" expresses what our youth experienced, "Out of the love which consumed him, Jesus Christ offered himself upon the cross as the perfect sacrifice of the new and eternal Covenant; the Father received the sacrifice and drew him from death to glory. On Sunday the whole Church celebrates this immeasurable mystery of love and life" (Magnificat, August, 2005).

**Jesus is absolute Mercy!  
Jesus we trust in you!**

*„O Jesus, I want to live in the present moment, to live as if this were the last day of my life. I want to use every moment scrupulously for the greater glory of God, to use every circumstance for the benefit of my soul. I want to look upon everything from the point of view that nothing happens without the will of God. God of unfathomable mercy, embrace the whole world and pour Yourself out upon us through the merciful Heart of Jesus" (Diary 1183).*

## How to Pray the Chaplet of The Divine Mercy

*On ordinary rosary beads (Diary, 476)*

### **Begin with the Sign of the Cross:**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

### **The Our Father**

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

### **The Hail Mary**

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

### **The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. He

was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

### **On the Large Bead before Each Decade:**

Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

### **On the 10 Small Beads of Each Decade:**

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

### **Concluding Doxology: (after five decades)**

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world. (*Three times*)



**Fr. George J. Bobowski**

## God's Servant Fr. Michael Sopocko

In order to understand the life of Saint Faustina Kowalska, and the remarkable spread of her devotion to the Divine Mercy throughout the world, it helps to begin by learning the story of someone else: a priest. His name was Fr. Michael Sopocko. Divine Providence entrusted a very important role in Saint Faustina's mission to her confessor and spiritual director Fr. Michael Sopocko. During Saint Faustina's stay in Vilnius (Lithuania) in the years 1933-1936, he was for her an irreplaceable help in discerning interior inspirations and visions. Obedient to his orders, she wrote a DIARY, which is now an extraordinarily valuable document of Catholic mysticism. In the DIARY one can also find evidence of Fr. Michael Sopocko's extraordinary character and his work in fulfilling the desires of the Lord Jesus.

"He is a priest after My own Heart (...) Through him it pleased Me to proclaim the worship of My mercy" (Diary 1256). "His thought is closely united to Mine, so be at peace about what concerns My work. I will not let him make a mistake, and you should do nothing without his permission" (Diary 1408).

The painting of the Image and the exposition of the Image for public honor, the propagation of the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy, undertaking the preliminary efforts of establishing the Feast of Divine Mercy and the founding of the new Congregation, all took place in Vilnius thanks to the labors of Fr. Michael Sopocko. From that time the collaborative efforts, brought to fruition at their cost of prayer and suffering, now radiate to embrace the whole world.

"Seeing Fr. Sopocko's sacrifice and efforts for this work, I admired his patience and humility. This all cost a great deal, not only in terms of toil and various troubles, but also of money, and Father Sopocko, was taking care of all the expenses. I can see that Divine Providence had prepared him to carry out this work of mercy before I had asked God for this. Oh, how strange are Your ways, O God! And how happy are the souls that follow the call of Divine grace!" (Diary 422).

Fr. Michael Sopocko was born on November 1, 1888 in Nowosady, near Vilnius (Lithuania). Between 1910 and 1914 he studied theology at the University of Vilnius, and then in Warsaw, where he also completed Pedagogical Institute. He was a chaplain in the Polish Army in Warsaw and Vilnius during both war time and peace time (1918-1932). After obtaining his doctorate in moral theology in 1926, he became the spiritual director of the seminary in Vilnius. He was tenured in 1934. He worked as lecturer of pastoral theology in the Theology Department of Stefan Batory University in Vilnius and the Higher Theological Seminary in Bialystok (1928-1962). He had over 200 scholarly works published.



Fr. Sopocko formulated the theological basis for the new forms of cult of Divine Mercy, to which he was a dedicated apostle. He was engaged for the social activity. He was the confessor for religious and lay communities. He wrote letters to the first community to help the sisters in their formation and composed the constitution for the newly founded Congregation according to the thinking and proposals of St. Faustina. He composed prayers to the Divine Mercy based on her texts.

After St. Faustina's death, with whom he kept in contact until the end of her life, he consequently took over the deed of apparition tasks allotted for their realization. In the

DIARY there are testimonies witnessing to the beautiful personality and inner riches of this holy priest. "O my Jesus, You see how very grateful I am to Father Sopocko, who has advanced Your work so much. That soul, so humble, has had to endure all the storms.

He has not allowed himself to become discouraged by adversities, but has faithfully responded to the call of God" (Diary 1586).

Fr. Michael Sopocko died on February 15, 1975 in Bialystok (on the name day of St. Faustina). The beatification process was completed at the diocesan level on September 29, 1993. December 20, 2004, The Congregation for the Causes of the Saints in Rome promulgated decree that stated the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Fr. Michael Sopocko.

