



Divine Mercy Sunday.com

THE FEAST OF MERCY (Divine Mercy Sunday)

Among all of the elements of devotion to The Divine Mercy requested by our Lord through Sr. Faustina, the Feast of Mercy holds first place. The Lord's will with regard to its establishment was already made known in His first revelation to the saint. In all, there were 14 revelations concerning the desired feast.

Once after insisting, "Do all you possibly can for this work of mercy," Jesus added: "My Heart rejoices on account of this feast." Sister Faustina concluded: "After these words, I understood that nothing can dispense me from the obligation which the Lord demands of me" (*Diary*, 998).

Our Lord's explicit desire is that this feast be celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. He joins the feast to the designated Sunday in eight revelations: *Diary*, 49, 88, 280, 299, 341, 570, 699, and 742. He also implies a connection between the feast and that Sunday on some other occasions recorded in the saint's *Diary* (see *Diary*, 420, 89).

The "First Sunday *after* Easter" - which is designated in "The Liturgy of the Hours and the Celebration of the Eucharist" as the "Octave Day of Easter" - was officially called the *Second Sunday of Easter* after the liturgical reform of Vatican II. Now, by the Decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the name of this liturgical day has been changed to: "*Second Sunday of Easter, or of Divine Mercy.*"

Pope John Paul II made the surprise announcement of this change in his homily at the canonization of Sr. Faustina on April 30, 2000. There, he declared: "It is important then that we accept the whole message that comes to us from the word of God on this Second Sunday of Easter, which from now on throughout the Church, will be called 'Divine Mercy Sunday.' "

By the words "the whole message," the Holy Father was referring to the strict connection between the "Easter Mystery of the Redemption" - the suffering, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, followed by the sending of the Holy Spirit - and this Feast of Divine Mercy, the Octave Day of Easter.

In this regard, the Holy Father also said, citing the Responsorial Psalm of the Liturgy, "The Church sings ... , as if receiving from Christ's lips these words of the Psalm" [that is, *Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His steadfast love (=mercy) endures forever, Ps 118:1*]. And then, the Holy Father developed the connection further: "[This comes] from the lips of the risen Christ, who bears the great

message of Divine Mercy and entrusts its ministry to the Apostles in the Upper Room: 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you. ... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained' " (Jn 20:21-23).

By what the Holy Father continued to say, it becomes clear why Jesus insisted that the sacred image of Himself as The Divine Mercy is to be venerated throughout the world in connection with the observance of this Sunday (see *Diary*, 49, 88, 299, 341, 570, 742). The Holy Father said: "Before speaking these words, Jesus shows His hands and His side. He points, that is, to the wounds of the Passion, especially the wound in His Heart, the source from which flows the great wave of mercy poured out on humanity.

"From that Heart, Sr. Faustina Kowalska, the blessed whom from now on we will call a saint, will see two rays of light shining from that Heart and illuminating the world: 'The two rays,' Jesus Himself explained to her one day, 'represent blood and water' (*Diary*, 299).

"*Blood and water!* We immediately think of the testimony given by the Evangelist John, who, when a soldier on Calvary pierced Christ's side with his spear, sees blood and water flowing from it (cf. Jn 19:34). Moreover, if the blood recalls the sacrifice of the Cross and the gift of the Eucharist, the water, in Johannine symbolism, represents not only Baptism but also the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 3:5; 4:14; 7:37-39).

"Divine Mercy reaches human beings through the Heart of Christ crucified: 'Tell, My daughter, [all people] that I am Love and Mercy itself [personified]' Jesus will ask of Sr. Faustina (*Diary*, 1074). Christ pours out this mercy on humanity through the sending of the Spirit who, in the Trinity, is the Person-Love. And is not mercy love's 'second name' (cf. *Rich in Mercy*, n.7), understood in its deepest and most tender aspect, in its ability to take upon itself the burden of any need and, especially, in its most immense capacity for forgiveness?"

From this teaching of the Holy Father on that most solemn occasion of his "presenting the life and witness of Sr. Faustina Kowalska. to the whole Church as a gift of God to our time," it can be deduced that the most opportune time, the most proper one, for the solemn honoring of The Divine Mercy falls immediately after the Paschal Feast of Easter, recalling the attaining of our Redemption.

St. Augustine called the *eight days of Easter* (which the Church liturgically considers as constituting a *single day - the day of the new creation*) "days of mercy and pardon." He calls the Sunday of this Paschal Octave (which our Lord insisted with St. Faustina is the Feast of Mercy [*Diary*, 88]) "the summary of the days of mercy" (*Sermon 156, Dom. In Albis*). It is no wonder, then, that already during his pilgrimage to Blessed Faustina's tomb on June 7, 1997, Pope John Paul II declared: "I give thanks to Divine Providence that I have been enabled to contribute personally to the fulfillment of Christ's will through the institution of the Feast of Divine Mercy."

