

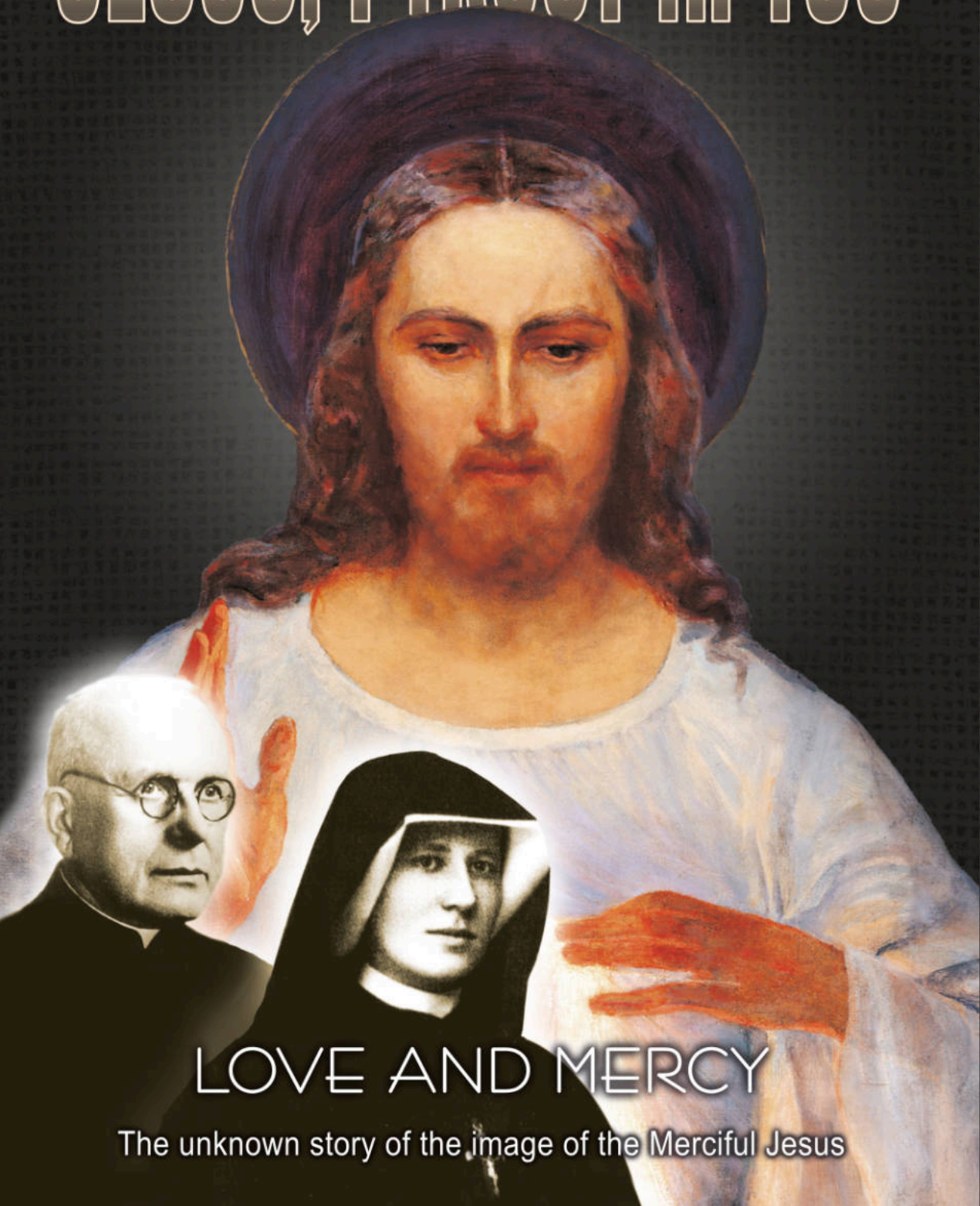
The Message of Mercy reaches today every corner of the world, thanks the Saint Sister Faustina Kowalska and the Blessed Father Michael Sopoćko, who as a priest and theologian had the courage to stand by Sister Faustina, to listen to the voice of God and become a disciple of the Merciful Jesus (fragment of the preface – Archbishop Grzegorz Ryś).

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JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU



LOVE AND MERCY

The unknown story of the image of the Merciful Jesus

To pass on the message of Divine Mercy addressed to the entire world, the Merciful God chose and shaped two Apostles of God's love: Saint Faustina Kowalska and the Blessed Michael Sopoćko. And even though they tried to fulfil their mission with heroic zeal, they did not live to receive credit for it. Instead, they received sanctity and eternal remembrance.

This book presents the events connected with that mission without any interpretation to give the reader the opportunity for his own reflection over the way of understanding them.

This publication, in addition to the extensive fragments of the "Diary" of Saint Faustina, contains three less known but very important and interesting aspects of the Divine Mercy Message:

- selected fragments of the works of the Blessed Michael Sopoćko, which justify the theological need to spread the Divine Mercy Message,
 - the unknown story of the first image of the Merciful Jesus painted in Vilnius (Lithuania) in 1934, and its remarkable rescues during the war and post-war years,
 - the history of the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus founded at the request of the Lord Jesus by the Blessed Sopoćko, spiritual director of Saint Faustina.
-

„Reading these texts makes us realize that God shows incredible determination in repeating that He is Mercy – an unconditional love, completely undeserved by us, precedent to any of our good deeds”.

✠ Grzegorz Ryś,
Metropolitan Archbishop of Łódź, Poland
Fragment of the Preface





Sanctuary of Divine Mercy, Vilnius (Lithuania)
The first image of Merciful Jesus

**JESUS,
I TRUST IN YOU**

LOVE AND MERCY



ARCYBISKUP
METROPOLITA ŁÓDZKI

Łódź, dnia 13 maja 2019 roku

Słowo wstępne

Ojciec Święty Franciszek w bulli *Misericordiae Vultus* napisał, iż „miłosierdzie to droga, która łączy Boga z człowiekiem, ponieważ otwiera serce na nadzieję, że będziemy kochani na zawsze, pomimo ograniczenia, jakim jest nasz grzech”. W tym znaczeniu miłosierdzie pozostaje wielką tajemnicą Boga i skandalem w oczach ludzi, gdyż jest chrześcijańską nadzieją na przyszłość dla tych, którzy dotknęli dna, którym według logiki tego świata odmawia się prawa do przebaczenia i nawrócenia. Orędzie Miłosierdzia dociera dziś po krańce świata dzięki Świętej Siostrze Faustynie Kowalskiej i Błogosławionemu Księdzu Michałowi Sopoćce, który jako kapłan, spowiednik i teolog stanął odważnie przy Siostrze Faustynie, by wsłuchiwać się w głos Boga i stawać się uczniem Jezusa Miłosiernego.

W tym kontekście z uznaniem należy przyjąć opublikowanie poszerzonej wersji książki pt. „Jezus, ufam Tobie. Miłość i miłosierdzie” autorstwa Urszuli Grzegorzcyk, której celem jest przybliżenie Czytelnikowi świadectwa życia tych dwóch Apostołów Bożego miłosierdzia oraz ich postawy bezgranicznego zaufania Bogu w realizacji powierzonego posłannictwa. Autorka w swojej publikacji, obficie udokumentowanej tekstami źródłowymi, prezentuje nowe formy nabożeństwa do Bożego Miłosierdzia zaproponowane przez Świętą Faustynę w oparciu o prywatne objawienia, jakie otrzymała od Jezusa. W tych nowych formach kultu centralne miejsce zajmuje postawa ufności oraz cześć oddawana obrazowi Jezusa Miłosiernego, obchodzenie Święta Miłosierdzia, odmawianie Koronki i spełnianie uczynków miłosierdzia. Jestem głęboko przekonany, iż zawarte w książce fragmenty z „Dzienniczka” Świętej Siostry Faustyny Kowalskiej oraz fragmenty publikacji Błogosławionego Księdza Michała Sopoćki przyczynią się do poznania i przyjęcia przesłania Orędzia Bożego Miłosierdzia, które jest kerygmatem chrześcijaństwa na trzecie tysiąclecie. Lektura tych tekstów uświadamia nam, iż Pan Bóg z niesłychaną determinacją powtarza o sobie, że jest Miłosierdziem – miłością bezwarunkową, przez nas w żaden sposób niezasłużoną, uprzednią w stosunku do jakiegokolwiek z naszych dobrych czynów.

Autorce życzę zyczliwego przyjęcia książki przez Czytelników. Ufam, iż dla Wszystkich, którzy wezmą ją do ręki, zagłębiając się w zawarte w niej przesłanie, stanie się ona źródłem inspiracji do odkrywania wciąż na nowo fundamentalnej prawdy o tym, iż miłość Boga jest silniejsza niż ludzki grzech i do bycia miłosiernym względem naszych bliźnich, tak jak miłosierny był Jezus.

Grzegorz Ryś
Arcybiskup Metropolita Łódzki

FOREWORD

In His bull “Misericordiae Vultus” the Holy Father Francis wrote that “mercy is a road that connects God with man because it opens our hearts to the hope that we will be loved forever, despite our limitations – our sin”. In that sense, mercy is a great mystery of God and an outrage in human eyes, because it is a Christian hope for the future for those who hit bottom, who – following the logic of this world – are refused the right to forgiveness and conversion. The Message of Mercy reaches today every corner of the world, thanks the Saint Sister Faustina Kowalska and the Blessed Father Michael Sopoćko, who as a priest and theologian had the courage to stand by Sister Faustina, to listen to the voice of God and become a disciple of the Merciful Jesus.

In this regard, with special recognition should be welcomed the publication of the extended version of the book “Jesus, I Trust in You. Love and Mercy”, written by Urszula Grzegorzczyk, aimed at introducing the reader to the testimony of life of these Apostles of God’s mercy and to their attitude of boundless trust in God in completing the entrusted in them mission. In her publication, generously documented with reference materials, the author presents new forms of Divine Mercy devotion proposed by Saint Faustina on the basis of her private revelations that she received from Jesus.

In the centre of these new forms of worship are the attitude of trust and the veneration of the Divine Mercy image, celebration of the Feast of Divine Mercy, reciting the Chaplet and practising the works of mercy. I am deeply convinced that the excerpts from the “Diary” of the Saint Sister Faustina and fragments of the publications of the Blessed Father Sopoćko included in the book will contribute to discovering and accepting the Message of Divine Mercy, which becomes the kerygma for the third millennium. Reading these texts makes us realize that God shows incredible determination in repeating that He is Mercy – an unconditional love, completely undeserved by us, precedent to any of our good deeds.

I wish the author the warm welcome of the book by the readers. I trust that for all who read the book going deep into the included in it message, it will become a source of inspiration to keep discovering the fundamental truth that the love of God is stronger than the human sin, and to show mercy to our neighbours, as Jesus did.

✠ Grzegorz Ryś
Metropolitan Archbishop of Łódź, Poland

“Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive”.

[Pope Francis, Bulla Misericordiae Vultus n. 3]



Photograph: Osservatore Romano

VATICAN, St. Peter's Square – Pope Francis – General Audience, May 8, 2013

INTRODUCTION

In the treasure of the Bible and the tradition of the Church, its liturgy and apostolate and, most of all, in its spirituality, there exists an age-long truth about God Who is Mercy. God's Mercy – incarnate in Lord Jesus – and, emerging out of It, human, Christian mercy, constitutes the root of the Gospel message, and at the same time, the symbol of objection against everything that opposes unconditional Love. For this reason, Mercy touches the deepest pain of injustice that exists in the world and in man. It lies in the heart of the fight for dignity and, despite the weakness of human endeavors, gives hope for the victory of good.

The strength of the message of Divine Mercy grew in the specific realities of the 20th century, a century that was scarred with a peculiar stigma of selfdestruction and the erosion of humanity. Totalitarian systems, inhumane work conditions, the lack of tolerance and moral authorities – do not constitute an exhaustive vision of this world, but merely provide its outline. All of this has not only found its reflection in the human psyche but has also had an impact on the spirituality of the current generation. This has been demonstrated by the decreasing sensitivity of consciences and growing social insensibility. Against this dark background of contemporaneity, brightly shine the examples of saints, among whom the Church especially honours Saint Faustina. Thanks to her mission, that is reminding the world about Divine Mercy, the Church refers to this truth anew and presents it as a sign to the world.

That is why the truth about Divine Mercy emerges as a universal truth that cannot be forgotten despite the times in which we find ourselves living, man will always look for happiness, meaning in life and love, because this need is deeply inscribed in human existence.

The truth about Divine Mercy reveals the essence of God's relation with humanity, which is characterized by forgiveness and respect for oneself and every human being, up to the salvation proposal that has been acquired through the blood of Christ. Through the perpetual assistance of the Holy Spirit this truth it manifests itself in the Church, constantly renewing himself through new inspirations. New forms of Divine Mercy of worship as well became the continuity of these inspirations - which were given by Saint Faustina, and thanks to strenuous efforts of her confessor and spiritual director, the Blessed Michael Sopoćko, they began to be practiced in the Church, what it happened inspired the creation of many varied works of Mercy around the world.

*Sister Theresa Szałkowska ZSJM
(Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus)*

*On the Cross, the fountain of My mercy
was opened wide by the lance
for all souls - no one have I excluded!
(Diary, 1182).*

THE MESSAGE OF DIVINE MERCY

**“I desire that the whole world
know My infinite mercy”
(Diary, 687)*.**

**“Mankind will not have Peace
until it turns with trust to My mercy”
(Diary, 300).**

* Numbers in brackets refer to paragraphs in the “Diary” of Saint Sr. Faustina Kowalska

*“...How fleeting all earthly things are.
Everything that appears great disappears
like smoke and does not give the soul freedom,
but weariness. Happy the soul
that understands these things...”
(Diary, 1141).*

The Lord Jesus gave Sister Faustina, a Polish nun from the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy¹, an extraordinary mission – **the Message of Mercy addressed to the whole world**. Her mission was to deliver new prayers and forms of devotions to the Divine Mercy, which are to remind us about the forgotten truth of faith: the merciful love of God for every person. In His message, the merciful God manifests Himself in Jesus Christ, the Saviour, as a Father of love and mercy, especially for the unfortunate, the errant and sinners – **wanting to change their lives**.



“You are the secretary of My mercy.
I have chosen you for that office in this life
and the next life” (Diary, 1605).

“Your task is to write down everything
that I make known to you about My mercy,
for the benefit of those who by reading these
things will be comforted in their souls and
will have the courage to approach Me”
(Diary, 1693).

“Today I am sending you with My mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish aching mankind, but I desire to heal it, hugging it to My Merciful Heart (...) before the Day of Justice I am sending the Day of Mercy” (Diary, 1588).

The Saviour wishes the whole world to learn about Divine Mercy, for each person to turn to it with trust, to discover the beauty and richness of graces of Christian mercy. New forms of devotion to the Divine Mercy and the promises related to them are to achieve this purpose.

“I have opened My Heart as a living fountain of mercy. Let all souls draw life from it. Let them approach this sea of mercy with great trust. Sinners will attain justification, and the just will be strengthened in goodness” (Diary, 1520).