God's Servant Father Michael Sopocko wrote in His Diary: "There are the truths which are known and often heard and spoken but not understandable. It was like that with me, concerning the truth of Divine Mercy. So many times I mentioned about this truth in my sermons, I thought about it during the retreats. I repeated it in the church prayers – especially in Psalms – but I didn't understand the meaning of this truth, and I didn't get to the core of its essence, that it is the highest attribute of God's outside activity. Just as it was necessary that a simple nun Sister Faustina from the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, who was led by intuition, told me, briefly and often repeated it, stimulating me to examining, studying and thinking often about this truth. (...) in the beginning I didn't know what was the problem, I listened, I distrusted, I thought, I studied, I sought other's advice – not until after several years I understood the importance of this work, the greatness of this idea. I became convinced myself about the effectiveness of this old, but neglected and demanding in our times the renewal, the huge life-giving cult. (...) The trust in God's Mercy, the spreading of the cult of this mercy among the others, and the boundless sacrifice of all self-thoughts, words and deeds to it, without the shadow of self-seeking, will be the general principle of the rest of my life, with the help of this immeasurable mercy" (Fr M. Sopocko's Diary).



**Lelis Cruzata**

# **Saint Sister Faustina and God's Servant Father Michael Sopoćko**

## **I. Sister Faustina Moves to Vilnius**

In May 1933, Sister Faustina left from Krakow to Vilnius. On her way there, she stopped in Czestochowa to visit the shrine of the Black Madonna.

Looking at the holy image, she became so engrossed in prayer that the superior of the house had to send for her so that she would not miss her train. When she arrived in Vilnius, it appeared that Jesus had prepared a great surprise for His servant. During confession, she met a priest whom she had previously seen twice in her visions, and who was to become her spiritual adviser and help her in her mission. His name was Michael Sopoćko, who was confessor to the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy as well as theology professor at the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius. During confession, Sister Faustina bared her soul to him and told him about Jesus' orders. At first the priest treated these revelations with extreme caution. When Sister Faustina insisted, during her subsequent confessions, he considered giving up his post as the Congregation's confessor. However, it never came to that. To make sure that Sister Faustina was not mentally ill, he sent her to psychiatrists and gathered information about her from her superiors. The results of the examination carried out by Doctor Helena Maciejewska and the opinion of the Vilnius superior, Sister Irena Krzyzanowska, and the Mother General Michaela Moraczewska were so favorable that Rev. Sopoćko changed his attitude towards Sister Faustina. He decided to help her to have the image of the Divine Mercy painted.

## **II. Eugeniusz Kazimirowski Paints the First Divine Mercy Image**

A Vilnius artist, Eugeniusz Kazimirowski, was chosen to paint the image. He was an average painter and was chosen for practical reasons – he lived in the same house as Father Sopoćko. Thus, from January 2nd, 1934, Sister Faustina went regularly, with her superior – Sister Irena and later Sister Borgia Tichy to Holy Mass at Ostra Brama every Saturday. Ostra Brama was the most important Shrine of our Lady, besides Czestochowa, in pre-war Poland. Our Lady is depicted without the Child, in the aureole of the sun amid is known by the name of "Mother of Mercy". They then went on to Rossa, where Father Sopoćko and the artist lived. The superior accompanied Sister Faustina while she instructed the painter. However, the painting was not as beautiful as Sister Faustina desired. Disappointed with the effect after one of her visits, she went to the chapel and cried bitterly saying: "Who will paint You as beautiful as You are?" It was then that she heard a voice: "Not in the beauty of the color, nor of the brush lies the greatness of this image, but in my grace."

After six months the painting was finished. Father Sopoćko paid the artist, took the picture to his apartment and later hung it in a dark corridor of the Bernardine Sisters convent near St. Michael's Church, where he was the rector. Sister Faustina was deeply disappointed that the image, which was to be honored all over the world, was hidden within the convent enclosure so that nobody could see it.

The image of the Divine Mercy shows Jesus wearing a white robe. His eyes are looking slightly downwards, and His right hand is raised to the shoulder level in the gesture of blessing. His left hand, meanwhile, is holding the garment at the breast from where two large rays come out – one red, the other pale.

Jesus himself explained the meaning of these rays: "The two rays denote Blood and Water. The pale ray stands for the Water, which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood, which is the life of souls."

## **III. Permission to found a new Congregation**

In May 1937, the Mother General, having consulted the general council, granted Sister Faustina permission to leave the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy if, according to God's will she was to found a new order. This decision took Sister Faustina by surprise. She immediately felt lost, lonely, and unable to do anything. Father Sopoćko, who was consulted in this matter, replied that both her confessor's and Mother General's permission were not valid if Sister Faustina did not get an explicit order from Jesus to leave the Congregation. At the end of Sister Faustina's life Father Sopoćko came to the conclusion that Sister Faustina was not able to start a new congregation, the same way, as she was not able to paint the image of the Divine Mercy by herself.

