



CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

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Dear Parish Family,

April 24, 2011

Happy Easter! Alleluia! Jesus is risen! He is risen as He said! May you enjoy countless Easter blessings today and throughout the Easter Season.

Just a reminder that the Parish Offices will be closed this week, and there will be no daily Masses. School classes and Religious Education will still meet, and there are meetings and retreats for First Eucharist - which is next Sunday at the 11:00 Mass. Please pray for our young people who will be making their First Holy Communion next Sunday.

Next Sunday is also Divine Mercy Sunday. A novena asking for mercy for people in various life situations begins on Good Friday and continues through this week, ending this weekend. Pray for God's mercy in your life and the life of your loved ones during this Easter Octave. You can also gain a plenary indulgence for yourself or for the deceased by praying before the Blessed Sacrament the Creed, an Our Father, and the short prayer "Merciful Jesus, I trust in You!" The usual conditions for a plenary indulgence apply (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion, prayers for the Holy Father, and a spirit of detachment from all sin.)

Please pray for and welcome our newly initiated Catholics: Roy Catlin, Elizabeth Corbin, Melissa Lovett, Bobbie Sanders, and Erin Snook. Also pray for our parishes and for our communities. See you next week. God bless you!

Fr. David

The Eucharist: The Presence of Mercy

In His great love for us, the Lord Jesus gave us a great miracle of mercy: the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

Christ's Resurrection into glory was not the final reason for the Incarnation, when God became man. The Incarnation looked forward to Jesus remaining with us to the end of time in the Eucharist. By this greatest miracle of His love, Jesus remains with us under the form of bread and wine, not only for our spiritual nourishment, but to be kept company by us as well.

In the Eucharist, Christ is fully present as He is in heaven. The Eucharist, explains Pope Leo XIII, contains, "in a variety of miracles, all supernatural realities" (*Encyclical Mirae Caritatis*).

The Eucharist is central to devotion to The Divine Mercy, and many of the elements of the devotion are essentially Eucharistic--especially the image, the chaplet, and the Feast of Mercy. The image, with its red and pale rays, presents the Eucharistic Lord Jesus, whose Heart has been pierced and now pours forth blood and water as a fountain of mercy for us. It is the image of God's gift of mercy made present in every Mass.

Several times in her Diary, Blessed Faustina writes of seeing the red and pale rays coming, not from the image, but from the Sacred Host; and once, as the priest exposed the Blessed Sacrament, she saw the rays from the image pierce the Host and spread out from it all over the world. So too, with the eyes of faith, we should see in every Host the merciful savior pouring Himself out as a fountain of mercy for us.

The concept of the Eucharist as a fountain of grace and mercy is not only found in the Diary, but also in Church teaching. The Church clearly teaches that all the other sacraments are directed towards the Eucharist and draw their power from it.

In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, we read: "Especially from the Eucharist, grace is poured forth upon us as from a fountain." And, in a note in the Catechism we hear, "compare the Eucharist to a fountain and the other sacraments to rivulets. For the Holy Eucharist is truly and necessarily the fountain of all graces, containing, as it does, after an admirable manner, the fountain itself of celestial gifts and graces, the Author of all the sacraments, Christ our Lord, from whom, as from its source, is derived whatever of goodness and perfection the other sacraments possess."

WHAT IS DIVINE MERCY?

From the diary of a young Polish nun, a special devotion began spreading throughout the world in the 1930s. The message is nothing new, but is a reminder of what the Church has always taught through scripture and tradition: that God is merciful and forgiving and that we, too, must show mercy and forgiveness. But in the Divine Mercy devotion, the message takes on a powerful new focus, calling people to a deeper understanding that God's love is unlimited and available to everyone — especially the greatest sinners.

The message and devotion to Jesus as The Divine Mercy is based on the writings of Saint Faustina Kowalska, an uneducated Polish nun who, in obedience to her spiritual director, wrote a diary of about 600 pages recording the revelations she received about God's mercy. Even before her death in 1938, the devotion to The Divine Mercy had begun to spread.

The message of mercy is that God loves us — all of us — no matter how great our sins. He wants us to recognize that His mercy is greater than our sins, so that we will call upon Him with trust, receive His mercy, and let it flow through us to others. Thus, all will come to share His joy. It is a message we can call to mind simply by remembering ABC.

A — Ask for His Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world.

B — Be merciful. God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. He wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us.

C — Completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive.

The Divine Mercy Devotion

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.

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).

It's an ironic and somewhat frightening fact that many of the most religious people of Christ's time (people who were actively practicing their religion and eagerly awaiting the

promised Messiah) were not able to recognize Him when He came.

The Pharisees, to whom Christ was speaking in the first quotation above, were very devoted to the prayers, rules, and rituals of their religion; but over the years, these outer observances had become so important in themselves that their real meaning had been lost. The Pharisees performed all the prescribed sacrifices, said all the right prayers, fasted regularly, and talked a lot about God, but none of it had touched their hearts. As a result, they had no relationship with God, they were not living the way He wanted them to live, and they were not prepared for the coming of Jesus.

When we look at the image of the Merciful Savior, or pause for prayer at three o'clock, or pray the Chaplet — are these things drawing us closer to the real sacramental life of the Church and allowing Jesus to transform our hearts? Or have they just become religious habits? In our daily lives are we growing more and more as people of mercy? Or are we just giving "lip service" to God's mercy?

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!

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).

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 Sister 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.

By asking for the Lord's mercy, trusting in His mercy, and sincerely trying to live His mercy in our lives, we can assure 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."