“Conversion, as well as perseverance, is a grace of My mercy (...) The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is – trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive” (Diary, 1578).

The essence of the devotion to the Divine Mercy is the attitude of trust toward God, a desire to fulfil His will, and practising works of mercy toward our neighbours, entrusting them to God’s boundless love and mercy. This is also a condition for the fulfilment of the promises which the Lord Jesus associated with new forms of venerating the Divine Mercy.

NEW FORMS OF DEVOTION TO THE DIVINE MERCY

THE IMAGE OF MERCIFUL OF JESUS

On February 22, 1931, Jesus revealed himself to Sister Faustina in a cell in the convent in Płock (Poland) and ordered her to paint an image, showing her the pattern of the image in a vision.

“Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You. I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and then throughout the whole world. I promise that the soul that venerates this image will not perish. I also promise victory over its enemies already here on Earth, **especially at the hour of death.** (...) I want this image, which you will paint with a brush, to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter; **that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy.** I desire that priests proclaim this great mercy of Mine towards the souls of sinners” (Diary, 47-49).

THE FEAST OF DIVINE MERCY

“I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners (...). I pour out an ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that accepts the Sacrament of Reconciliation and receives the Eucharist **shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and avoid punishment**; on that day all the divine floodgates through which grace flows will be opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet”

(Diary, 699).

“Even if a soul is like a decaying corpse, so that, from a human standpoint, there would be no hope of restoration and everything would already be lost - it is not so with God. **The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full**” (Diary, 1448).

THE CHAPLET OF DIVINE MERCY

On September 13 and 14, 1935, in Vilnius, Jesus dictated to Saint Faustina the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, as a prayer pleading for the grace of God's mercy for us and for the whole world — the grace of mercy for sinners.

“Through the chaplet you will obtain everything, if what you ask for is compatible with My will” (Diary, 1731).

“Say unceasingly the chaplet that I have taught you. Whoever recites it will receive great mercy at the hour of death. Priests will recommend it to sinners as their last hope of salvation. Even the most hardened sinner, if he recites this chaplet only once, will receive the grace of My infinite mercy” (Diary, 687).

“At the hour of their death, I defend as My own glory every soul that will say this chaplet; **or when others say it for a dying person, the indulgence is the same**. When this chaplet is said by the bedside of a dying person, God’s anger is placated and his unfathomable mercy envelops the soul” (Diary, 811).

“Write that when they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the merciful Saviour” (Diary, 1541).

The Chaplet of Divine Mercy is to be recited on Rosary beads.
Begin with:

“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.

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

I Believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come 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 life everlasting. Amen.

On the large beads (once):

**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 small beads (10 times):

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

In conclusion (3 times):

**Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One,
have mercy on us and on the whole world” (Diary, 476).**

THE HOUR OF MERCY

In October 1937, in Cracow (Poland), the Lord Jesus instructed Sister Faustina to venerate the hour of His death and to connect with Him in prayer referring to the value and merits of His Passion.

“I desire that you know more profoundly the love that burns in My Heart for souls, and you will understand this when you meditate upon My Passion. Call upon My mercy on behalf of sinners; I desire their salvation. When you say this prayer, with a contrite heart and with faith on behalf of a sinner, I will give him the grace of conversion. This is the prayer:

O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of Mercy for us, I trust in You” (Diary 187).

“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...” (Diary, 1320).

“...as often as you hear the clock strike the third hour, immerse yourself completely in My mercy, adoring and glorifying it; invoking its omnipotence for the whole world (...). In this hour you can obtain everything for yourself and for others simply by asking; **it was the hour of grace for the whole world** – mercy triumphed over justice.

(...) try your best to meditate on the Stations of the Cross in this hour, provided that your duties permit it; and if you are not able to say the Stations of the Cross, then at least step into the chapel for a moment and adore the Blessed Sacrament, My Heart, which is full of mercy; and should you be unable to step into the chapel, immerse yourself in prayer wherever you happen to be, if only for a very brief instant. I claim veneration for My mercy from every creature” (Diary, 1572).

“On the Cross, the fountain of My mercy was opened wide by the lance for all souls – **no one have I excluded!**” (Diary, 1182).

SPREADING THE DIVINE MERCY DEVOTION

“...do whatever is within your power to spread devotion to My mercy. I will make up for what you lack. Tell aching mankind to embrace My Merciful Heart, and I will fill it with peace (...) When a soul approaches Me with trust, I fill it with such an abundance of graces that it cannot contain them within itself, but must radiate them to other souls. **Souls who spread the honour of My mercy I shield throughout their entire lives as a tender mother shields her infant...**” (Diary, 1074-75).

“To priests who proclaim and extol My mercy, I will give wondrous power; I will anoint their words and touch the hearts of those to whom they speak” (Diary, 1521).

WORKS OF MERCY

“You are to show mercy to your neighbours always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse or abstain from it. I am giving you three ways of exercising mercy toward your neighbour: **first - by deed, second - by word, third - by prayer.** In these three acts is contained the fullness of mercy, and it is an unquestionable demonstration of love for Me. By this means a soul glorifies and pays reverence to My mercy” (Diary, 742).

THE NEW CONGREGATION

Sister Faustina tried to discern God’s plan to bring about a new religious Congregation. For this intention, she offered to God numerous prayers and sufferings. In June 1935 in Vilnius, she wrote:

“God demands that there be a Congregation which will proclaim the mercy of God to the world and, by its prayers, obtain it for the world”
(Diary, 436).

“I desire that there be such a Congregation” (Diary, 437).

“Unceasingly, they will intercede for Divine Mercy for themselves and for the whole world. And every act of mercy will flow from God’s love, that love with which they will be filled to overflowing. They will strive to make their own this great attribute of God, and to live by it and to bring others to know it and to trust in the goodness of the Lord”

(Diary, 664).

“I saw the convent of the new Congregation. It was a large and spacious building. I went from room to room, observing everything. I saw that God’s Providence had provided for all that was necessary.

(...) During Mass, I received a clear and profound understanding concerning this whole work, and not a shadow of a doubt remained in my soul. The Lord gave me knowledge of His will under three aspects, so to speak, but it all comes down to one.

The first is that souls separated from the world will burn as an offering before God’s throne and beg for mercy for the whole world... and through their efforts they will obtain blessings for priests, and through their prayers prepare the world for the final coming of Jesus.

The second is prayer together with the act of mercy. In particular, they will defend the souls of children against the spirit of evil. Prayer and merciful deeds are all that will be required of these souls (...). And in this egoistic world they will try to rouse love - the mercy of Jesus.

The third is prayer and deeds of mercy, without any obligation of taking vows. By doing this, these people will have a share in all the merits and privileges of the whole [congregation]. Everyone in the world can belong to this group. A member of this group ought to perform at least one act of mercy a day; at least one, but there can be many more, for such deeds can easily be carried out by anyone, even the very poorest.

For there are three ways of performing an act of mercy: first, the merciful word, by forgiving and by comforting; second, if you can offer no word, then pray - that too is mercy; and third, through deeds of mercy.

And when the Last Day comes, we shall be judged from this, and on this basis we shall receive the eternal verdict”

(Diary, 1154-1158).

*You are the secretary of My mercy.
I have chosen you for that office
in this life and the next life.
That is how I want it to be in spite
of all the opposition they will give you.
Know that My choice will not change
(Diary, 1605).*

*I myself will give you many orders directly,
but I will delay the possibility
of their being carried out
and make it depend on others
(...) but know, My daughter,
this sacrifice will last until your death
(Diary 923).*

CHAPTER I

SAINT SISTER FAUSTINA KOWALSKA (1905-1938)

Sister Faustina, the world-renowned apostle of Divine Mercy and one of the greatest mystics of the Church, was born on August 25, 1905 in Głogowiec² (Łódź region, Central Poland). She was the third of ten children, in a poor Catholic peasant family. At her baptism, in the nearby parish church of Świnice Warckie, she was given the name Helena. During her childhood she distinguished herself by acts of devotion, her love for prayer, hard work, obedience and a tremendous sensitivity to human misery.



Family house.
Głogowiec
- the birth place
of Sister Faustina



Sister Faustina
with her family (1935)

Despite completing only three years of schooling, in her Diary she clearly described what she wanted to achieve, in a simple, precise manner, without any ambiguity. In the (Diary, 7) she wrote about her experiences from her childhood:

“From the age of seven, I experienced the definite call of God, the grace of a vocation to the religious life. It was in the seventh year of my life that, for the first time, I heard God’s voice in my soul; that is, an invitation to a more perfect life. But I was not always obedient to the call to grace. I came across no one who would have explained these things to me”.

At the age of sixteen she left her family home for the nearby city of Aleksandrów (Poland) and then moved to Łódź (Poland), where she worked as a servant to support herself and to help her parents. During this period the desire to join a convent was gradually growing inside her. Since her parents were against it, young Helena tried to deaden God’s call.

Years later, she reminisced about this in her (Diary, 9-10):

“Once I was at a dance with one of my Sisters and while everybody was having a good time, my soul was experiencing internal torments. As I began to dance, I suddenly saw Jesus at my side, Jesus racked with pain, stripped of his clothing, covered with wounds, who spoke these words to me, “How long shall I suffer and how long will you keep deceiving Me?” At that moment the charming music stopped and any company vanished from my sight; there remained Jesus and I. I took a seat by my dear sister, pretending to have a headache to hide what had taken place in my soul. After a while, I slipped out unnoticed, leaving my sister and all my companions behind, and made my way to the Cathedral of St. Stanislaus Kostka³ (Łódź).

It was almost twilight; there were only a few people in the cathedral. Paying no attention to what was happening around me, I fell prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament and begged the Lord to be good enough to allow me to understand what I should do next. Then I heard these words, “Go at once to Warsaw (Poland), you will enter a convent there”. I rose from prayer, came home and took care of things that needed to be settled. As best I could, I confided to my sister what took place within my soul. I told her to say goodbye to our parents and thus, in one dress, with no other belongings, I arrived in Warsaw”.



Venezian Park in Łódź (Poland) – the place of the ball



St. Stanislaus Kostka Cathedral Church in Łódź



The interior of the St. Stanislaus Kostka Cathedral Church where Jesus called Sister Faustina to the religious life.



The general house of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. Here, Sister Faustina was accepted into the religious congregation. Warsaw (Poland), 3/9 Żytnia Street

In Warsaw, she knocked on numerous convent doors, but with no luck. Finally, on August 1, 1925, she applied to the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, located at Żytunia Street in Warsaw, and she was accepted. Before that though, to satisfy the conditions and put together her outfit, she worked as a housekeeper near Warsaw for a family with several children. In the Diary she described her feelings when joining the convent: “It seemed to me that I had stepped into the life of Paradise. A single prayer was bursting forth from my heart, one of thanksgiving” (Diary, 17).

Upon joining the Congregation, Helena took on the name Sister Mary Faustina. She completed her probation in Cracow where, in the presence of Bishop Stanislaus Rospond⁴, she took her initial religious vows, and five years later, perpetual vows professing chastity, poverty and obedience. She was assigned to work in various houses of the Congregation, spending the longest periods of time in Cracow, Płock and Vilnius, working as a cook, gardener and doorkeeper. Her extraordinarily rich mystical life was not visible to others in the convents or outside. She passionately fulfilled her duties and faithfully observed all the monastic rules. She was focused and silent, but at the same time, natural and cheerful, full of a kind and unselfish love for her neighbours. Her rigorous lifestyle and exhausting fasting, which she was undertaking even before joining the Congregation, weakened her body to such an extent that already during her postulancy it became necessary to send her for medical treatment.

After her first year in novitiate, she went through an unusually painful mystical experience: her so-called “dark night”, and then, further spiritual and moral sufferings related to fulfilling the mission she was given by The Lord Jesus. Sr. Faustina sacrificed her life for sinners to save their souls; for that she underwent a diverse range of sufferings.

During the final years of her life, her health deteriorated significantly: she developed tuberculosis which attacked her lungs and gastrointestinal tract. As a result, she underwent two periods of hospital treatment, each lasting a few months. Physically totally ravaged, but spiritually entirely mature being mystically united with God, she died in Cracow-Łagiewniki on October 5, 1938 in an atmosphere of holiness, having lived for only 33 years, including 13 years of monastic life.

(See annotation of Saint Faustina's Diary)

On April 30, 2000, in the Vatican, sister Faustyna Kowalska was proclaimed a Saint.



The house of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Plock (Poland), 14/18 Stary Rynek, where The Lord Jesus ordered Sr. Faustina to paint the image of Merciful Jesus as seen in her vision, and expressed a desire to establish a Feast of Mercy.



The house of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, Vilnius (Lithuania), 29 Grybo Street, where Sr. Faustina was staying during the period 1933-1936 and where The Lord Jesus dictated to Sr. Faustina the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.



The house of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Cracow (Poland), 3 Siostry Faustyny Street, the place where the early remains of Sr. Faustina are found. Here, Lord Jesus expressed the desire for the hour of His death to be venerated – the Hour of Mercy.

*These rays of mercy will pass through you,
just as they have passed through this Host,
and they will go out through all the world
(Diary, 441).*

*Tell sinners
that I am always waiting for them,
that I listen intently
to the beating of their heart...
When will it beat for Me?
(Diary, 1728).*

FRAGMENTS OF THE DIARY OF SAINT SR. FAUSTINA

The Diary in the form of a journal was created during the last four years of Saint Sister Faustina's life. It reveals the depths of her spiritual life and illustrates the high degree of her soul's union with God. The Lord endowed Sr. Faustina with tremendous graces: the gift of contemplation, a deep knowledge of the mystery of the mercy of God, visions, revelations, the hidden stigmata, the gifts of prophecy and of reading human souls, and also the rare gift of mystical espousal (Diary Introduction, p. 10, Polish Edition).

“Secretary of My most profound mystery, know that yours is an exclusive intimacy with Me. Your task is to write down everything that I make known to you about My mercy, for the benefit of those who by reading these things will be comforted in their souls and will have the courage to approach Me. I therefore want you to devote all your free moments to writing” (Diary, 1693).

“My Heart overflows with great mercy for souls (...). If only they could understand that I am the best of Fathers to them and that it is for them that the Blood and Water flowed from My Heart as from a fountain overflowing with mercy. For them I dwell in the tabernacle as the King of Mercy. I desire to bestow My graces upon souls, but they do not want to accept them (...). Oh, how indifferent are souls to so much goodness, to so many proofs of love! (...). They have time for everything, but they have no time to come to Me for graces” (Diary, 367).

“Tell sinners that no one shall escape My Hand; if they run away from My Merciful Heart, they will fall into My Just Hands. Tell sinners that I am always waiting for them, that I listen intently to the beating of their heart. When will it beat for Me? Write that I am speaking to them through their remorse of conscience, through their failures and sufferings, through thunderstorms, through the voice of the Church. And if they bring all My graces to naught, I begin to be angry with them, leaving them alone and giving them what they want” (Diary, 1728).

“God never violates our free will. It is up to us whether we want to receive God’s grace or not. It is up to us whether we will co-operate with it or waste it” (Diary, 1107).