Due to health problems, at the end of July 1937, Sister Faustina went to Rabka for few days but she felt even worse there and returned to Krakow. Because of her deteriorating health, her job was changed from gardener to gatekeeper. The Sisters testified later, that Sister Faustina was very gentle and kind as a gatekeeper – particularly to the poor, who often came to the convent begging for food or alms. There were many of them, but Sister Faustina never refused to go to the kitchen to ask for something to eat for them although this made the cooks angry with her.

One rainy day, a poor young man, in rags and very cold, came to the gate and asked for something to eat. Sister Faustina went to the kitchen, found some soup, put some breadcrumbs in it and offered it to the beggar. As she was taking the bowl from him, she recognized Jesus, but He vanished from her sight.

When Sister Damiana visited her in the autumn of the same year, Sister Faustina said to her: "I am feeling really bad but I hope that Jesus will not surprise me because I am to die at the age of thirty-three." However, her illness was progressing fast, and she had to stay in the hospital longer and longer. Some sisters suspected and accused her of simulating her illness.

## **IV. The Propagation of the Worship of Mercy**

In February 1935 Jesus promised Sister Faustina that, at the hour of death He would protect everyone who had worshipped His great mercy. Soon after that, during the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus promised again to show His mercy at the time of death, to the people who would propagate the Devotion to Divine Mercy.

On Sunday, April 4th, 1937, Jesus said that people who would propagate the worship of mercy would enjoy His maternal protection during their lives, and at the hour of death, would experience the Saviour's infinite mercy.

At the end of January 1938, Jesus addressed a special profuse promise to priests, and propagators of the Devotion. He promised to give them wondrous power and inspiration, so that on hearing them speak about this unfathomable Mercy, even hardened sinners would repent.

The last vision directed to all propagators of the Divine Mercy took place on January 28th, 1938. It was then that Jesus said: "All those souls who will glorify My mercy and spread its worship, encouraging others to trust in My mercy, will not experience terror at the hour of death. My mercy will shield them in that final battle."



**Ewa Bobowska**

## The story of a very precious Painting

Fr. Michael Sopoćko has endured the denial of the propagation of Saint Faustina's form of devotion to the Divine Mercy, first in his diocese and then in the whole Church. He could not give up the divine message, which he has been convinced of, but he did not want to go against the priest's obedience to the Church authorities. He has searched everywhere for indispensable help and support. In a certain moment he has found the conviction that Saint Faustina's vision is the same, as the Apostles have experienced while seeing the Resurrected Christ, as it has been written in St. John's Gospel: "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."

He started to search with doubled effort the justification of God's Mercy within the Holy Scripture. He asked also the well-known painter from Vilnius Ludomir Ślędzinski (later, after the Second World War, the President of the Technical University in Krakow) to paint the image according to the evangelic records i.e. with the doors of the Upper Room closed and without the inscription "Jesus, I trust in you". The painting received its imprimatur on Oct. 5th, 1954 and has been evaluated as appropriate for cult purposes by the Main Commission of the Polish Episcopate.

But this was not the painting, which found its way to the Cathedral in Białystok. After being in various locations, almost forty years later, in 1993, the painting has been found in Kalisz, in the church of the Society of Jesus, which has been known for its special devotion to the Holy Heart of Jesus.

The Church in Kalisz has accepted the image with special love. The painting became – "a very precious painting" – in the Sanctuary of the Heart of the Merciful Jesus founded by Bishop Stanislaw Napierala in 1998. In 2002 the painting of the Merciful Jesus has been thoroughly renewed; the team of world-famed specialists led by Ryszard Wujtowicz has made the preservation works. And all that just for the purpose that the work of Ludomir Ślędzinski would visit each parish of the Kalisz' diocese. There was even the thought to show the painting to the Pope so that He bless it while dedicating the sanctuary of God's Mercy in Łagiewniki, but it failed.

In October 2004 the Kalisz sanctuary celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the image's painting, with the presence of the Primate of Poland. Bishop Stanisław Napierala said – among others – "Father Primate! You will preside the solemn recall of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the painting of Merciful Jesus. One could wonder why Poland's Primate celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a painting. I would like to explain that this painting is a special one. This is the painting connected to the Conference of the Polish Episcopate. The image is of great importance in the history of the devotion to God's Mercy as revealed by Sister Faustina Kowalska. 50 years ago this devotion has been banned by the Church and even questioned".

The image of the Merciful Jesus in front of us is the response to recommendations of Saint Faustina, which

she has received when Jesus ordered her to paint His image. This conformity has been confirmed by God's Servant Fr. Michael Sopoćko, Sister Faustina's confessor. The main and only source of inspiration for the creation of the Painting has been not only Saint Faustina's description but also Saint John's Gospel. The image shows Jesus, who – in the day of his Resurrection – has appeared to the apostles. He stood in the door of the Passover room and said to the frightened ones: "Peace be with you. [...] Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (Jn 20, 21-23). Thus, we can say that the image revealed by Saint Faustina's description is somehow contained within the Image of the Resurrected Jesus shown to us by St. John within his Gospel".