Novena

In fact, Jesus Himself dictated the intentions for each day of the novena which starts on Good Friday and He desired to be celebrated as a preparation for the solemn observance of this feast.

Veneration of the Image

The image of Jesus, The Divine Mercy, is to have a special place of honor on the Feast of Mercy, a visual reminder of all that Jesus did for us through His Passion, Death, and Resurrection ... and a reminder, too, of what He asks of us in return - to trust Him and be merciful to others:

"I want the image to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter, and I want it to be venerated publicly so that every soul may know about it" (341).

A Special Promise of Mercy

Our Lord's promise to grant complete forgiveness of sins and punishment on the Feast of Mercy is recorded three times in the Diary of Saint Faustina, each time in a slightly different way:

"I want to grant a complete pardon to the souls that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion on the Feast of My mercy" (1109).

"Whoever approaches the Fountain of Life on this day will be granted complete forgiveness of sins and punishment" (300).

"The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion will obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment" (699).

Extraordinary Graces

Our Lord is emphasizing, through this promise, the infinite value of Confession and Communion as miracles of mercy. He wants us to realize that since the Eucharist is His own Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, it is the "Fountain of Life" (300). The Eucharist is Jesus, Himself, the Living God, longing to pour Himself as Mercy into our hearts.

Why would Our Lord feel the need to emphasize this? Because so many people do not really understand it. They either see no need to receive Holy Communion, or they receive it simply out of habit. As St. Paul explains in his letter to the Corinthians, they eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, "without recognizing the body of the Lord" (I Cor 11:27-29).

In His revelations to Saint Faustina Our Lord makes it very clear what He is offering us in Holy Communion and how much it hurts Him when we treat His presence with indifference:

"My great delight is to unite Myself with souls ... When I come to a human heart in Holy Communion, My hands are full of all kinds of graces which I want to give to the soul. But souls do not even pay any attention to Me; they leave Me to Myself and busy themselves with other things. Oh, how sad I am that souls do not recognize Love! They treat Me as a dead object" (1385) ...

"It pains Me very much when religious souls receive the Sacrament of Love merely out of habit, as if they did not distinguish this food. I find neither faith nor love in their hearts. I go to such souls with great reluctance. It would be better if they did not receive Me" (1288) ...

"How painful it is to Me that souls so seldom unite themselves to Me in Holy Communion. I wait for souls, and they are indifferent toward Me. I want to lavish My graces on them, and they do not want to accept them. They treat me as a dead object, whereas My Heart is full of love and mercy. In order that you may know at least some of My pain imagine the most tender of mothers who has great love for her children, while those children spurn her love. Consider her pain. No one is in a position to console her. This is but a feeble image and likeness of My love" (1447).

So, Our Lord's promise of complete forgiveness is both a reminder and a call. It is a reminder that He is *truly present* and *truly alive* in the Eucharist, filled with love for us and waiting for us to turn to Him with trust. And it is a call for us all to be washed clean in His Love through Confession and Holy Communion - no matter how terrible our sins - and begin our lives again. He is offering us a new start.

Prepare Yourself Properly

Going to Confession is not the only way we should prepare ourselves for Divine Mercy Sunday. As Cardinal Francis Macharski, Archbishop of Krakow, Poland explains in a 1985 pastoral letter, we are not simply called to ask for God's mercy with trust. We are also called to *be merciful*:

"Our own merciful attitude is likewise a preparation. Without deeds of mercy our devotion would not be real. For Christ does not only reveal the mercy of God, but at the same time He places before people the demand that they conduct themselves in life with love and mercy. The Holy Father states that this requirement constitutes the very heart of the Gospel *ethos* (*Rich in Mercy, 3*) - it is the commandment of love and the promise: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7). Let it be a mercy that is forgiving and true, and universal, with good words, deeds, and prayer for others!"

Our Lord's words to Saint Faustina about this requirement to be merciful are very strong and leave no room for misinterpretation:

"Yes, the first Sunday after Easter is the Feast of Mercy, but there must also be acts of mercy ... 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 or absolve yourself from it" (742).

Thus, to fittingly observe the Feast of Mercy, we should:

1. **Celebrate** the Feast on the Sunday after Easter;
2. Sincerely **repent** of all our sins;
3. Place our complete **trust** in Jesus;

4. Go to **Confession**, preferably before that Sunday;
5. Receive **Holy Communion** on the day of the Feast;
6. **Venerate*** the Image of The Divine Mercy;
7. **Be merciful to others**, through our actions, words, and prayers on their behalf.

*To venerate a sacred image or statue simply means to perform some act or make some gesture of deep religious respect toward it because of the person whom it represents - in this case, our Most Merciful Savior.

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