“...I saw two roads. One was broad, covered with sand and flowers, full of joy, music and all sorts of pleasures. People were walking along it, dancing and enjoying themselves. They reached the end without realizing it. And at the end of the road there was a horrible precipice; that is, the abyss of hell. The souls fell blindly into it; as they walked, so they fell. And their number was so great that it was impossible to count them.

And I saw the other road, or rather, a path, for it was narrow and strewn with thorns and rocks; and the people who walked along it had tears in their eyes, and all kinds of suffering befell them. Some fell down upon the rocks, but stood up immediately and went on. At the end of the road there was a magnificent garden filled with all sorts of happiness and all these souls entered there. At the very first instant they forgot all their sufferings” (Diary, 153).

“...How fleeting all earthly things are. Everything that appears great disappears like smoke and does not give the soul freedom, but weariness. Happy the soul that understands these things and with only one foot touches the Earth” (Diary, 1141).

“...If a soul loves God sincerely and is intimately united with Him, then, even though such a soul may be living in the midst of difficult external circumstances, nothing can disturb its interior life. In the midst of corruption, it can remain pure and unsullied because the great love of God gives it strength for battle, and God also protects it in a special way” (Diary, 1094).

“The Lord gave me much light to know His attributes. The first attribute that the Lord revealed to me is His Holiness. His Holiness is so great that all the powers and virtues tremble before Him.

(...) The Holiness of God is poured out upon the Church of God and upon every living soul, but not in the same degree. There are souls who are completely penetrated by God, and there are those who are barely alive. The second form of knowledge that the Lord granted me concerns His justice.

His justice is so great and penetrating that it reaches deep into the heart of things, and all things stand before Him in naked truth.

(...) The third attribute He revealed is His love and Mercy. And I understood that this is the greatest attribute. It unites the creature with the Creator. This immense love and abyss of Mercy are made known in the Incarnation of the Word and in the redemption [of humanity], and it is here that I saw this as the greatest of all God's attributes" (Diary, 180).

"All that is great and beautiful is in God (...). O you sages of the world and you great minds, recognize that true greatness is in loving God!"
(Diary, 990).

"Jesus, You have allowed me to know and understand in what a soul's greatness consists: not in great deeds but in great love. Love has its worth, and it confers greatness on all our deeds. Although our actions are small and ordinary in themselves, because of love they become great and powerful before God" (Diary, 889).

"True greatness of the soul is in loving God and in humility"
(Diary, 427).

"As the soul continues to immerse itself more deeply in the abyss of its nothingness and need, God uses His omnipotence to exalt it. If there is a truly happy soul upon Earth, it can only be a truly humble soul. At first, one's self-love suffers greatly on this account, but after a soul has struggled courageously, God grants it much light by which it sees how wretched and full of deception everything is" (Diary, 593).

"The floodgates of Heaven are open to a humble soul, and a sea of graces flows down upon it (...). God refuses nothing to such a soul; it is all-powerful and influences the destiny of the whole world. God raises up such a soul to His very throne, and the more the soul humbles itself, the more God stoops down to it, pursuing it with His graces and accompanying it at every moment with His omnipotence" (Diary, 1306).

"God, who is Light, lives in a pure and humble heart, and all sufferings and adversities serve but to reveal the soul's holiness" (Diary, 573).

“...Humility is nothing but the truth. There is no cringing in true humility. Although I consider myself the least (...). I enjoy the honour of being the beloved of Christ” (Diary, 1502).

“O my Jesus, You know what efforts are needed to live sincerely and unaffectedly with those from whom our nature flees, or with those who, deliberately or not, have made us suffer. In human terms alone, this is impossible. At such times more than at others, I try to discover the Lord Jesus in such a person and for this same Jesus, I do everything for such people. In such acts, love is pure, and such practice of love gives the soul endurance and strength. I do not expect anything from creatures, and therefore I am not disappointed...” (Diary, 766).

“Jesus, my most perfect model, with my eyes fixed on You, I will go through life in Your footsteps, adapting nature to grace, according to Your most Holy Will and Your light which illuminates my soul, trusting completely in Your help” (Diary, 1351).

“This firm resolution to become a saint is extremely pleasing to Me. I bless your efforts and will give you opportunities to sanctify yourself. Be watchful that you lose no opportunity that My providence offers you for sanctification. If you do not succeed in taking advantage of an opportunity, do not lose your peace, but humble yourself profoundly before Me and, with great trust, immerse yourself completely in My mercy. In this way, you will gain more than you have lost, because more favour is granted to a humble soul than the soul itself asks for...” (Diary, 1361).

“I seek and desire souls like yours but they are few. Your great trust in Me forces Me to continuously grant you graces” (Diary, 718).

“...Let three virtues adorn you in a particular way; humility, purity of intention and love” (Diary, 1779).

“I demand of you a perfect and whole-burnt offering; an offering of the will. No other sacrifice can compare with this one. I Myself am directing your life and arranging things in such a way that you will be for Me a continual sacrifice and will always do My will. And for the accomplishment of this offering, you will unite yourself with Me on the Cross. I Myself will give you many orders directly, but I will delay the possibility of their being carried out and make it depend on others (...) but know, My daughter, that this offering will last until your death” (Diary, 923).

“I want to hold you in My hand as a pliant tool, perfectly adapted to the completion of My works” (Diary, 1359).

“Outwardly, your sacrifice must look like this: silent, hidden, permeated with love, imbued with prayer. I demand, My daughter, that your sacrifice be pure and full of humility, that I may find pleasure in it (...). You shall accept all sufferings with love. Do not be afflicted if your heart often experiences repugnance and dislike for sacrifice. All its power rests in the will, and so these contrary feelings, far from lowering the value of the sacrifice in My eyes, will enhance it” (Diary, 1767).

“... every conversion of a sinful soul demands sacrifice” (Diary, 961).

“...I need sacrifice lovingly accomplished, because that alone has meaning for Me. Enormous indeed are the debts of the world which are due to Me; pure souls can repay them by their sacrifice, exercising mercy in spirit” (Diary, 1316).

“...but write this for the many souls who are often worried because they do not have the material means with which to carry out an act of mercy. Yet spiritual mercy, which requires neither permissions nor storehouses, is highly meritorious and is within the grasp of every soul. If a soul does not exercise mercy one way or another, it will not obtain My mercy on the day of judgment. Oh, if only souls knew how to gather eternal treasure for themselves, they would not be judged, for they would forestall My judgment with My mercy” (Diary, 1317).

“I was led by an Angel to the chasms of hell (...). I would have died at the very sight of these tortures if the omnipotence of God had not supported me. Let the sinner know that he will be tortured throughout all eternity, through those senses which he used to sin. I am writing this at the command of God, so that no soul may find an excuse by saying there is no hell, or that nobody has ever been there, and so no one can say what it is like (...). I noticed that in hell there are most souls that did not believe it exists. I could hardly recover from the fright. How terribly souls suffer there!” (Diary, 741).

“In a moment, I was in a misty place full of fire in which there was a great crowd of suffering souls. They were praying fervently, but to no avail; only we can come to their aid (...) their greatest torment was longing for God. I saw Our Lady visiting the souls in Purgatory. The souls call her “The Star of the Sea”. She brings them refreshment” (Diary, 20).

“...I was in Heaven and I saw its inconceivable beauties and the happiness that awaits us after death. I saw how all creatures give ceaseless praise and glory to God. I saw how great is the happiness in God, which spreads to all creatures, making them happy; and all the glory and praise which springs from this happiness returns to its source; and they enter into the depths of God, contemplating the inner life of God.

(...) This source of happiness is unchanging in its essence, but it is always new, gushing forth happiness for all creatures” (Diary, 777).

“I rarely have such visions. But more often I commune with the Lord in a profound manner. My senses sleep and, although not in a visible way, all things become more real and clearer to me than as if I saw them with my eyes. My intellect learns more in one moment than during long years of thinking and meditations, both as regards the essence of God and as regards revealed truths and knowledge of my own misery” (Diary, 882).

“There are, in my life, times and moments of spiritual insight; that is, Divine illuminations, when the soul receives inward instruction about things it has not read in any book and has not been taught by any person. These are times of great inner knowledge that God himself imparts to the soul. They are great mysteries” (Diary, 1102).

“God approaches a soul in a special way known only to himself and to the soul (...). Love presides in this union, and everything is achieved by love alone. Jesus gives himself to the soul in a gentle and sweet manner, and in His depths there is peace. He grants the soul many graces and makes it capable of sharing His eternal thoughts. And frequently, He reveals to it His Divine plans” (Diary, 622).

“...If the Lord demands something of a soul, He gives it the means to carry it out, and through grace He makes it capable of doing this. So, even if a soul is utterly miserable, at the Lord’s command it can undertake things beyond its expectation, because this is the sign by which it can be known that the Lord is with that soul; God’s power and strength, which make the soul courageous and valiant, is manifested within it”

(Diary, 1090).

“God imparts himself to the soul in a loving way and draws it into the infinite depths of His divinity but, at the same time, He leaves it here on Earth for the sole purpose that it might suffer and die longing for Him. And this strong love is so pure that God himself finds pleasure in it; and self-love has no access to its deeds (...) and because of this, the soul is capable of great deeds for God”(Diary, 856).

“Chosen souls are, in My hand, lights which I cast into the darkness of the world and with which I illuminate it. As stars enlighten the night, so chosen souls enlighten the Earth. And the more perfect a soul is, the stronger and the more far-reaching is the light shed by it. It can be hidden and unknown, even to those closest to it, and yet its holiness is reflected in souls even to the most distant extremities of the world” (Diary, 1601).

“...There are souls living in the world who love Me dearly. I dwell in their hearts with delight. But they are few. In convents too, there are souls that fill My Heart with joy. They bear My features (...). Their number is very small. They are a defence for the world before the justice of the Heavenly Father and a means of obtaining mercy for the world. The love and sacrifice of these souls sustains the world” (Diary, 367).

THE CHAPLET TO THE DIVINE MERCY

Vilnius, Lithuania, September 13, 1935.

“In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw an Angel, the executor of divine wrath. He was clothed in a dazzling robe, his face gloriously bright, a cloud beneath his feet. From the cloud, bolts of thunder and flashes of lightning were springing into his hands; and from his hand they were going forth, and only then were they striking the Earth. When I saw this sign of divine wrath which was about to strike the Earth and, in particular, a certain place which for good reasons I cannot name, I began to implore the Angel to stop for a few moments, and the world would do penance. But my plea was a mere nothing in the face of the divine anger.

(...) At that very moment I felt the power of Jesus’ grace, which dwells in my soul. When I became conscious of this grace, I was instantly brought before the Throne of God. (...) I found myself pleading with God for the world with words heard internally. As I was praying in this manner, I saw the Angel’s helplessness: he could not carry out the just punishment which was rightly due for sins. Never before had I prayed with such inner power as I did then.

The words with which I entreated God are these: “Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ for our sins and those of the whole world; for the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us”. The next morning, when I entered chapel, I heard these words internally: Every time you enter the chapel, immediately recite the prayer which I taught you yesterday.

When I had said the prayer, in my soul I heard these words: This prayer will serve to appease My wrath. You will recite it for nine days, on the beads of the rosary, in the following manner:

First of all, you will say one Our Father, one Hail Mary and the I Believe in God. Then on the Our Father beads you will say the following words: 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 Hail Mary beads you will say the following words: For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world. In conclusion, three times you will recite these words: Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world” (Diary, 474-476).

“Oh, what great graces I will grant to souls who say this chaplet (...) Write down these words, My daughter. Speak to the world about My mercy; **let all mankind recognize My unfathomable mercy.** It is a sign for the end times; after it will come the day of justice. While there is still time, let them have recourse to the fountain of My mercy; let them profit from the Blood and Water which gushed forth for them” (Diary, 848).

THE PROMISE OF THE GRACE OF MERCY FOR THE DYING

“It pleases Me to grant everything souls ask of Me by saying the chaplet. When hardened sinners say it, I will fill their souls with peace, and the hour of their death will be a happy one. Write this for the benefit of distressed souls; when a soul sees and realizes the gravity of its sins, when the whole abyss of the misery into which it immersed itself is displayed before its eyes, let it not despair, but with trust let it throw itself into the arms of My mercy, as a child into the arms of its beloved mother (...). Tell them no soul that has called upon My mercy has been disappointed or brought to shame. I delight particularly in a soul that has placed its trust in My goodness. **Write that when they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the Merciful Saviour**” (Diary, 1541).

“I desire that this mercy will flow out upon the whole world through your heart. Let no one who approaches you go away without that trust in My mercy, which I so ardently desire for souls. Pray as much as you can for the dying. By your entreaties, obtain for them trust in My mercy, because they have most need of trust, and have it the least” (Diary, 1777).

“My daughter, help Me to save a certain dying sinner. Say the chaplet that I have taught you for him. When I began to say the chaplet, I saw the man dying in the midst of terrible torment and struggle. His Guardian Angel was defending him, but he was, as it were, powerless against the enormity of the soul’s misery (...). But while I was saying the chaplet, **I saw Jesus just as He is depicted in the Image.** The rays that issued from Jesus’ Heart enveloped the sick man, and the powers of darkness fled in panic. The sick man peacefully breathed his last” (Diary, 1565).

“I often communicate with people who are dying and obtain Divine Mercy for them. Oh, how great is the goodness of God, greater than we can understand. There are moments and there are mysteries of the Divine Mercy over which the heavens are astounded. Let our judgment of souls cease, for God’s mercy is extraordinary” (Diary, 1684).

“God’s mercy sometimes touches the sinner at the last moment in a wondrous and mysterious way. Outwardly, it seems as if everything were lost, but it is not so. The soul, illuminated by a ray of God’s powerful final grace, turns to God in the last moment with such a power of love that, in an instant, it receives from God absolution of sins and remission of punishment, while outwardly it shows no sign either of repentance or of contrition, because souls [at that stage] no longer react to external things. Oh, how beyond comprehension is God’s mercy!

But - horror! There are also souls who voluntarily and consciously reject and scorn this grace! Although a person is at the point of death, the merciful God gives the soul that interior vivid moment, so that if the soul is willing, it has the possibility of returning to God. But sometimes, the obduracy in souls is so great that consciously they choose hell; they [thus] make useless all the prayers that other souls offer to God for them and even the efforts of God Himself...” (Diary, 1698).

“O life so dull and monotonous, how many treasures you contain! When I look at everything with the eyes of faith, no two hours are alike, and the dullness and monotony disappear. The grace which is given me in this hour will not be repeated in the next. It may be given me again, but it will not be the same grace. **Time goes on, never to return again.** Whatever is enclosed in it will never change; it seals with a seal for eternity” (Diary, 62).

“...The Lord let me know how much He desires a soul to distinguish itself with deeds of love. And in spirit I saw how many souls are calling out to us, “Give us God.” And the blood of the Apostles boiled up within me. I will not be parsimonious with it; I will shed it all to the last drop for immortal souls. Although perhaps God will not demand that in the physical sense, in spirit it is possible and no less meritorious” (Diary, 1249).

“I desire to go throughout the whole world and to speak to souls about the great mercy of God. **Priests, help me in this...**” (Diary, 491).