The inhabitants of Kalisz call "their" painting the "very precious one". But the story of this image is connected to one person, Father

Michael Sopoćko. Until the very end Fr. Sopoćko was a cheerful priest, who lived for the great mission, who propagated the idea that God's Mercy is just this spark, which will be spread within us throughout the world. But first we should be concerned deeply about it, concentrate and improve ourselves under its blessed action, practice it in our daily life, in our merciful deeds we provide to people, including our worst enemies, and revere it in private and officially, or rather worship the Lord in its greatest perfection and propagate this devotion among other nations.



Merciful Jesus, Białystok – painted by L. Ślędzinski

*"He is a priest after My own Heart (...) Through him it pleased Me to proclaim the worship of My mercy" (Diary 1256).*

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



**Anne Rogel**

## **My Testimony of Merciful Jesus**

In my innocent age of nine I received the grace to be merciful to the poorest of the poor and later in life I would understand that Jesus is alive and dwells in our hearts.

One sunny afternoon I was alone playing in the yard in my native country the Philippines, a tired exhausted old man came to me and asked me for water. I gave him water, offered him food and then asked him where he was going. He then said it's a long walk. My heart broke thinking he didn't have money for a bus ride. I gave him all the money that I had in my little treasure (piggy bank) which I had been saving. What a joy in my soul to do such a thing for Jesus!

During my teenage years, going to church was not a priority, especially without my parents' guidance and persistence. I being the youngest of seven with none of my older siblings being good spiritual models either. But there was always a longing for God. Many problems in the family occurred with frustrations of my parents. Witnessing all these things was not a good influence for my soul. Praying the Holy Rosary which binds the family together was long forgotten. Everything was falling apart.

I had many dreams in life and set goals which I planned to reach with self discipline and determination. But God had different plans for me. I took advantage of the many opportunities knocking at my door and thought I was on the right track for my earthly success. I had everything laid out for my future but God also set his mind and work for me to do. He respected my choices and freedom in life.

Life was full of excitement and fun, I was close to reaching my dream job as a flight stewardess and the privilege to travel around the world. But one blessed day I met a wonderful man who later became my husband. There were many promises made as we exchanged our "I DO's" and Jesus was nowhere to be found in our hearts, maybe in our minds. God was less important to us and we chose to wed outside the church.

I started my life in America with my husband. Being married to a previously married man was very tough. I suffered with anxiety, depression and culture shock. We had rough times together and did not get much support from him because he was very much focused on his hobbies. "Fishing and hunting" were his life. I was starting to drift away from Jesus' loving hands. We tried going to church at our own convenience, as an insurance policy, an obligation as a Catholic to win God's heart and to give us more of what we needed. Shopping and material things caught my heart and brought temporary joy to my life. I was blinded with material prosperity and life's comfort in America and growing concern for a secure future. Satan was slowly eroding my soul, love for Jesus and the Blessed Mother was vanishing.

My marriage was failing when God sent an angel into our life (our son, Rocky). Still God was not in our midst. My husband was busy with his job as an airline pilot and I tried to occupy my loneliness and emptiness with superficial happiness. Life was reasonably going well.

We planned on vacations and seeing exotic and tropical places and swimming in crystal blue water were on top of our "to do" lists.

One unforgettable day, Jesus said in my soul, "I have been waiting for you and now is the time. I have blessed and graced you abundantly but you are ungrateful". I received a wake up call in my life which led to an eye opener of how much I have taken life for granted.

My son, Rocky, was only 3 years of age in the year 1996. That year I felt the profound and transforming love and THE DIVINE MERCY OF JESUS. In the early part of the year my oldest sister passed away with a heart attack; two months later my other sister's news of unwanted pregnancy devastated my entire family. It brought shame and degradation to my parents' dignity. No one wanted this child's soul on earth. I stood up and defended the right of this innocent soul and with God's love and power it changed the whole family's outlook on life.

A few months later, came the heartbreaking news of my husband's prognosis of his terminal cancer. This announcement shocked me as he was given few months to live. The message carried pain, denial and turmoil. I asked God "WHY" but little did I know that this great suffering would lead to great faith and love of God who is LOVE and MERCY HIMSELF.

When everything was out of control in my life I turned to Jesus and His Mother Mary. I started praying the Rosary which I hadn't recited for ages. Her maternal love was so great and introduced me to Divine Mercy devotion and the life and mission of St. Faustina through a holy priest. I had long heard of the Hour of Mercy prayer in my childhood days back in the Philippines as it was broadcasted on television and radio. But did not pay any attention to it.

My husband started his not very promising chemo therapy treatment and we were told not to put our faith in the treatment, so I completely surrendered myself to His Holy Will and immersed my whole being and trust in His mercy. While receiving his treatment and the drug was flowing in his bloodstream I visualized it as Jesus' precious blood and water that he shed for my husband's salvation. Jesus was stirring up my emotions and challenging my trust in Him. I struggled to be tough, trying to balance my being as I was thrown back and forth with the strong wave of life's catastrophe. Jesus reassured me of His Divine Mercy and to rest in Him where I would find the true source of peace.

