

# Divine Mercy Sunday, A Reflection

Deacon Frank J. De Frank

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As I look at the painting of the merciful Jesus as relayed to St. Faustina, I am struck by the fact that this image of Jesus was commissioned and designed by Jesus himself ... And at the same time, I am in awe that as often as I turn my eyes to the altar I realize that I am in the Real Presence of the Author of that image—our Lord Jesus who—through St. Faustina—has called us to focus on His mercy on this Sunday after Easter. *“My daughter tell the whole world about my inconceivable mercy. I desire that the feast of mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners ... It is my desire that [the feast of mercy which emerges from my very depths of tenderness] be celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter .... (699).”* And so we come as he calls us.

But today’s devotion is a continuing reminder that **every minute of every day** God’s mercy permeates our lives. At the same time, we believe that Jesus had a special reason for requesting this specific day to remind us of his mercy ... And to tell us that it had to be reclaimed uniquely in our time. *“In the old covenant, I sent prophets wielding thunderbolts to my people. Today I am sending you with my mercy to the people of the whole world ...I do not want to punish aching mankind ...[rather] I desire to heal it- pressing it to my merciful heart”* (1588). And so, we come.

In a vision St. Faustina had on February 22, 1931, Jesus instructs her: *“paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: ‘Jesus, I trust in you.’ I desire that this image be venerated throughout the world ...I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish.... I myself will defend it as my own glory.”*

In the image we see the right hand of our risen Christ raised in a blessing of peace ...and his left hand pointing to his heart inviting us to come to him ...see the two rays issue forth from his pierced heart which is not visible in the image ... Jesus himself tells us: *“the red ray stands for the blood which is the life of souls. The pale ray stands for the water that makes souls righteous.”* Church fathers and mystics have seen the blood and water as symbols of Baptism and the Eucharist.

On Friday, September 13th, 1935, Jesus dictated the **Chaplet of Divine Mercy** to St. Faustina. In the revelations that followed he disclosed to her its value, as well as the promises he attached to it. *“Say unceasingly the chaplet that I have taught you*

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*... Whoever will recite it ... Will receive great mercy at the hour of death.... Even if there were a sinner most hardened--if he were to recite this chaplet only once-- he would receive grace from my infinite mercy ... I desire that the whole world know my infinite mercy... I desire to grant unimaginable graces to those souls who trust in my mercy."*

In this chaplet, we offer the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ to God the Father--uniting ourselves with His sacrifice offered on the cross for the salvation of the whole world.

By offering the Father his most dearly beloved Son.... We are asking for mercy for us and for the whole world.

During the year of 1937 Jesus first made mention of the "**hour of great mercy.**" He asked St. Faustina to immerse herself at **three o'clock** into his passion and implore mercy for sinners. *"At three o'clock implore my mercy, especially for sinners; and, if only for a brief moment, immerse yourself in my passion, particularly in my abandonment at the moment of agony. This is the hour of great mercy for the whole world. I will allow you to enter into my mortal sorrow. In this hour I will refuse nothing to the soul that makes a request of me in virtue of my passion."* (1320).

When we think about it...it would seem that Jesus was asking an awful lot of St. Faustina ... So it would seem reasonable to wonder why he chose her to be his secretary and apostle "...to proclaim to the whole world [his] unfathomable mercy (1142). One part of the answer may be in who she was: a simple, uneducated humble polish nun, living a somewhat secluded life in an undistinguished part of the world ... **And** ...who was—in her own words—very aware of her own misery (881) ... What a **perfect instrument** through whom Jesus could accomplish his mission. There would be no self-serving pride obstructing his grace-filled request.

Jesus found St. Faustina's soul spiritually grounded for the work he was preparing to give her ... Her apparently insignificant and monotonous life belied the fact that within her was a life lived in an extraordinary union with God. She was profoundly in love with Jesus ...and lived **each day--and each activity** of each day-- only to do his will-- **without reservation**. She had an unfettered

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attitude of **childlike trust** in God's love and mercy. ...and was therefore prepared to cooperate with God's mission of mercy to save lost souls when he called her.

*"My daughter, if I demand through you that people revere my mercy, you should be the first to distinguish yourself by this confidence in my mercy. ... You are to show mercy to your neighbors always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this."*

In spite of being so richly endowed with extraordinary graces, St. Faustina knew—as **we must know** if we are to follow her example—that these extraordinary gifts **do not** in fact constitute sanctity. In her diary she wrote:

*"neither graces, nor revelations, nor raptures, nor gifts granted to a soul make it perfect ... But rather **the intimate union of the soul with God** ... (diary 1107)."*

As we have noted with our wondering why Jesus chose St. Faustina to be his Secretary and Apostle, we are also inclined to ask why Jesus chose St. John Paul II to be his 20thc Evangelist of Divine Mercy. The contrast on one level between these two holy persons is glaring. Unlike St. Faustina, St. John Paul II was a philosopher, a theologian, a world leader, a bishop, a cardinal and a prolific proponent of the teachings of the Catholic Church. Yet they were both called.

That clearly tells us that God calls us to do his work **where we are**. Position, education, and ability are important in carrying out God's work; but more important is **the inner self-sacrificing life of the person who enables the Spirit to grace that soul with His Presence**. That is the **ground** out of which Christ can use us to reach his people—which both Faustina and John Paul had.

Every baptized person has the opportunity to live a life of radical discipleship ...and that's our connection to St. Faustina and St. John Paul II. In the final analysis, it's not about perfection. "it's about living one's life compassionately and with the intention of doing the right thing—carrying out God's will as we are graced to understand it—whatever the cost.

Praise be Jesus Christ, Our Merciful Lord, now and forever.