“Tell My priests that hardened sinners will repent on hearing their words when they speak about My unfathomable mercy, about the compassion I have for them in My Heart. To priests who proclaim and extol My mercy, **I will give wondrous power; I will anoint their words and touch the hearts of those to whom they speak**” (Diary, 1521).

“My daughter, look into the abyss of My mercy and give praise and glory to this mercy of Mine. Do it in this way: Gather all sinners from the entire world and immerse them in the abyss of My mercy” (Diary, 206).

“When I immersed myself in prayer and united myself with all the Masses that were being celebrated all over the world at that time, I implored God, for the sake of all these Holy Masses, to have mercy on the world and especially on poor sinners **who were dying at that moment.**”

At the same instant, I received an internal answer from God that a thousand souls had received grace through the prayerful mediation I had offered to God. We do not know the number of souls that is ours to save through our prayers and sacrifices; therefore, let us always pray for sinners” (Diary, 1783).

**PLENARY INDULGENCE FOR SAYING THE „DIVINE MERCY CHAPLET”
Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary dated January 12, 2002**

The plenary indulgence under the general conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father), is granted in Poland to the faithful whose soul is free from attachment to sin of any kind, and who devoutly say the Divine Mercy Chaplet at church or chapel before the Most Blessed Sacrament displayed publically or reserved in the tabernacle.

Whereas, if due to illness (or other just reason) these faithful are not able to leave home, but say the Divine Mercy Chaplet faithfully and with the desire of mercy for themselves and the readiness to show it to others, then under the general conditions, they will also be granted the plenary indulgence subject to the provisions with regard to “having obstacle”, specified in rules 24 and 25 of the Enchiridion of indulgences (Enchiridii Indulgentiarum). Under other circumstances the indulgence will be partial. This permission is to remain valid perpetually regardless any other contrary orders.

THE PRAYERS OF SAINT FAUSTINA

“O Jesus, stretched out upon the Cross, I implore You, give me the grace of following faithfully the most Holy Will of Your Father in all things, always and everywhere. And when this Will of God seems to me very harsh and difficult to fulfil, it is then I beg You, Jesus, may power and strength flow upon me from Your wounds, and may my lips keep repeating - Your will be done, O Lord (...) O most compassionate Jesus, grant me the grace to forget myself that I may live totally for souls, helping You in the work of salvation, according to the most Holy Will of Your Father...” (Diary, 1265).

“O Lord, I want to be completely transformed into Your mercy and to be Your living reflection. May the greatest of all divine attributes, that of Your unfathomable mercy, pass through my heart and soul to my neighbour.

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 neighbours’ souls and come to their rescue.

Help me, O Lord, that my ears may be merciful, so that I may give heed to my neighbours’ 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 neighbour, but 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 neighbours and take upon myself the most difficult and toilsome tasks.

Help me, O Lord, that my feet may be merciful, so that I may hurry to assist my neighbour, overcoming my own fatigue and weariness (...)

Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful so that I myself may feel all the sufferings of my neighbour...

(...) O my Jesus, transform me into Yourself, for you can do all things”
(Diary, 163).

“O Greatly Merciful God, Infinite Goodness, today all mankind calls out from the abyss of its misery to Your mercy, to Your compassion, O God; and it is with a mighty voice of misery that it cries out. Gracious God, do not reject the prayer of this Earth’s exiles!

O Lord, Goodness beyond our understanding, Who are acquainted with our misery through and through and know that by our own power we cannot ascend to You, we implore You: fill us with Your grace and keep on increasing Your mercy in us, that we may faithfully do Your Holy Will all through our lives and at the hour of death. Let the omnipotence of Your mercy shield us from the darts of our salvation's enemies, that we may with confidence, as Your children, await Your final coming..." (Diary, 1570).

THE FRUITS OF PRAYER

"By prayer a soul arms itself for all kinds of combat. In whatever state the soul may be, it ought to pray. A soul which is pure and beautiful must pray, or else it will lose its beauty. A soul which is striving after this purity must pray, or else it will never attain it. A soul which is newly converted must pray, or else it will fall again. A sinful soul, plunged in sins, must pray so that it might rise again. There is no soul which is not bound to pray, for every single grace comes to the soul through prayer" (Diary, 146).

"...a soul should be faithful to prayer despite torments, dryness and temptations, because often the realization of God's great plans depends on such prayer. If we do not persevere in such prayer, we frustrate what the Lord wanted to do through us or within us. Let every soul remember these words: And being in anguish, He prayed longer" (Diary, 872).

"We should often pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace of prudence. Prudence consists in discretion, rational reflection and courageous resolution. **The final decision is always up to us**" (Diary, 1106).

THE NOVENA TO THE DIVINE MERCY

“Novena to the Divine Mercy which Jesus instructed me to write down and make before the Feast of Mercy. It begins on Good Friday.

I desire that during these nine days you bring souls to the fount of My mercy, that they may draw the strength and refreshment and whatever graces they need in the hardships of life and, especially, at the hour of death.

On each day you will bring to My Heart **a different group of souls, and you will immerse them in the ocean of My mercy**, and I will bring all these souls into the house of My Father. You will do this in this life and in the next. I will deny nothing to any soul whom you bring to the fount of My mercy. On each day you will beg My Father, on the strength of My bitter Passion, for graces for these souls.

FIRST DAY

Today bring to Me all mankind, especially all sinners, and immerse them in the ocean of My mercy. In this way you will console Me in the bitter grief into which the loss of souls plunges Me.

Most Merciful Jesus, whose very nature it is to have compassion on us, to forgive us, do not look upon our sins, but upon the trust we place in Your infinite goodness. Receive us all into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart, and never let us escape from it. We beg this of You, by Your love which unites You to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon all mankind and especially upon poor sinners, all enfolded in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, show us Your mercy, that we may praise the omnipotence of Your mercy forever and ever. Amen.

[The Chaplet to the Divine Mercy] – text page 16

“The Lord told me to say this chaplet for nine days before the Feast of Mercy. It is to begin on Good Friday. By this novena, **I will grant every possible grace to souls**” (Diary, 796).

SECOND DAY

Today bring to Me the souls of priests and religious, and immerse them in My unfathomable mercy. It was they who gave Me the strength to endure My bitter Passion. Through them, as through channels, My mercy flows out upon mankind.

Most Merciful Jesus, from whom comes all that is good, increase Your grace in us, that we may perform worthy works of mercy, and that all who see us may glorify the Father of Mercy who is in Heaven.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the company [of chosen ones] in Your vineyard - upon the souls of priests and religious; and endow them with the strength of Your blessing. For the Love of the Heart of Your Son, in which they are enfolded, impart to them Your power and light, that they may be able to guide others in the way of salvation, and with one voice sing praise to Your boundless mercy for ages without end. Amen.

[The Chaplet to the Divine Mercy]

THIRD DAY

Today bring to Me all devout and faithful souls, and immerse them in the ocean of My mercy. These souls brought Me consolation on the Way of the Cross. They were that drop of consolation in the midst of an ocean of bitterness.

Most Merciful Jesus, from the treasury of Your mercy, You impart Your graces in great abundance to each and all. Receive us into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart and never let us escape from It. We beg this of You by that most wondrous love for the heavenly Father with which Your Heart burns so fiercely.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon faithful souls, as upon the inheritance of Your Son. For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, grant them Your blessing and surround them with Your constant protection. Thus may they never fail in love or lose the treasure of the holy faith, but rather, with all the hosts of Angels and Saints, may they glorify Your boundless mercy for endless ages. Amen.

[The Chaplet to the Divine Mercy]

FOURTH DAY

Today bring to Me the pagans and those who do not yet know me. I was thinking also of them during My bitter Passion, and their future zeal comforted My Heart. Immerse them in the ocean of My mercy.

Most Compassionate Jesus, You are the Light of the whole world. Receive into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart the souls of pagans who as yet do not know You. Let the rays of Your grace enlighten them that they, too, together with us, may extol Your wonderful mercy; and do not let them escape from the abode which is Your Most Compassionate Heart.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the souls of pagans and of those who as yet do not know You, but who are enclosed in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. Draw them to the light of the Gospel. These souls do not know what great happiness it is to love You. Grant that they, too, may extol the generosity of Your mercy for endless ages. Amen.

[The Chaplet to the Divine Mercy]

FIFTH DAY

Today bring to Me the souls of heretics and schismatics, and immerse them in the ocean of My mercy. During My bitter Passion they tore at My Body and Heart; that is, My Church. As they return to unity with the Church, My wounds heal, and in this way they alleviate My Passion.

Most Merciful Jesus, Goodness Itself, You do not refuse light to those who seek it of You. Receive into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart the souls of heretics and schismatics. Draw them by Your light into the unity of the Church, and do not let them escape from the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart; but bring it to pass that they, too, come to adore the generosity of Your mercy.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the souls of heretics and schismatics, who have squandered Your blessings and misused Your graces by obstinately persisting in their errors. Do not look upon their errors, but upon the love of Your own Son and upon His bitter Passion, which He underwent for their sake, since they, too, are enclosed in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. Bring it about that they also may glorify Your great mercy for endless ages. Amen.

[The Chaplet to the Divine Mercy]

SIXTH DAY

Today bring to Me the meek and humble souls and the souls of little children, and immerse them in My mercy. These souls most closely resemble My Heart. They strengthened Me during My bitter agony. I saw them as earthly Angels, who would keep vigil at My altars. I pour out upon them whole torrents of grace. Only the humble soul is able to receive My grace. I favour humble souls with My confidence.

Most Merciful Jesus, You Yourself have said “Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart”. Receive into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart all meek and humble souls and the souls of little children. These souls send all heaven into ecstasy, and they are the heavenly Father’s favourites. They are a sweet-smelling bouquet before the throne of God; God himself takes delight in their fragrance. These souls have a permanent abode in Your Most Compassionate Heart, O Jesus, and they unceasingly sing out a hymn of love and mercy.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon meek and humble souls, and upon the souls of little children, who are enfolded in the abode which is the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. These souls bear the closest resemblance to Your Son. Their fragrance rises from the earth and reaches Your very throne. Father of mercy and of all goodness, I beg You by the love You bear these souls and by the delight You take in them: bless the whole world, that all souls together may sing out the praises of Your mercy for endless ages. Amen.

[The Chaplet to the Divine Mercy]

SEVENTH DAY

Today bring to Me the souls who especially venerate and glorify My mercy, and immerse them in My mercy. These souls sotted most over My Passion and entered most deeply into My Spirit. They are living images of My Compassionate Heart. These souls will shine with a special brightness in the next life. Not one of them will go into the fire of hell. I shall particularly defend each one of them at the hour of death.

Most Merciful Jesus, whose Heart is Love Itself, receive into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart the souls of those who particularly extol and venerate the greatness of Your Mercy. These souls are mighty with the very power of God Himself. In the midst of all afflictions and adversities they go forward, confident of Your mercy. These souls are united to Jesus and carry all mankind on their shoulders. These souls will not be judged severely, but Your mercy will embrace them as they depart from this life.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the souls who glorify and venerate Your greatest attribute, that of Your fathomless mercy, and who are enclosed in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. These souls are a living Gospel; their hands are full of deeds of mercy and their spirits, overflowing with joy, sing a canticle of mercy to You, O Most High! I beg You O God: Show them Your mercy according to the hope and trust they have placed in You. Let there be accomplished in them the promise of Jesus, who said to them, I Myself will defend as My own glory, during their lifetime, and especially at the hour of their death, those souls who will venerate My fathomless mercy. Amen.

[The Chaplet to the Divine Mercy]

EIGHTH DAY

Today bring to Me the souls who are in the prison of Purgatory, and immerse them in the abyss of My mercy. Let the torrents of My Blood cool down their scorching flames. All these souls are greatly loved by Me. They are making retribution to My justice. It is in your power to bring them relief. Draw all the indulgences from the treasury of My Church and offer them on their behalf. Oh, if you only knew the torments they suffer, you would continually offer for them the alms of the spirit and pay off their debt for My justice.

Most Merciful Jesus, You Yourself have said that You desire mercy; so I bring into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart the souls in Purgatory, souls who are very dear to You, and yet, who must make retribution to Your justice. May the streams of Blood and Water which gushed forth from Your Heart put out the flames of the purifying fire, that in that place, too, the power of Your mercy may be praised.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the souls suffering in Purgatory, who are enfolded in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. I beg You, by the sorrowful Passion of Jesus Your Son, and by all the bitterness with which His most sacred Soul was flooded, manifest Your mercy to the souls who are under Your just scrutiny. Look upon them in no other way than through the Wounds of Jesus, Your dearly beloved Son; for we firmly believe that there is no limit to Your goodness and compassion. Amen.

[The Chaplet to the Divine Mercy]

NINTH DAY

Today bring to Me souls who have become lukewarm, and immerse them in the abyss of My mercy. These souls wound My Heart most painfully. My soul suffered the most dreadful loathing in the Garden of Olives because of lukewarm souls. They were the reason I cried out: "Father, take this cup away from Me, if it be Your will". For them, the last hope of salvation is to flee to My mercy.

Most Compassionate Jesus, You are Compassion Itself. I bring lukewarm souls into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart. In the fire of Your pure love let these tepid souls, who, like corpses, filled You with such deep loathing, be once again set aflame. O Most Compassionate Jesus, exercise the omnipotence of Your mercy and draw them into the very ardour of Your love; and bestow upon them the gift of holy love, for nothing is beyond Your power.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon lukewarm souls, who are nonetheless enfolded in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. Father of Mercy, I beg You by the bitter Passion of Your Son and by His three-hour agony on the Cross, Let them, too, glorify the abyss of Your mercy. Amen" (Diary, 1209-1229).

[The Chaplet to the Divine Mercy]



SAINT FAUSTINA'S TESTIMONY

“Low Sunday. [The Feast of The Divine Mercy] Today, I again offered myself to the Lord as a holocaust for sinners. My Jesus, if the end of my life is already approaching, I beg You most humbly, accept my death in union with You as a holocaust which I offer You today, while I still have full possession of my faculties and a fully-conscious will, and this for a three-fold purpose:

First, that the work of Your mercy may spread throughout the whole world and that the Feast of The Divine Mercy may be solemnly promulgated and celebrated.

Secondly, that sinners, especially dying sinners, may have recourse to Your mercy and experience its unspeakable effects.

Thirdly, that all the work of Your mercy may be realized according to Your wishes, and for a certain person who is in charge of this work...”
(Diary, 1680).

On April 30, 2000 in the Vatican, Pope John Paul II proclaimed Sister Faustina a Saint and established the Divine Mercy Feast for the entire Church.

A fragment of the homily delivered on the day of canonization:

Faustina, a gift of God to our epoch, a gift from the land of Poland to the whole Church, obtain for us an awareness of the depth of Divine Mercy. Help us to experience him personally and boldly give testimony about him among people. May your message of light and hope spread throughout the world, spurring sinners to conversion, calming rivalries and hatred and opening individuals and nations to the practice of brotherhood.*

PRAYER FOR OBTAINING GRACES THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF SAINT FAUSTINA

*O Jesus, You inspired Saint Faustina
with profound veneration for Your boundless Mercy,
deign, if it be Your Holy Will, to grant me,
through her intercession,
the grace for which I fervently pray.....
My sins render me unworthy of Your Mercy,
but be mindful of Saint Faustina's spirit of sacrifice and self-denial,
and reward her virtue by granting the petition which,
with childlike confidence,
I present to You through her intercession.*

Our Father..., Hail Mary..., Glory be...