I thought I was alone and did not get the support I needed from people that I most expected. But I never was alone, Jesus was with me with His Mother Mary all the way through this ordeal. I understood why it had to be this way, Jesus was teaching me genuine faith. My true faith stopped me from worrying about the scary things that might happen to my husband. The heavy load I was carrying became light as I entrusted everything to His Divine Will and in His Will is my peace.

My trust in His mercy touched the very core of Jesus' heart. It was the Feast of All Saints and my birthday. The doctor revealed the good news of the CT scan result after

two months of treatment. To his amazement he said that 50% of the tumor was gone. He was very hopeful to learn that the treatment he had been administering was working. I let Jesus' love flow into my open heart and learned to let go of my negative feelings and resentments from the past. Jesus gave me the grace to forgive all the wrong that was done to me and realized the pain and hurt I caused to others. Forgiveness is the greatest healing, I must first be healed in spirit and the rest will follow. Two months later, another good news 90% of the tumor shrunk after the 2nd cycle of treatment. My husband's healing was a step by step process not instantaneous.

Jesus wanted me to discover and grow in His love and mercy. We were left with the choice of continuing the treatment which in itself could do further damage or forget it. We decided to think about it and went on our first pilgrimage trip to Our Lady of the Snows Shrine. We met a special priest who shared with my husband his special healing grace. And he reassured him of his complete physical healing but knowing we haven't received the sacramental grace of being married in the church he advised us to receive a blessing from a priest. He said "in order to receive God's grace, one must be in the state of grace." We got married in church in obedience to what God wanted us to do.

The Lord Jesus stretched out his arms and embraced us with His love. It was Holy Week and Jesus startled us with His presence and accompanied us to the doctor on Holy Monday, we thought that he would schedule another treatment but to his amazement he ordered another CT scan.

The warmth of Jesus' love together with our Blessed Mother penetrated my soul. It was a very peaceful day and on Holy Wednesday the CT scan was performed; the radiologist was surprised no tumor showed on his screen. He was the one who took the very first CT scan that carried such devastating news. On Good Friday at 3:00 O'clock, the Hour of Great Mercy, Jesus died and gave my husband new life. The doctor announced a great miracle; he became a living witness of the Divine Mercy of Jesus. Jesus restored my husband to health and took us on a journey through the road of spiritual awakening. The mercy that we received is not ours to keep but to share with others and this answered my question "WHY". Jesus may not grant our every request the way we want Him to answer it but His Glory will reign forever if a humble soul will learn to persevere and listen to His words from the heart of their faith. Trusting in Jesus' mercy without a doubt is the surest way to our spiritual growth and salvation.

I learned to give up my own desires in this world and prefer to listen more closely to Jesus' message, a call to proclaim His Divine Mercy to the whole world. We traveled

to holy places around the world, not as curious tourists but to deepen our relationship with Jesus and devotion to Our Lady. I now shop for souls who are struggling to come back to our Father's house. My husband fishes and hunts in the deep ocean of God's mankind and gently brings them to safety to Jesus' shore of love. The seed that I planted in my son's heart that a family that prays together stays together has grown. He knows the importance of saying devoutly the Holy Rosary that will bind the family together, he understands that if you are merciful to others, God is more merciful to you and it will be overflowing.



Merciful Jesus, Vilnius - painted by E. Kazimirowski

My husband's cancer recurred after four years in remission. The Lord extended my husband's earthly life for seven more years for my son to get to know him and to bear witness of God's unfathomable love for us. I am also given a chance to purify the cancer in my soul, pride and self interest and the love of temporal things and desire only what is eternal. He was given time to get ready for his final departure and preparation for his eternal vacation. He was ready for take off but was not given clearance yet. My husband who was once physically strong and always in control in the airplane cockpit realized that God is the captain of his life. A man, who was kind of arrogant at some point humbled himself and bent down his knees and praised God for His mercy and forgiveness. He was aided with man made oxygen in the last few months before he took his last breath and this made me aware that prayer and love of God is our spiritual air that we need on our travel to get to our final destination "HEAVEN". I laid down my life for my husband and love him more when he became frail and his health was deteriorating because my love for him was bonded with Jesus. His soul was more beautiful.

On December 8th, Feast of the Immaculate Conception He expired and went on a flight with our Blessed Mother to meet Jesus face to face and St. Faustina who interceded for him. His last words were "I'm going to heaven and you are going there too". We renewed our marriage vows on his death bed and exchanged our love for each other that even death can't separate us, we are one spirit, working together to proclaim the DIVINE MERCY OF JESUS. I have formed a prayer group Disciples of Divine Mercy at Holy Disciples Church in Puyallup, Wa. In memory of my husband, a witness to God's Mercy.

I thank and praise Jesus for using us as His vessels to transport His Love and Mercy to other souls and for the priests and nuns who provided and nourished me with their love, prayer and blessing as I climb up the steep mountain of my salvation and how at the top, I see the GLORY OF GOD. JEZU, UFAM TOBIE!

# Faith has cured her

## God makes miracles, I do not. I pray, these are mysteries

March of 1978. Kay Kelly, living in Liverpool, Great Britain, learns that she has cancer. She has been married to Pat Kelly, docker, for fifteen years, and they have three children. Kay undergoes treatment in Clatterbridge hospital in Liverpool.

– I prayed to God to give me strength to accept what cannot be avoided, she recalls. – I knew other women who had had mastectomy and who could smile. I saw dying men who could smile. I prayed for my children, too. I thought it would be likely they could bear grudges against God and rebel against him, and I wanted to avoid that. I wanted them to get to know Christ and to know they are loved. I prayed to our Mother asking her to give me time. I needed time.

At the same time she learnt that some woman died in the neighboring Manchester. She also suffered from cancer and she also collected a huge sum of money for that hospital where she was treated. She was called Pat Seed and unfortunately, the disease overcame her. Was Kay to share the same fate? There was much that indicated that. It was the Sunday of March 11, 1979. After having left the hospital Kay knelt before the figure of Mary in her parish church. She prayed and looked at the statue. When she knelt she was very anxious and then, all of a sudden, she was calm. She did not know where from she got such a strong conviction that she was not to fear the terminal disease. And she did not understand completely why she was convinced that she would meet the Pope.

– How are you, Kay? asked the parish priest who passed by. – What are you planning in the near future?

– I am meeting the Pope soon, she said.

The priest looked at her with compassion. He thought she was out of her senses because of her disease. Meeting John Paul II? He knew that this new Pope from distant Poland was carrying out his ministry in a different way than his predecessor. But that did not mean that he met ordinary people, regardless how serious their healthy conditions were. Crowned heads, statesmen, the high and mighty of this world, indeed they could enter the Bronze Door to St Peter's. But anyone else? After she had returned home she had doubts. Was it only an illusion? Why would she have the chance to meet the Pope? He was elected only five months earlier, and surely he had million affairs to deal with, more important things than to cheer up some strange English woman.

A phone call dispelled all doubts. A representative of the Knights of Columbus phoned her to inform about the award she had received from this well-known Catholic charity. The Knights decided to appreciate Kay's efforts in collecting money for those who were treated for cancer. And the award was ... two air tickets to Rome to be used at once. The next day, together with her son David she was aboard the plane from Liverpool to Rome. Before the de-

parture she was informed that Archbishop Derek Worlock of Liverpool, organized a semi-private meeting with the Pope after the general audience on Wednesday, March 14. They arrived in Rome very late, on March 13. Their plane was delayed and landed in the Eternal City at 3.00 a.m. In the afternoon they went to St Peter's Square and then for tea (traditionally at 5 p.m.) to the Angelicum, the seminary for British priests who could not be trained in Great Britain after King Henry VIII had banned Catholicism. In the evening Kay went to Piazza Navona and admired the magnificent fountain by Bernini, with the figures symbolizing four rivers: the Nile, the Danube, the Ganges and the Plate, which were sculptured by Bernini's disciples

The next day a British seminarian came to their hotel and took them to the Vatican.

– Then I was not sure what the meeting with the Pope would look like – David Lewis recalls.

The rector of the seminary only told me that he hoped the Holy Father would meet Kay. They reached the gate leading to a little square on the left side of St Peter's basilica. There was the entrance to Paul VI's audience hall, which was designed by the well-known Italian architect Pier Luigi Nervi.

– At 12:15 the Holy Father began walking through the audience hall. A cannonade of flash lamps accompanied him. People were holding out their hands, the seminarian narrates. – It took him about thirty minutes to go through. I saw Kay sitting quietly in the part of the hall that was reserved for the sick. In the end the Holy Father spoke in Italian. I translated his words to Kay and David. Then he spoke in French, English, German and Spanish, and finally he asked the gathered people to sing Our Father. The audience was drawing to a close. The Pope left the podium and approached the sick. David Lewis saw that John Paul II was coming towards them. And here he stood in front of them!

– Holy Father, can I introduce Mrs. Kay Kelly? the seminarian asked.

– Oh, Mrs. Kelly from Liverpool, the Pope answered in English. – I have heard a lot about you. They talked for a while. The Pope signed his picture, which Kay had brought. It was for her son David. Then he hugged the English woman. He went on but he returned and came to her again.

– I am very proud of you. You are a wonderful mother, he said and left her. How did she experience that meeting?

– One needs a lot of courage to be very human and it seems to me that the Pope had that gift, she says.

– I felt that the meeting with the Holy Father was a turning point in my illness. His love and understanding created an atmosphere of joy, which embraced everybody and everything around. His smile reflected his inner peace and self-control. It was easy to talk to him. I was also struck



that he did not mind the protocol. It was the Pope who showed that he was the shepherd of his people. Kay's stay in Rome lasted several hours. After the audience she flew home. She was taken to the hospital again. The doctors who examined her were shocked. The cancer disappeared! There was no trace of the primary site of cancer and no signs of the metastases. The case caused a sensation and the news from England reached the Vatican as well. On the first occasion the journalists asked the Pope about that extraordinary healing.