* Source:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2000/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20000430_faustina.html

August 17, 2002. Pope John Paul II consecrated the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy Cracow – Łagiewniki (Poland) and entrusted the fate of the world to Divine Mercy.



Fot. M. Zubrzycki

Pope John Paul II in the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy
Cracow – Łagiewniki.

“I bear a special love for Poland, and if she will be obedient to My will, I will exalt her in might and holiness. From her will come forth the spark that will prepare the world for My final coming” (Diary, 1732).

THE ACT OF ENTRUSTING

*O God, merciful Father,
Who has revealed your love in your Son,
Jesus Christ,
and has poured it out upon us
in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter;
We entrust to You today
the destiny of the world
and of every man and woman.
Reach out to us sinners,
heal our weaknesses,
conquer all evil,
and grant that all the inhabitants
of the Earth may experience Your mercy.
May they always find
the source of hope In You,
the Triune God. Eternal Father,
for the sake of the sorrowful Passion,
and the Resurrection of Your Son,
have mercy on us
and on the whole world. Amen*

Pope John Paul II

*This is the visible help
for you on Earth.
He will help you to carry out
My will on Earth
(Diary, 53).*

*As a result of his efforts,
a new light will shine in the Church of God
for the consolation of souls
(Diary, 1390).*

CHAPTER II

BLESSED FATHER MICHAEL SOPOĆKO (1888-1975)

Father Michael Sopoćko, the confessor and spiritual director of Saint Faustina, was personally involved in the mystery of the revelations of the Merciful Jesus. God assigned to him the very important role of fulfilling the mission given to Sister Faustina. Father Sopoćko dedicated almost his entire life to this work.

Michael Sopoćko was born on November 1, 1888 in Nowosady, in the Vilnius region. He was born into a noble family fostering patriotic traditions. Despite their poor standard of living, his parents ensured that he received an elementary education. The moral values of his parents, their deep piety and parental love had a positive effect on the spiritual development of Michael and his siblings. Already in his childhood, the spiritual atmosphere which reigned in his family home awakened in Michael an ardent piety and desire to serve God as a priest.

In 1910, Michael Sopoćko began 4-year studies at the Theological Seminary in Vilnius. He could continue these studies thanks to an allowance he was awarded by the rector. He received the sacrament of Holy Orders on June 15, 1914.



Initial years of Michael Sopoćko's
priestly service in Vilnius

As a priest, Father Michael Sopoćko was sent to work in the parish of Taboryszki, near Vilnius. In addition to his clerical duties, he asked to conduct Sunday religious preaching for the young. The first year of his pastoral work was crowned with the ceremony of about 500 children receiving their first Holy Communion.

In the summer of 1915 the front of the German-Russian war⁵ passed through Taboryszki. Despite the danger arising from the fighting Father Sopoćko continued to celebrate all church services and participated in the lives of parishioners. He also became involved in educational activities through opening new schools in neighbouring areas, which over time led to persecution by the German occupying authorities. The Germans started consistently preventing Fr. Sopoćko from visiting Vilnius where he travelled to bring teachers for the new schools. Consequently, he was forced to leave Taboryszki.

In 1918, received permission from the Church authorities in Vilnius to go to Warsaw to study at the Department of Theology of Warsaw University. However, he was unable to begin his studies due to illness and the political situation in Poland.

After medical treatment, he did return to Warsaw to resume his studies, but it turned out that the university was closed due to military operations. Thus, he volunteered to provide pastoral services in the military. The field bishop of the Polish Army appointed him as a military chaplain and assigned him to provide pastoral services in the field hospital that was organized in Warsaw.

A month later, Fr. Sopoćko asked to be sent to the military front and the Vilnius Regiment. He immediately began serving soldiers who were fighting on the frontline. In addition to his pastoral duties, he assisted the wounded, who often found themselves in difficult circumstances due to the lack of hospital facilities.

Following a long, exhausting march with the fighting troops, Fr. Sopoćko's own health problems resurfaced and he was referred for treatment to a military hospital where, during the many weeks of his recovery he helped with the spiritual care of the sick. When his treatment ended, he was appointed as a military chaplain in the training camp for officers in Warsaw.

His duties included weekly religious and moral lectures for officers and non-commissioned officers from various regiments and holding services at two military hospitals. In his lectures, Fr. Sopoćko talked about dogma and the history of the church, catechism and practical moral topics relating to military service. The moral, religious and patriotic issues he brought up in his lectures were highly-valued by his superiors. The Ministry of Defence later published them and officers were given orders to introduce his work to the cadets in their units.



Michael Sopoćko as a military chaplain of the Training Camp for officers

In October 1919, despite the on going war, the university resumed its activity. Fr. Sopoćko enrolled in moral theology and classes in law and philosophy. From that moment, he had to share his time between studies and service in the military. In addition, he was involved in organizing social work. He supervised the operations of the *Brotherly Help for Soldiers* (acting as its president), the military inn and the school for the orphaned children of military families.

In the summer of 1920, he witnessed the collapse of the frontline and, immediately after that, the heroic defence of Warsaw and the final victory over the Soviet offensive. Years later, in his "*Memoirs*", he described that event as an extraordinary dispensation of Divine Providence and a sign of Divine Mercy for Poland obtained through the prayers of the faithful who filled the churches that August.

While serving as a military chaplain and studying moral theology, he also undertook additional studies at the Higher Pedagogical Institute. In 1923 he received his master's degree in theology and became even more involved in the field of pedagogy. The results of his research on the effects of alcohol on the development of abilities in youth became the foundation for his dissertation: *"Alcoholism and the school-aged youth"*, the crowning achievement of his studies at the Pedagogical Institute.

The Bishop of Vilnius, Jerzy Matulewicz⁶, aware of the merits and achievements of the chaplain and of his theological and pedagogical background, wanted to recruit him to work in his diocese. First, he wished to entrust to him the organization of a ministry for youth. Father Michael accepted the bishop's proposal and returned to work in Vilnius. By virtue of an official decision made in the autumn of 1924, Fr. Sopoćko was appointed head of the Military Chaplaincy for the Vilnius Region, consisting of 12 independent units numbering over 10,000 men. The transfer of Fr. Sopoćko to Vilnius was a promotion but, at the same time, it imposed on him more obligations and greater responsibility. The pastoral work as a military chaplain was recognized by Marshal Józef Piłsudski⁷.

Despite his numerous pastoral duties, he continued his part-time studies at the Department of Theology of the Warsaw University working on his doctoral thesis in moral theology titled: *"The family in legislation in Polish lands"*. He defended his doctoral thesis on March 1, 1926. After obtaining his doctoral degree, he planned to pursue a habilitation.

Doing research required knowledge of foreign languages so he started to learn German, English and French. His religious and other lectures delivered to soldiers in Russian at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Vilnius (now the Sanctuary of the Divine Mercy), were also very popular among the faithful.

In 1927 and 1928, while continuing to work as the head of the chaplaincy of the local Military District, Father Sopoćko was appointed to the prominent position of spiritual father and confessor of the seminary and the head of the Department of Pastoral Theology at Vilnius University. These new duties forced him to withdraw gradually from his military chaplaincy work.

As a spiritual father, acted also at the seminary as a moderator of the Marian Sodality, the Eucharistic Association, the Third Order of Saint Francis and a group of clerics in the Missionary Association of Clergy. Another service he provided at that time, and indeed during his entire stay in Vilnius, was acting as a confessor of religious Sisters.

After being partially excused from the role of military chaplain, his duties, in addition to his function as the spiritual father at the seminary, included lecturing and research work. Since textbooks were scarce at that time, Fr. Sopoćko wrote his own academic scripts for the subjects he taught. These scripts were then copied by the students and served as learning materials for many years.



With students of Stefan Batory University in Vilnius, 1929

The research of Fr. Sopoćko was conducted mostly for his habilitation thesis about the problems of spiritual upbringing and formation. To collect materials for his work, in the summer of 1930, he visited various libraries in Western European countries. The journey was fruitful for both his research and his faith, as he was also able to visit places of devotion and centres of religious life. In addition to work on his thesis, he wrote scholarly articles on pastoral theology and for a church encyclopedia, delivered scientific lectures and became engaged in journalism.

As he became more involved in his research, he asked to be excused from his duties as chaplain and spiritual father. Both the field Bishop and Archbishop eventually agreed.

In September 1932, Fr. Sopoćko moved into a monastery building occupied by the Sisters of the Visitation where he was able to finish writing his habilitation thesis titled: *“The purpose, subject and object of spiritual development according to M. Łęczycki”*. He received his habilitation degree on May 15, 1934 and was nominated by the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education as the assistant professor at Warsaw University. The title was later transferred to the Department of Pastoral Theology at the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius.

From 1932 was the confessor at the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, one of whose convents was then in Vilnius. There, in May 1933, he met Sr. Faustina Kowalska who became his penitent. Their meeting proved to be the defining moment for the future of Fr. Sopoćko and his mission.

Sr. Faustina, having found in Fr. Sopoćko an enlightened confessor and spiritual director, began to share with him her spiritual experiences and visions of the Merciful Saviour. As there was not enough time, asked Faustina to record her inner experiences in a diary. He then reviewed the texts at his leisure. In this way, the spiritual *“Diary”* of Saint Sr. Faustina came into being. Sr. Faustina, referring to the revelations of the Lord Jesus that she had already experienced before she came to Vilnius and then again while there, informed Fr. Sopoćko about the requests of the Lord Jesus which included: painting the Image of the Most Merciful Saviour, undertaking efforts to institute a Feast of Divine Mercy on the first Sunday after Easter, and establishing a new religious congregation. In time, it transpired that God's providence entrusted the completion of these tasks to Fr. Sopoćko.

In July 1934, Fr. Sopoćko became a rector of Saint Michael's Church in Vilnius, which turned out to be of significant importance in the future. In that church, thanks to his efforts and at a definite request of the Lord Jesus, on April 4, 1937, the first Image of the Merciful Jesus was consecrated and exposed to public veneration. Sr. Faustina left Vilnius in March 1936. Fr. Sopoćko, through correspondence and meetings with Faustina in Cracow, worked on their common task to bring the mystery of Divine Mercy closer to the world.

Father Sopoćko, on the basis of Church doctrine, searched for the theological grounds of the existence of this Divine attribute of Mercy and for the grounds to institute the Feast of Divine Mercy that was requested in Faustina's visions. He presented the results of his research and the arguments for introducing the feast in several articles, in theological periodicals and in separate works on the subject of Divine Mercy.

In June 1936, Father Sopoćko published in Vilnius his first brochure *Divine Mercy* with the Image of the Most Merciful Christ on the cover. He sent that first publication to all bishops gathered at the Episcopal conference in Częstochowa (Poland). However, he did not receive an answer from any of them. He published his second brochure titled "*Divine Mercy in the Liturgy*" in 1937 in Poznań.

The concept of Divine Mercy also required the construction of a new church of Divine Mercy in Vilnius. In 1938, the construction committee was created and was pretty soon approved by the regional administration office.

However, the outbreak of the war and Soviet occupation⁸ of Vilnius resulted in a new political situation which destroyed that work. The Soviet Army plundered the gathered construction materials. The money to finance the construction, set aside in banks, was also lost. In 1940, Fr. Sopoćko was still trying to obtain permission from the occupying authorities to build at least a chapel, but he was turned down.

The difficult situation of the war engulfing ever larger areas of Europe, affecting the population of many nations, and the spreading with it evil, made Fr. Sopoćko evermore convinced that the world needed Divine Mercy. Thus, he became even more eager to proclaim the message of Divine Mercy, which he thought could save the world. Parish priests from Vilnius and also from neighbouring areas, were inviting him to give lectures. During the Lenten devotions at Vilnius Cathedral, he delivered homilies on Divine Mercy which attracted crowds of the faithful from all over Vilnius and echoed widely all over the city. At that time, he also began working on the treatise: "*De Misericordia Dei Deque Eiusdem Festo Instituendo*" on the concept of Divine Mercy and the need to worship him. He was encouraged even before the war to pursue that work by Cardinal August Hlond⁹, to whom Fr. Sopoćko presented his research on Divine Mercy.

In June 1940, Lithuania was once again under the occupation of the Soviet Army and, a month later, was merged with the Soviet Union as its fifteenth republic. Fr. Sopoćko was forced to discontinue the meetings of the organized groups that he was supervising. He was also deprived of the chance to publish his treatise on Divine Mercy. Jadwiga Osińska, who was an expert in classical philology, came to his aid and took care of his treatise. With the help of her acquaintances, she copied it in secret. Then she made sure that the copies reached people who were able to leave Vilnius. This way, the work of Fr. Sopoćko reached many countries and, particularly, came into the hands of bishops in Europe and throughout the world.

Because he was proclaiming the concept of Divine Mercy and spreading its devotion, Fr. Sopoćko was wanted by the Soviet authorities. Warned by a Registration Office worker, he was able to evade arrest and left Vilnius to avoid danger. When the threat was over, he returned and resumed lecturing at the seminary where, in spite of difficult material and housing conditions, the new academic year 1940/41 began. He moved back to St. Michael's Church where the Image of the Most Merciful Saviour was still displayed and surrounded by ever-greater devotion.

On June 22, 1941 the German-Soviet war¹⁰ broke out. Vilnius soon found itself under German occupation. The Jewish people were subjected to particular discrimination. Fr. Sopoćko supported them financially as well as spiritually. For such actions he could have faced serious consequences, including execution. The Gestapo finally traced his activities and he was even arrested for a couple of days.

At the end of 1941, the terror of the German occupation intensified. On the last Sunday of Advent, under the pretence of an alleged epidemic, all the churches in Vilnius were closed down. On March 3, 1942 the Germans started widespread action against priests. They arrested professors and seminarians, as well as almost all of the priests working in Vilnius. At the same time, the Gestapo also set a trap at the apartment of Fr. Sopoćko. Warned by his housekeeper, he escaped and managed to reach the Archbishop's office to inform him of the danger. He asked to be released from lecturing at the seminary and for the Archbishop's blessing to go into hiding.

He left Vilnius in disguise and escaped to the convent of Ursulines in Czarny Bór, four kilometres from Vilnius. The Sisters accommodated him in a house they were renting on the edge of the forest. The Gestapo searched for him all over Lithuania, asking for him especially in presbyteries and among priests.



Father Sopoćko in Czarny Bór at the Ursulines changed his identity and appearance

With assistance from trusted people, he obtained an identity card issued in the name of Waclaw Rodziewicz and, thereafter, was regarded as a carpenter and cabinet-maker making simple tools and equipment for local people. Every morning he celebrated Holy Mass. After that he had plenty of time for prayer and personal reflections. Every few weeks he visited the house of the Sisters in Czarny Bór to hear confessions. Moreover, he did some research based on literature provided by Jadwiga Osińska and her friends (*see page 134*).