It was her faith that cured her, the Holy Father stated.

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"Her faith has cured her," Kay quotes the Pope's words after 26 years. – I can hear the voice of an old woman on the phone. She is older but she has the same will to fight

as she had when nobody gave her any chance to recover.

– This happened a long time ago, she says, and for all those years I have tried to serve God. In what ways? She has collected dozen thousand pounds to support the work of Mother Teresa who founded a small convent of the Sisters of Charity in Liverpool. She also helped the dying who asked her to be with them at the moment of their deaths.

– I prayed for them, believing that life has no end, that there is only eternity where people go to God, Kay says. – I sent two young people to Paris, too. They both had cancer and both departed from their faith. They came back completely changed. They were converted before their deaths. This is a real miracle. People say: Kay, you have been cured, this is a miracle. And I say: a miracle happens when life changes.

## Prayer for the Grace to be Merciful for Others

I want to be completely transformed  
into Your Mercy and to be Your living reflection,

O Lord. May the greatest of all the divine  
attributes, that of Your unfathomable mercy,  
pass through my heart and soul to my neighbor.

Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful,  
so that I may never suspect or judge from  
appearances, but look for what is beautiful  
in my neighbor's souls and come to their rescue.

Help me, that my ears may be merciful, so that  
I may give heed to my neighbors needs and not  
be indifferent to their pains and moanings.

Help me, O Lord, that my tongue may be  
merciful, so that I should never speak negatively  
of my neighbor, and have a word of comfort  
and forgiveness for all.

Help me, O Lord, that my hands may be merciful  
and filled with good deeds, so that I may do only  
good to my neighbors and take upon myself  
the more difficult and toilsome tasks.

Help me, that my feet may be merciful,  
so that I may hurry to assist my neighbor,  
overcoming my own fatigue and weariness.

My true rest is into the service of my neighbor.

Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful  
so that I myself may feel all the sufferings  
of my neighbor. I will refuse my heart to no one,  
I will be sincere even with those who I know, will  
abuse my kindness.

And I will lock myself up in the most merciful  
Heart of Jesus. I will bear my own suffering in  
silence. May Your Mercy, O Lord, rest upon me.

Amen.

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

*In the present encyclical I wish to accept this appeal; I wish to draw from the eternal and at the same time – for its simplicity and depth – incomparable language of revelation and faith, in order through this same language to express once more before God and before humanity the major anxieties of our time.*

*In fact, revelation and faith teach us not only to meditate in the abstract upon the mystery of God as "Father of mercies," but also to have recourse to that mercy in the name of Christ and in union with Him. Did not Christ say that our Father, who "sees in secret," is always waiting for us to have recourse to Him in every need and always waiting for us to study His mystery: the mystery of the Father and His love.*

*I therefore wish these considerations to bring this mystery closer to everyone. At the same time I wish them to be a heartfelt appeal by the Church to mercy, which humanity and the modern world need so much. And they need mercy even though they often do not realize it.*

John Paul II  
Encyclical Letter "Dives in Misericordia"

# Mercy in Deeds

## Putting mercy into action is not an option of the Divine Mercy Devotion – it's a requirement!

### The Divine Mercy Devotion and Mercy in Deeds

Devotion to the Divine Mercy involves a total commitment to God as Mercy. It is a decision to trust completely in Him, to accept His mercy with thanksgiving, and to be merciful as He is merciful. The devotional practices proposed in the Diary of Saint Faustina are completely in accordance with the teachings of the Church and are firmly rooted in the Gospel message of our Merciful Savior. Properly understood and implemented, they will help us grow as genuine followers of Christ.

### “Lip Service” or Merciful Heart

There are two scriptural verses that we should keep in mind as we involve ourselves in these devotional practices:

1. “This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Is 29:13);
2. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5:7).

### Living the Message of Mercy

The devotional practices revealed through Saint Faustina were given to us as “vessels of mercy” through which God’s love can be poured out upon the world, but they are not sufficient unto themselves.

It’s not enough for us to hang The Divine Mercy image in our homes, pray the Chaplet every day at three o’clock, and receive Holy Communion on the first Sunday after Easter. We also have to show mercy to our neighbors. **Putting mercy into action is not an option of the Divine Mercy Devotion; it’s a requirement!**

Like the gospel command, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful,” this demand that we show mercy to our neighbors “always and everywhere” seems impossible to fulfill. But the Lord assures us that it is possible. “When a soul approaches Me with trust,” He explains, “I fill it with such an abundance of graces that it cannot contain them within itself, but radiates them to other souls” (Diary, 1074).

How do we “radiate” God’s mercy to others? By our actions, our words, and our prayers. “In these three degrees,” he tells Saint Faustina, “is contained the fullness of mercy” (Diary 742). We have all been called to this threefold practice of mercy, but we are not all called in the same way. We need to ask the Lord, who understands our individual personalities and situation, to help us recognize the various ways we can each show His mercy in our daily lives.

Asking for the Lord’s mercy, trusting in His mercy, and sincerely trying to live His mercy in our lives, we can be assured that we will never hear Him say of us, “Their hearts are far from Me,” but rather that wonderful promise, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

It is our hope that we will continue to read and make the prayers, attitudes, and practices presented as a real part of our life, so that we may come to trust completely in God and live each day immersed in His merciful love – thus fulfilling the Lord’s command to let our life “shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in Heaven” (Mt 5:16).

### Our Lord strongly speaks about this to Saint 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 (Diary, 742).

\*\*\*

I am giving you three ways of exercising mercy toward your neighbor:

- The first – by deed
- The Second – by word
- The third – by prayer

In these three degrees is contained the fullness of mercy, and it is an unquestionable proof of love for Me. By this means a soul glorifies and pays reverence to My mercy.

Yes, the first Sunday after Easter is the Feast of Mercy, but there must also be acts of mercy, and I demand the worship of My mercy through the solemn celebration of the Feast and through the veneration of the Image which is painted. By means of this image I shall grant many graces to souls.

It is to be a reminder of the demands of My mercy, because even the strongest faith is of no avail without works .

*Diary, Notebook II, 742*



### Corporal Works:

1. Feed the hungry.
2. Give drink to the thirsty.
3. Clothe the naked.
4. Shelter the homeless.
5. Comfort the imprisoned.
6. Visit the sick.
7. Bury the dead.

### Spiritual works:

1. Admonish sinners.
2. Instruct the uninformed.
3. Counsel the doubtful.
4. Comfort the sorrowful.
5. Be patient with those in error.
6. Forgive offenses.
7. Pray for the living and the dead



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- Pilgrimages are symbols of our journey to Heaven
- Join us to follow the steps of Saint Faustina and God's Servant John Paul II
- Join us on our trip to Rome to meet the Holy Father Benedict XVI

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# POLAND AND LITHUANIA

„Follow the steps of Saint Faustina and God’s Servant John Paul II”

17 - 28, September 2006

## **Day 01 – Departure to Warsaw**

## **Day 02 – Arrival in Warsaw**

Transfer to Monastery in Niepokalanow  
Niepokalanow – established by Saint Maximilian Maria Kolbe and dedicated to our Immaculate Mother.

## **Day 03 – Warsaw**

Warsaw – capital of Poland. After breakfast, we will visit Old Town, including King’s Palace, Churches from 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Century and Warsaw Ghetto. Evening departure to Vilnius, Lithuania. Arrival 10:20 PM.  
Check-in to hotel.

## **Day 04 – Vilnius**

Visit the Old Town, Cathedral Church. Visit the Convent of the Sisters of Holy Mother of God’s Mercy. Here, in September 13, 14 1935 Jesus dictated Saint Sister Faustina the Chaplet. Prayers in the Church, where is the first icon of Merciful Jesus and Holy Mass. Also, visit to Chapel with miraculous Image of Holy Mother of Mercy.

## **Day 05 – Sanctuary in Bialystok**

Departure to Bialystok  
Bialystok – the City of Mercy. The City is closely connected with Divine Mercy. God’s Servant Father Michael Sopocko, Spiritual Director of Saint Sister Faustina, lived and worked here.

- \* Mother Boleslaw’s Lament Sanctuary
- \* Saint Faustina’s Chapel on Poleska Street and home where Father Sopocko lived and worked
- \* Sanctuary of Divine Mercy – prayers at the tomb of Father Michael Sopocko
- \* Sanctuary of Mother of God’s Mercy



## **Day 06 – Plock**

Departure to Plock. Check-in to hotel. Visit the Old Town and Cathedral Church. Visit the Convent of the Sisters of Holy Mother of God’s Mercy. Here, on February 22, 1931, Saint Sister Faustina had her revelation of the Merciful Jesus. Prayers and Holy Mass in Chapel. Visit Sister Faustina’s family home and visit the church where she was baptized.

## **Day 07 – Czestochowa**

Afternoon arrival at Czestochowa – the most holy place for Polish people. There, we will see the famous Black Madonna, which is believed to have been brought to Czestochowa from Jerusalem on August 31, 1384.

## **Day 08 – Czestochowa**

All day with our Blessed Mother.

## **Day 09 – Czestochowa – Oswiecim – Wadowice – Krakow**

Visit Aushwitz Concentration Camp, and Wadowice – birthplace of God’s Servant John Paul II. Evening arrival in Krakow. Check-in to hotel.

## **Day 10 – Krakow-Lagiewniki**

Lagiewniki – Sanctuary of Divine Mercy. Here, Sister Faustina lived and died. Prayer at the tomb of Saint Faustina.

## **Day 11 – Krakow**

Attend Mass at the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy in Lagiewniki. Thereafter, start the sightseeing tour of Krakow and visit the Royal Castle, Cathedral, Old Town and Cloth Hall. Free Time.

## **Day 12 – Departure to USA**



For Reservations call: The Lay Institute of Divine Mercy

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