In the summer of 1944 the Soviet army surrounded Vilnius and after a siege of several weeks, the German occupiers were forced to retreat from the city. Despite the exceptionally difficult living conditions, Archbishop Jałbrzykowski¹¹ ordered the seminary to resume its activities. Following two years in hiding, Father Sopoćko returned to Vilnius to resume his duties. To keep the seminary working, every Sunday he travelled with other professors and seminarians to rural parishes to collect donations of farm produce to support the students at the seminary. Undertook pastoral work also outside Vilnius, using this to spread the concept of Divine Mercy.

Initially, despite their anti-religious attitude, the authorities of the Lithuanian Soviet Republic tolerated the pastoral activities of priests. But, over time, they gradually started to restrain their work, particularly, the catechization of youth and children. Church meetings were held in secret, but somehow news that they were being organized reached the government. Fr. Sopoćko was summoned and faced the real possibility of having sanctions brought against him, including deportation to Siberia¹².

In July 1947, Father Sopoćko received a providential invitation from Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski, already living in Białystok, to come to work in Poland. Thus, he decided to leave Vilnius as soon as possible, especially granted that at that time the repatriation of Polish people from Lithuania was ending. Left for Białystok at the end of August 1947, with the very last transport of Poles leaving Vilnius. Before his departure, he visited the Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy in the “Gate of Dawn”. On arrival in Białystok, he reported to Archbishop Jałbrzykowski to receive his commission for his new appointment.

In October 1947, the new academic year began at the seminary in Białystok. Father Sopoćko taught the same subjects that he had taught in Vilnius: catechetics, pedagogy, psychology and the history of philosophy. His work at the seminary was not limited solely to teaching. He was also a confessor of the seminarians and conducted numerous retreats for them. At the same time, he also pursued pastoral, religious, social and educational activities. An important part of his activities was his educational programmes promoting sobriety in society.

But his most engaging and important activity was spreading the devotion to the Divine Mercy, to which he was ardently devoted and to which he remained faithful to the end of his life. He was not discouraged by Church authorities resistant to approve the devotion or by the incorrect, grass-roots spreading of the devotion due to inaccuracies in some publications. Fr. Sopoćko tirelessly corrected errors and explained the theological bases of this cult.

In the meantime he visited Myślibórz for a few days where Jadwiga Osińska and Izabela Naborowska, the first Mothers of the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, were organizing the monastic community life. It was their first meeting since the Sisters left Vilnius.

From that time, he remained in constant touch with the Sisters of the newly founded Congregation, providing them with advice and spiritual and material support.



Father Michael Sopoćko with his spiritual daughters, 1970

In Białystok, as in Vilnius, Fr. Sopoćko was the confessor of religious Sisters. Amongst others, he listened to confessions of Sisters from the Congregation of Missionaries of the Holy Family, who then resided on Poleska Street. Bringing his spiritual services there, Fr. Sopoćko also served the local people on this occasion. Thanks to his efforts, on November 27, 1957 on the Solemnity of Christ the King, a chapel under the invocation of the Holy Family was consecrated in the religious house of the Sisters.

Upon his retirement Fr. Sopoćko moved permanently to the Sisters of the Missionaries of the Holy Family, where he conducted his pastoral work. His rich personality, his spirituality and authority, resulting from his extraordinary life experience, accompanied by a great personal modesty, attracted the faithful. Towards the end of the 1950s, Fr. Sopoćko undertook an initiative to build a church, this time in Białystok. Thanks to his efforts, a plot of land was purchased with a house on it.

He covered almost half of the cost with his savings. He planned to build a shrine under the invocation of Divine Mercy. However, once again he had to come to terms with the failure of his projects.

During a retreat with fellow priests in 1958, Fr. Sopoćko suffered damage to a facial nerve. From that time, speaking aloud to large audiences was very exhausting for him. Moreover, he was in a car accident in February 1962 in Zakopane (Poland), while participating in a conference of theology professors. This also had an adverse effect on his health. Thus, he was forced to retire. This caught him by surprise. He had always been active and engaged in numerous activities and duties, and for the first time (excluding his time of hiding in Czarny Bór) he had unlimited time at his disposal.

While performing his priestly duties in the Chapel on Poleska Street, he resumed work on the treatises on the concept of Divine Mercy. As well as some new ideas, he collected a large amount of existing material. While working on his treatises, he launched himself diligently into writing. As a result, he completed several works, with a four-volume work "*God's Mercy in His Works*" being the main one. It was translated into English and published thanks to the generosity of people committed to the matter of Divine Mercy living in the West. The first volume was published in London in 1959 and the others in Paris in the 1960s.

An important event boosting the commitment of Fr. Sopoćko was the constant development of the Divine Mercy devotion and the interest of this idea to theologians. Another significant incentive encouraging him in his missionary work for the benefit of Divine Mercy was the commencement of the beatification process of Sr. Faustina Kowalska by the Cracow Archbishop Karol Wojtyła. The informative phase started in 1965. Fr. Sopoćko was involved as a witness.

Father Sopoćko lived to celebrate a beautiful jubilee of 60 years of priestly service. That celebration, according to the feelings and opinions of many participants, was a much belated moral reward for the venerable priest who had done so much for the cause of God, especially in the matter of spreading the Divine Mercy devotion.

A sign of recognition of the manifold meritorious works he accomplished for the Church and the Białystok Archdiocese was his appointment as an honorary Canon of the Chapter of the Metropolitan Basilica. It was granted in 1972, near the end of his life.



Throughout his life, Father Sopoćko was a man of action based on a strong spiritual foundation. When his physical ability deteriorated and ailments struck, the spiritual domain became the base of his commitment and service to God and His message. A quotation from his “Diary” constitutes a testimony of how he understood his final service:

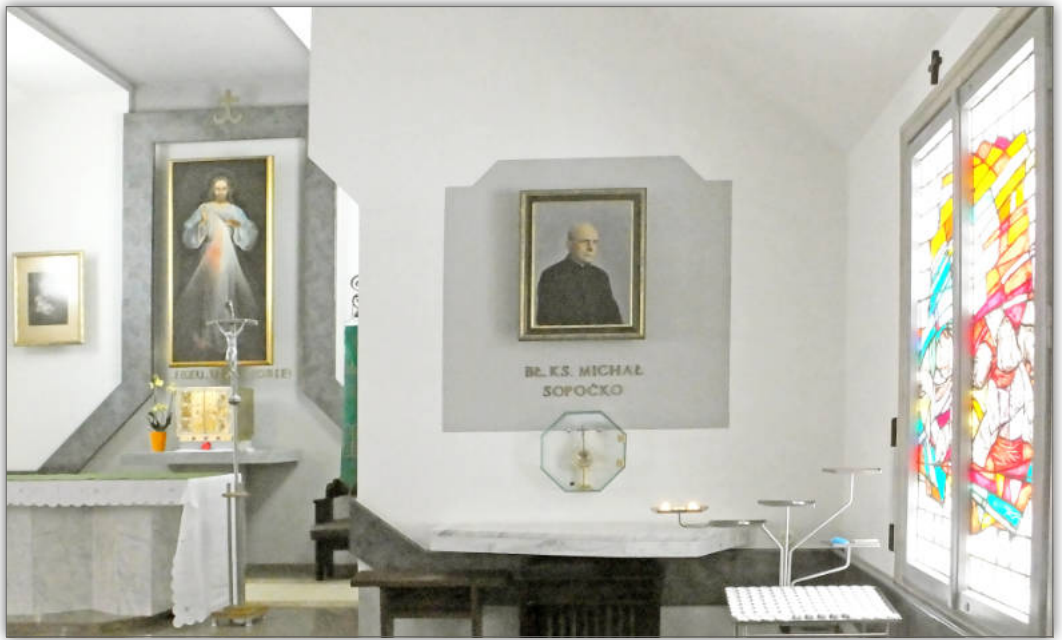
Old age should be treated as a vocation to greater love of God and neighbour. God has new plans for the elderly, plans of deepening the human being by revealing to him, face to face, his inner life. The only effective action that we are capable of is prayer. In that active passivity everything is being prepared, everything is being decided, everything is being worked out.

*Heaven will be praying the **OUR FATHER**.*

Reference:
publication of Rev. Prof. Henryk Cierieszko – “Father Michael Sopoćko Apostle of Divine Mercy”.



The house where Father Michael Sopoćko spent the final years of his life presently belongs to the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus. A Memorial Room to him was established in his apartment. Białystok, 42 Poleska Street.



The Memorial Room of Father Sopočko

Despite efforts to spend his final years in the main house of the newly founded Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus in Gorzów Wielkopolski (Poland), Father Sopoćko decided otherwise because of his health problems which prevented him from adapting to a new environment. So, he remained in Białystok until the end of his life abandoned by students, none of whom wanted to undertake his mission.

Died on a Saturday evening, February 15, 1975 in his room on Poleńska Street, on the feast day of Saint Faustinus, the patron of Sr. Faustina Kowalska. He did not live to see the approval of the new forms of the cult of Divine Mercy by the Church.

In 1959, the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition (presently the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith), prohibited propagation of images and documents presenting the Divine Mercy cult in forms provided by Sr. Faustina, due to incorrect translations being spread. Father Sopoćko humbly obeyed that decision, devoting himself mainly to scientific work, proving the theological foundations for that cult.

It was not until three years after the death of Father Sopoćko – April 15, 1978 – that the Notification prohibiting spreading the new forms of the Divine Mercy cult was annulled.

The Sacred Congregation, having considered the numerous original documents unknown in 1959, the profoundly changed circumstances, as well as the opinions of many Polish Ordinaries, announces that the prohibitions in the quoted Notification are no longer binding.

On September 28, 2008 in the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy in Białystok, took place the beatification of Father Michael Sopoćko.

Holy Mass The beatification was presided over by the papal delegate, Archbishop Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for Beatification and Canonization, He made the act of beatification by reading the decree of Pope Benedict XVI issued in the Vatican on September 26, 2008.

...We, with our Apostolic authority grant permission that the Venerable Servant of God Michael Sopoćko, presbyter, who devoted his life to proclaiming the Divine Mercy, giving the example of priestly sanctity, be henceforth Blessed and announce that his feast will be celebrated annually on February 15, on the day of his birth for Heaven, in the places and in the way determined by Law.



Pope Benedict XVI greeted the participants of the ceremony through the media.

A fragment of the pastoral letter of Archbishop Edward Ozorowski, metropolitan of Białystok, on the occasion of the beatification of Fr. Sopoćko.

Jesus Christ entrusted the task of reviving the truth about Divine Mercy to three people: Sr. Faustina Kowalska, Fr. Michael Sopoćko and John Paul II. Sr. Faustina was the first recipient of Christ's revelations. Fr. Michael was the first one to believe in what she conveyed. John Paul II was the first pope who did what Jesus Christ recommended through Sr. Faustina.



Sarcophagus with the mortal remains of blessed priest Michael Sopoćko
Divine Mercy Sanctuary in Białystok



Sanctuary of Divine Mercy, Białystok, 1 The Blessed Michael Sopoćko Square, Poland

**PRAYER FOR OBTAINING GRACES THROUGH THE INTERCESSION
OF THE BLESSED FATHER MICHAEL SOPOĆKO**

*Oh Merciful God,
You have made Blessed Fr. Sopoćko,
the apostle of Your endless Mercy and venerator of Our Lady,
the Mother of Mercy, grant, through his intercession,
that by praising Your Mercy and arousing trust
in Your fatherly goodness,
I will obtain the grace of*
I ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Our Father..., Hail Mary..., Glory be...

*At the feet of Jesus I saw my confessor
and behind him a great number
of the highest ranking ecclesiastics clothed
in vestments the like of which I had never seen
except in this vision...*

*I saw two rays coming out from the Host,
as in the Image,
closely united but not intermingled;
they passed through the hands of my confessor
and then through the hands of the clergy
and from their hands to the people,
and then they returned to the Host...
(Diary, 344).*

In Saint Faustina's mission, Divine Providence entrusted a special role to her confessor and spiritual director – Father Michael Sopoćko. He was of crucial assistance to Sister Faustina during her stay in Vilnius (then in Poland) during the period of 1933-1936¹³, helping her to understand her inner experiences and visions. At his request she wrote the Diary, which is a document of Catholic mysticism of extraordinary value. The Diary also presents the sanctity of Michael Sopoćko's priestly life and his contribution to fulfilling the desires of the Lord Jesus.



Father Michael Sopoćko

“He is a priest after My own Heart; his efforts are pleasing to Me (...) Through him it pleases Me to proclaim the worship of My mercy” (Diary, 1256).

“His thought is closely united with 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).

Painting the image of the Merciful Jesus and its exposition for public worship, spreading the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy, initiating the efforts to establish the Feast of the Divine Mercy, and establishing a new religious Congregation – all of this was accomplished in Vilnius thanks to the efforts of Father Michael Sopoćko. Since then, the joint efforts paid for through prayer and sufferings have been emanating throughout the whole world.

“Seeing Father Sopoćko's sacrifice and effort in his work, I admired his patience and humility. This all cost a great deal, not only in terms of toil and various troubles, but also money; and Father Sopoćko 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 mysterious are Your ways, O God! And how happy are the souls that follow the call of Divine Grace!” (Diary, 422).

“O my Jesus, You see how very grateful I am to Father Sopoćko, 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).

“Once as I was talking with my spiritual director, I had an interior vision of his soul in great suffering, in such agony that God touches very few souls with such fire. The suffering arises from this work. There will come a time when this work, which God is demanding so very much, will be as though utterly undone. **And then God will act with great power, which will give evidence of its authenticity. It will be a new splendour for the Church,** although it has been dormant in it from long ago. That God is infinitely merciful, no one can deny. He desires everyone to know this before He comes again as Judge. He wants souls to come to know Him first as King of Mercy. When this triumph comes, we shall already have entered the new life in which there is no suffering. But before this, your soul (of the spiritual director) will be overwhelmed with bitterness at the sight of the destruction of your efforts.

However, this will only appear to be so, because what God has once decided upon, He does not change. But although this destruction will be such only in outward appearance, the suffering will be real. When will this happen? I do not know. How long will it last? I do not know” (Diary, 378).

“Jesus, this is Your affair, so why are You acting this way toward him? It seems to me that You are making difficulties for him while at the same time ordering him to act. Write that by day and by night My gaze is fixed upon him, and I permit these adversities in order to increase his merit. **I do not reward for good results but for the patience and hardship undergone for My sake**” (Diary, 86).

“Jesus allows me to know how everything is dependent on His will, thus giving me profound peace regarding the security of His work. Listen, My daughter; although all the works that come into being by My will are exposed to great sufferings, consider whether any of them has been subject to greater difficulties than that work which is directly Mine - the work of Redemption. You should not worry about adversities. The world is not as powerful as it seems to be; its strength is strictly limited” (Diary, 1643).

“I see Father Sopoćko, how his mind is busily occupied and working in God’s cause in order to present the wishes of God to the officials of the Church. (...) I have never before come upon such great faithfulness to God as distinguishes this soul” (Diary, 1390).

*In his more than two hundred scientific publications, numerous press publications and delivered conferences, **Father Dr. Michael Sopoćko developed theological foundations for new forms of the worship of Divine Mercy**, devotion which he fervently promoted through his engagement in evangelization and social activities. He wrote formation letters and then drafted constitutions for the first congregation of sisters, which became the root of the established Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, according to the thoughts and suggestions of Sister Faustina. He composed and published prayers to the Divine Mercy based on the texts of Sister Faustina, with whom he remained in touch until the end of her life. After Sister Faustina’s death, he consistently tried to complete the tasks indicated in the apparitions.*

Father Sopoćko wrote in his “Diary”:

“There are truths that are known and often heard, but not understood. It applied to me with regard to the truth about the Divine Mercy. So many times I spoke about this truth in my preaching, thought about it during retreats, repeated it in church prayers – especially in psalms - but I neither understood its meaning nor buried myself in its essence – the highest attribute of God’s external activity. It was only the ordinary nun Sister Faustina from the Congregation of the Sisters of Mary Mother of Mercy (Magdalens), who, following her intuition, told me about this truth, repeating it briefly and often, activating me to research, study and think about it frequently.

(...) at first, I was not sure what it was, I listened, distrusted, contemplated, researched, sought advice from others – just a few years later I understood the significance of this work, the greatness of this idea, and I became convinced about the effectiveness of this old, but neglected, life-giving devotion calling for its renewal in the present world”.

Based on the Rev. Dr. Michael Sopoćko's fragments of the book
"THE MERCY OF GOD IN HIS WORKS"

GOD'S MERCY

Man's thoughts of God are very vague as *no one has ever seen God*
(John 1: 18).

(...) If we had never seen the sun, but formed our idea about it solely from such light as on a dull day, we would have never created the exact concept of that source of the daylight. Or, if we had never seen white light, but experienced it only through the seven colours of the rainbow, we would have never learned what whiteness is. Similarly, we cannot develop a concept of the Divine Being by ourselves. The most we can do, is to learn about His perfections, revealed to us as they are in created things, in the state of multiplicity and diffusion, whereas in God they exist in an absolute, simple unity.

God, as the most perfect Being, is the purest and simplest spirit, thus, made of no parts. It is not possible to sound the depths of all the perfections found in the Divine Being: there are many, and they far surpass our mental abilities.

Of all these perfections the Lord Jesus singles out the one which, as the fountain-head, is the source of everything that crosses our earthly paths, and in which God desires to be praised eternally. That perfection is the Mercy of God. *Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:36).*

The Mercy of God is the perfection of His activity, stooping down to all inferior beings to free them from their misery and to complement their deficiencies; it is His Will to do good to all suffering from any shortcomings, who cannot fulfil their needs by themselves. A single act of mercy is pity, but the unchanging state of pity is mercy.

God's relation to creatures is revealed in Him replacing their deficiencies by granting them all kinds of perfections. This granting of perfections, considered in isolation, irrespective of the circumstances, is the act of God's goodness which gives to each and every one according to its will. If we see a complete disinterest of God in granting His blessings, we attribute it to His munificence. The watchful care of God, to make sure that with the help of all the blessings He is giving to us we reach our goal, is called Providence.

The granting of perfections, in accordance with a pre-arranged plan and order, is the work of Justice. And finally, the granting of perfections to creatures to save them from their misery and to eliminate their scarcities is the work of Mercy.

A shortcoming in a being is not always its misfortune since each creation is entitled merely to what God had foreseen and decided for it. It is no misfortune for a sheep, for instance, to have no mind, nor is it a disaster for a man to have no wings. But the lack of mind in a man or wings in a bird would be a terrible misfortune. Whatever God does for creatures, He does in accordance with a carefully devised and scheduled order, determined by Divine Justice. But since that order was unanimously accepted and was not imposed upon God by anyone, thus in his establishing such order, and not any other, we should also see the work of Mercy.

For example, the rescue of baby Moses left in his basket in the waters of the Nile river will be called - in general understanding, regardless of any circumstances - a goodness of God. But if we consider the disinterest of God in this rescue, which for Him was not needed, and the baby himself did nothing to deserve it - it will be the work of God's Munificence. Again, when we reflect that God had decided to lead the Israelites out of Egypt by Moses, we may call his initial rescue the act of God's Justice. The watchful care over the baby abandoned in the river and exposed to so many dangers we attribute to Divine Providence. And, finally, rescuing a child from poverty, abandonment and numerous shortcomings, and granting him perfections in the form of proper conditions for living, growth, upbringing, and education, will be the work of God's Mercy.

And because in each of the above instances we are struck by the child's helplessness and various needs, we may say that the goodness of God constitutes that Mercy which creates and gives; the Munificence of God - that Mercy, which lavishly gives to us regardless of our merits; the Providence of God - that Mercy, which keeps vigil; the Justice of God - that Mercy, whose rewards exceed our deserts and whose punishments undershoot our sins; and finally, the Love of God - that Mercy, which takes pity on human misery and draws us to Itself. In other words, the Mercy of God is the mainspring of God's external activity, meaning that it is present at the source of each creation of the Creator.

DIVINE MERCY DEVOTION

“Our Lord’s love for us is both divine and human, for He has fully both divine and human nature and will. Hence, we may regard the Most Sacred Heart of the Saviour as the symbol of His threefold love for us: a divine love, a spiritual human love, and an emotional human love. In the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus we worship, above all, Our Lord’s human love for mankind, in addition to His divine love for us, which, being the love for the wretched, is Divine Mercy. So, in this devotion we worship a trace of Divine Mercy – as it exists merely in relationship with Him. In the Divine Mercy devotion, a more appropriate material object is the blood and water which flowed from the pierced side of the Saviour on the Cross. They constitute a symbol of the Church.

(...) This blood and water flow ceaselessly in the Church as soul-cleansing graces (in the sacraments of baptism and penance), and as life-giving graces (in the Sacrament of the Eucharist), through the Holy Spirit given by the Saviour to the Apostles. The formal object in this devotion - its motive - is the eternal Mercy of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for fallen humanity. It is indeed the love of God for mankind in a wider sense, as it is not the love of affection for perfection, but a compassionate love for misery.

Accordingly, the Divine Mercy devotion is a logical consequence of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as they exist in a relationship. Now the Divine Mercy devotion exists by itself, and does not identify itself with the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as it has different material and formal objects and a completely different goal. It relates to all Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, and not – as in the case of the devotion to the Sacred Heart – to the Second Person alone. Moreover, it suits better the mental condition of contemporary man who needs to trust in God. *Jesus, I trust in You*, and, through You, I trust in the Father and in the Holy Spirit.

The devotion to Divine Mercy - the mercy we receive from God in the sacrament of penance - is one of the devotions which befits all souls, as it leads to the adoration of the Most Merciful Saviour, not in any particular state of Him or mystery, but in His Universal Mercy, in which all mysteries are revealed at their most profound. For our worship is directed to the venerated Person of God the Man.

This is expressed in an ardent act of worship: *Jesus, I trust in You*, which impels a human soul to feel wretchedness and transgression, but also to feel the virtue of trust which constitutes the foundation of our defence”.

TRUST

Trust is a decisive factor in obtaining God’s Mercy.

Natural trust - as the expectation of human help - constitutes a great power in a person’s life. But expecting help from other people often leads to disappointment. Those who trust in God, on the other hand, are never disappointed. ...*steadfast love surrounds him who trusts in the Lord*
(Ps. 32:10).

In His farewell speech, delivered in the Cenacle after the Last Supper, Our Lord, having given His last orders and foretold to the Apostles the afflictions that they would have to endure in this world for His Holy Name, spoke of trust as the essential condition for perseverance and for securing the help of God’s Mercy: *In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world* (John 16:33). This is the last statement of the Saviour before the Passion, recorded by the beloved Apostle, who wanted to remind all the faithful throughout the ages how important is the trust which the Saviour not only commended, but commanded.

(...) Our spiritual life depends mainly on the concepts of God that we create ourselves. If we create false concepts of the Lord Most High, our relationship with Him will be erroneous, and all our efforts to set it right will be in vain. If we have a distorted idea of Him, our spiritual life will be full of gaps and imperfections. If, on the other hand, our concept of Him is - as far as is humanly possible - true, our souls will, quite certainly, grow in holiness and light.

The concept of God is, then, the key to holiness, as it governs our attitude to God and God’s attitude to us. God has adopted us as His children, but, unfortunately, in practice, we do not behave like children. The sonship of God is just a phrase, and in our actions we fail to show childlike trust in such a good Father.

(...) For lack of trust prevents God from lavishing His blessings on us; it is like a dark cloud impeding the work of the sun, or a dam blocking access to spring water.

Nothing gives such glory to Divine omnipotence as the fact that God makes those who trust in Him omnipotent. Yet, if our trust is never to be disappointing, it must bear those characteristics of which the King of Mercy spoke Himself.

When trusting in God, we must not rely too much on ourselves, on our own talents, prudence or strength. If we do, God will withhold His help and leave us to learn about our inefficiency from bitter experience. In Divine matters we must learn to distrust ourselves and be convinced that if we act alone, we can only harm, or even wreck, God's plans.

Our trust in God should be strong and enduring, without doubts or hesitations. Such was the trust of Abraham, who was ready to offer up his son in sacrifice. And such was the trust of the martyrs. On the other hand, the Apostles, during the storm, were found lacking in this virtue, and the Lord Jesus reproached them with the words: *Why are you afraid, O men of little faith? (Matthew 8:26)*.

If our trust is strong, we must beware pusillanimity and presumption. Pusillanimity is the most despicable of all temptations for, if we lose the courage to persevere in good, we quickly fall headlong into sin. Presumption, on the other hand, leads us in to danger (for instance, the occasion for sin), with the hope that God will come to our rescue. This is temptation of God, and such temptation usually ends tragically for the tempters.

In our case, trust should go hand in hand with fear, which is the outcome of acknowledging our own misery. Without that fear, trust turns into self-importance, and fear without trust turns into pusillanimity. Fear with trust becomes humble and brave, and trust with fear becomes strong and modest. Trust should be accompanied by longing, namely the desire to see God's promises fulfilled and to be united with our beloved Saviour.

(...) The longing for God must be in conformity with His Will; it should be humble, not only with regard to feeling, but also with regard to will, which should encourage us to work unceasingly and to surrender completely to God. After all, a trustful longing should be based on a sincere penance for sins, otherwise, it is a mere delusion. Trust is, above all, homage to the Mercy of God which, in exchange, bestows on the trustful the strength and courage they need to overcome even the most formidable difficulties.

Trust in God drives away all sadness and depression and fills the soul with great joy, even when circumstances are at their worst.

Trust gives us inner peace that the world cannot give. Trust paves the way for all the virtues.

There is a legend about how all the virtues resolved to leave the Earth, stained by so many sins, and to return to their heavenly homeland. When they approached the heavenly gates, the doorkeeper let all of them in, with the exception of trust: trust was excluded, in order for the wretched people on Earth, surrounded by so many temptations and sufferings, to be saved from despair. Thus, trust had to return to Earth and was followed by all the other virtues.

Above all, trust comforts the dying who, in their last moments, recall all their sins and are driven to despair. Appropriate acts of trust should then be suggested to the dying. They should be reminded of their true home, now no longer distant, where the King of Mercy joyfully awaits all who trust in His Mercy. Trust secures us a reward after death, as it has been proven by the numerous examples of the Saints. We need only to think of Dismas, the thief dying on the cross next to Our Lord, whom he approached with trust in the hour of his death to hear the blissful assurance: *Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise (Luke 23:43).*

Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come (Jeremiah 17:5-6). Here is a picture of today's world, trusting so much in itself, its own wisdom, strength and its own inventions which, instead of making it happy, fills it with the fear of self-destruction.

Inventions are undoubtedly a good thing and in accordance with the Will of God, who said: *Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the Earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28)*, but we must not trust exclusively our own mind, forgetting the Creator and the homage and trust that we owe Him.

Let us trust in God in all our needs, temporal and eternal, in our sufferings, dangers and derelictions.

Let us trust in Him even when it seems that He has abandoned us, when He withholds His consolations, leaves our prayers unanswered, crushes us beneath a heavy cross. Then we should trust in God the most, for this is the time of trial, the time of testing, which every soul must undergo.

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

Increase our faith (Luke 17:5).

With these words the Apostles asked the Saviour to increase their faith, as they understood that faith is a gift of God's Mercy that they did not deserve. Thus, they humbly asked for that gift as for the greatest blessing. The Saviour replied: *If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this sycamore tree, 'Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you (Luke 17:6).* There, Christ talks about the power of faith to encourage the Apostles to desire and ask for it.

(...) To believe means to acknowledge what God has revealed to us and, through the Church, taught us to believe in; it is homage that our mind unconditionally pays to the truthfulness of God: *I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me (John 14:6).* Accepting that testimony of Christ and submitting our minds to His words, we perform the act of faith, which – repeated often – shapes in us the spirit of faith. To be born in God and to be His children we have to trust and receive Christ.

(...) The life of grace received at baptism is a seed that is supposed to give life to the holiness of a Christian, as faith constitutes a foundation and a root. As the tree gains its strength from its roots, the life of a Christian gets it from faith: faith is an indispensable condition for each and every life, each and every spiritual advancement and the peak of perfection. If we live in faith, if faith constitutes the root and source of all our activities, then our life becomes strong and stable despite external and internal difficulties, despite darkness, obstacles and temptations, as then we judge everything as God does and participate in one permanence – the fidelity of God.

Let us develop and strengthen our faith through proper acts, not only during our spiritual exercises but also in our ordinary activities. Let us see everything through eyes of faith and we will escape the routine which is one of the greatest dangers in our lives.

Let the faith penetrate our tiniest works, each day from dawn to dusk, and the more we advance in our faith – the stronger, more zealous and active our faith will become and the more we will be filled with joy and peace. Because the more open-minded we become, the stronger our hope and the love of God and our neighbour will be."

THE VIRTUE OF MERCY - A DUTY TO PRACTISE THE WORKS OF MERCY

“The virtue of mercy is a brotherly bond of people, the vigilant mother, who comforts and saves everyone who suffers. It is an image of Divine Providence because it has an open eye for everyone’s needs, but most of all, it is an image of God’s Mercy, as Our Lord said: *Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:36)*.

We should understand that this virtue is not only advisable, but it is a mandatory duty of each Christian. Many people share a mistaken view of the virtue of mercy: they think that by practising acts of mercy they practise only the act of grace and sacrifice which is up to our will and good heart. However, it is not like that at all. The virtue of mercy is not an isolated advice, which one can follow or reject sinlessly. It is a binding law and a duty that no one can fail to fulfil. It comes from the Holy Bible, from the voice of reason and from our brotherhood. Already in the Old Testament everyone was obliged by the virtue of mercy. In the books of Moses we read: *For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land (Dt. 15:11)*.

To an even greater extent the duty of mercy is placed upon us by Our Saviour. Depicting the Judgment Day, He put the following words in the mouth of the judge: *Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41)*. The failure to practise acts of mercy toward our neighbours is enough to be rejected by Our Lord: *For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me. Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?’ Then he will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me (Matthew 25:42-45)*. After reading these words of the Lord Jesus, there is no need to prove that the virtue of mercy is our lawful duty, as our just Heavenly Father cannot punish us for what is not commanded.

Jesus Christ promises even greater blessings and graces for merciful people: *(...) give, and it will be given to you (...) For the measure you give will be the measure you get back (Luke 6:38)*.

(...) The reward for being merciful goes beyond earthly matters. The spiritual goods are a hundred times more precious and they all can be confined to one word: forgiveness. It is the greatest goodness, the most precious treasure and the most prized pearl, which one can find easily by practising works of mercy toward our neighbours.

If one has not yet had the chance to experience Our Lord's Mercy and, thus, is not able to follow Him, let him begin by practising acts of mercy toward his neighbours, and the words of Our Lord will certainly come true for him: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy* (Matthew 5:7).

The virtue of mercy brings upon us grace and light, washes away our sins leading us towards the Sacrament of Reconciliation, it saves our souls from death, namely from an eternal damnation, as it has been stated in the Holy Bible: *and for all who practise it, charity is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High* (Tobit 4:11).

(...) In order to receive the eternal reward for practising acts of mercy, certain conditions have to be met: intentions behind the acts should be pure and they should be practised willingly, continuously and without any personal preferences.

(...) What a great privilege it is for us to act in the name of God on Earth in rendering His Mercy and freeing our brothers and sisters from poverty as well as healing their bodies and souls.

What a joy it is for us, that Our Lord let us, in such an easy way, atone for our sins and earn our eternal reward!"

***Holiness is not the privilege of a few, but of all
– the greater sinners without an exception.***

***The message of the Gospel
does not proclaim that sinners should become good,
but that God is good for sinners.***

PRAYER – THE ROAD TO GOD’S MERCY

God, in his infinite Mercy, prepared for each of us an abundance of graces, virtues, gifts, harvests and blessings, but to obtain them we need to pray to express our will to accept all these tokens of God’s Mercy. Even God withholds His graces if we withhold our will to accept them. Of the two thieves on the cross one prays and goes to Heaven and the other swears and dies.

Prayer is mandatory for everyone: the sinners and the just. Without prayer, sinners will not be freed from the shackles of their inveterate addictions and will not obtain God’s Mercy. Without prayer, the just will not move forward on their road of virtue and will not last long in its heights, but soon collapse conquered by temptation.

(...) God will always be the Lord on a throne and humanity will always be a creature at its foot. There is a place for a man there, on his knees; he becomes a man of great worth and joy: *(...) ask, and you will receive that your joy may be full (John 16:24)*. What an abundance of His Mercy God promises to those who will pray. Not only will they receive what they pray for, but already in their earthly life they will enjoy complete happiness.

But are we praying only by ourselves?

The Holy Spirit is the creator of our sanctification, in which our prayer plays such an important role, thus the prayer must - in a special way - depend on Him: *(...) no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3)*.

He shows to us the loftiness, necessity and power of prayer, while inspiring in us longing for it. In other words, the Holy Spirit provides the spirit of prayer, which is one of the most essential conditions for the prayer to be effective. He penetrates into our hearts and knows best what is needed for our salvation. He gives us an idea what we should pray for and how we can reach perfection. He teaches us also how to pray, filling us with holiness, zeal, trust and perseverance.

(...) Here is a symbiosis of the Holy Spirit with prayer, which constitutes the road to God’s Mercy, and, at the same time - by its efficacy - the work of the said Mercy.

To pray and to obtain mercy means to have the Heart of God and the salvation of the soul.

(...) We have to pray with simplicity and present ourselves as we are, with the talents and resources we received from God.

(...) Moreover, we have to be inventive in our prayer, draw it from our soul, from the depths of our heart lifted to a supernatural state.

I have no idea how much man has to exalt himself to evaluate the quality of his prayer on the basis of his extraordinary efforts, when we ourselves are incapable, as it is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who supports our incompetence and prays inside us through inexpressible longing. If the prayer comes from Him, from the heart, it breaks through Heaven and receives everything.

(...) they ought always to pray and not lose heart (Luke 18:1)

To persist in prayer, we should not be bound by prayer books, but rather pray in the spirit of faith with submission to God's Will, adoring His Being, His beauty, His highness and goodness – namely, what will not become an illusion.

(...) We may not always have new thoughts, but we can always direct to God our feelings, in which all the powers of the soul unite. Thanks to such prayers the Saints brought great creations into life, reaching to the ends of the world and transforming work into prayer”.

***The entire history of humanity is traced
by the efforts of God to establish connection with humanity.***

***If you stop talking to God [praying] you will miss Jesus
and will not hear Him talking to you.***



THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Based of the fragments of the book Rev. Dr. Michael Sopoćko's
"THE MERCY OF GOD IN HIS WORKS"

Photograph of the Way of the Cross - Jasna Góra in Częstochowa (Poland)

**THE FIRST STATION
JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH**

*We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.
Because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.*



“I am ashamed, O Lord, to stand before Your Holy Face, for I am so unlike You. So greatly did You suffer for me during the scourging that this alone would have caused Your death, but it was the will of the Heavenly Father and His sentence that You should die on the Cross. And am I finding it hard to bear with the trifling faults and human frailties of my family.

You, in Your Mercy, did pour out Your Blood for me, and I find any sacrifice or act of kindness to my neighbours a burden. You, with an ineffable patience, and in silence, did bear the pain of the scourging, and I groan and complain if I am to suffer for You a difficulty or contempt from my neighbour”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

THE SECOND STATION JESUS TAKES UP THE CROSS



*We adore You,
O Christ,
and we bless You.
Because
by Your Holy Cross
You have redeemed
the world.*

“With deep compassion I will follow Jesus! I will bear patiently any sorrow that comes my way today, so little an offering but one to honour His journey to Golgotha. Indeed, it is for me that He is to die! It is for my sins that He is suffering! How can I be indifferent to this?

You do not ask of me, Lord, that I carry Your heavy Cross with You, but that I bear my small, daily crosses patiently. Yet, until now I have not done so. I am ashamed and I regret my meanness and ingratitude. I have decided that whatever You will in Your Mercy lay upon me, I will accept with trust and bear with love”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

THE THIRD STATION JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

*We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.
Because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.*



“O Lord, You have taken on Yourself a terrible burden - the sins of the whole world of all the ages. And among this horrifying mass of sins of humanity, my countless sins lay heavy on You with a deadweight burden. And they brought You to the ground. And so Your strength gives out! You can carry the load no longer, but do fall under it.

O Lamb of God, who in Your Mercy takes away the sins of the world by the weight of Your Cross, relieve me from the heavy weight of my sins, and light in me the fire of Your love, whose flame may never be extinguished”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

**THE FOURTH STATION
JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER**



*We adore You,
O Christ,
and we bless You.
Because
by Your Holy Cross
You have redeemed
the world.*

“Holy Mother, Virgin Mother, let me too share the sorrow in Your Soul! I love You, the Sorrowful Mother, who follows the steps of Your beloved Son – walking the way of shame and humiliation, the way of contempt and damnation. Engrave me on Your Immaculate Heart and, as the Mother of Mercy, obtain for me this grace – that I may not falter as I follow Jesus and You on that thorny road to Calvary that the Divine Mercy determined for me”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

**THE FIFTH STATION
SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS TO CARRY THE CROSS**



*We adore You,
O Christ,
and we bless You.
Because
by Your Holy Cross
You have redeemed
the world.*

“To me, as to Simon, the Cross is a bitter thing. By nature, I shrink from it, but circumstances force me to become accustomed to it. I will try henceforth to carry my cross with the nature of Christ our Lord.

Following the example of the Most Merciful Saviour, I will carry the cross for my sins, for the sins of others, and for the souls in Purgatory. I shall thus be practising the Royal Way of Christ, and will not swerve from it even when a sneering, hostile crowd surrounds me”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

**THE SIXTH STATION
VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS**



*We adore You,
O Christ,
and we bless You.
Because
by Your Holy Cross
You have redeemed
the world.*

“Our Lord suffers no longer, so I cannot give Him a cloth to wipe away His Blood and sweat.

But the suffering Saviour lives on in His Mystical Body, in His brethren burdened with a cross - in the sick, the dying, the poor, and those in need, who still need a kerchief to wipe away the sweat. For He said: *as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me (Matt. 25:40)*. I will stand then by my sick or dying neighbour with true love and patience, to wipe away His sweat, to strengthen and comfort Him”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

**THE SEVENTH STATION
JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME**

*We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.
Because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.*



“O Lord (...), how can You still bear with me, a sinner, who offends You every day with his countless sins? That You still wait for my improvement, it can only be explained by the greatness of Your Mercy.

Enlighten me, O Lord, with the light of Your grace, that I may know all my transgressions and evil habits, which led to Your second fall beneath the Cross, so that I may henceforth thoroughly uproot them. Without Your grace, I cannot divest myself of them. Thus, I pray and trust that Your Mercy will help me”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

THE EIGHT STATION
JESUS CONSOLES THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM WHO WEEP FOR HIM



*We adore You,
O Christ,
and we bless You.
Because
by Your Holy Cross
You have redeemed
the world.*

“For me, too, there is a time of Divine Mercy - but this time is limited. When the time is gone, the hour of justice of which Our Lord speaks warningly will come. (...) I am burdened with many sins, so that I wither and dry up with fear; but I will follow in Christ’s footsteps, my heart will be pierced with sorrow for my sins, and I will, in this life, try to do justice through a sincere penance. I am inspired to do this penance by the might of God and the duty to serve Him. I am inspired to this penance by the Infinite Mercy of Jesus, who replaced His Crown of Glory with the Crown of Thorns, and came out to search for me, and when He found me, He hugged me to His Heart”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

**THE NINTH STATION
JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME**

*We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.
Because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.*



“It is for me that Jesus suffers, for me He falls under the Cross! Where would I be today without these sufferings of the Saviour?

(...) Only the Saviour can rescue us from the infernal abyss. Thus, all that we have today, and all that we are in the supernatural sense, we owe only to the Passion of Lord Jesus. Even carrying our own cross means nothing without grace. It is the Saviour’s Passion, and that alone, which makes our repentance worthy and our penance effective. Only His Mercy, revealed in His three falls, is the guarantee of my salvation”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

**THE TENTH STATION
JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS**



*We adore You,
O Christ,
and we bless You.
Because
by Your Holy Cross
You have redeemed
the world.*

“This horrible mystery was witnessed by the Holy Mother, who saw everything, heard everything and contemplated everything. We can imagine her internal anguish as she saw her Son deeply ashamed, blood-drenched and naked, and tasting a bitter drink - the bitterness of which was intensified by my intemperance in eating and drinking.

From now on, with the help of Divine Grace - I want to and promise to practise prudent mortifications in this matter, so that the nakedness of my soul does not offend the eyes of Lord Jesus or His Immaculate Mother”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

THE ELEVENTH STATION JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

*We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.
Because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.*



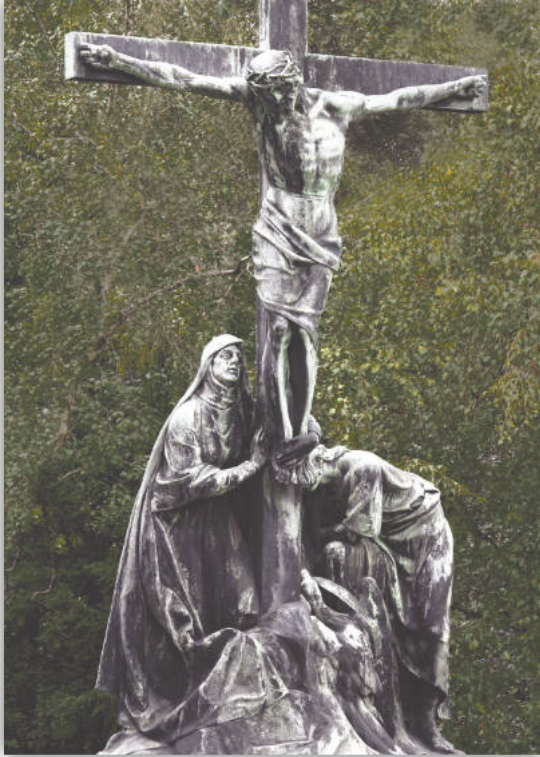
“In our thoughts let us stand on Golgotha, under Our Lord’s Cross, and ponder on the terrible scene.

The Saviour hangs between Heaven and Earth, outside the town, rejected by His own people - hangs like a criminal, between two criminals - as the image of utter wretchedness, negligence and suffering. But He is like a leader who conquers the nations - not with arms and sword, but with the Cross - not to destroy, but to save them. As from now on, the Saviour’s Cross will be the tool of Divine Glory, Justice, and Infinite Mercy”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

**THE TWELFTH STATION
JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS**



*We adore You,
O Christ,
and we bless You.
Because
by Your Holy Cross
You have redeemed
the world.*

“No one witnessed this sacrificial act with such wonderful and appropriate feelings and thoughts as the Mother of Mercy. Just as at the Conception and Nativity she acted on behalf of all humanity, adoring and ardently loving the Lord of Hosts, so at her Son’s death she adores the lifeless body hanging on the Cross, mourns over It, but, at the same time, has also in mind her adopted children. The representatives of those children were John the Apostle and, the converted, dying villain for whom she pleaded to her Son. Intercede for me too, O Mother of Mercy; remember me too, when, in my agony, I commend my soul to the Father”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

THE THIRTEENTH STATION JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

*We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.
Because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.*



“The Most Merciful Saviour, can any heart resist the overwhelming, overpowering eloquence with which You speaks to us through the innumerable wounds of Your dead body as it rests on the bosom of Your Sorrowful Mother?

(...) any act of Yours would have sufficed as propitiation of Divine Justice and atonement for our sins. But You did choose this kind of Redemption to show us the great value of our souls and Your Infinite Mercy, so that even the greatest sinner might come to You with trust and contrition and receive forgiveness, as the dying villain did”.

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

THE FOURTEENTH STATION JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

*We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.
Because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.*



“Mother of Mercy, who did choose me for Your child, that I might become the brother and sister of Jesus – Jesus whom You mourns, after laying Him in the tomb!

(...) Do not look at my weakness, instability, and carelessness, which I deplore unceasingly and continuously renounce. But ponder on the wish of Lord Jesus, who put me in your care. Fulfil, thus, Your mission towards me, unworthy as I am; adjust the Saviour’s graces to my weakness, and be for me always the Mother of Mercy!”

MERCIFUL LORD, HELP ME TO FOLLOW YOU WITH TRUST

Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on us.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS

“The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the pinnacle of the life and work of the world’s Saviour.

What the Saviour began on Mount Tabor now became a complete reality: He clothed His body in brightness and beauty; He spiritualized it completely, making it subtle and penetrable and totally obedient to His Will. We also long for the glorified life, for a spiritualized body, for the spiritualization of external forms. We long for our own Easter; we long for our souls to win victory over the base instincts of our body, and to attain joyful immortality.

(...) Shall we rise from the dead?

To be certain of that truth let us recall that it is our creed: “*The resurrection of the body*”. Most of all, we should rise from spiritual death already in our present life.

(...) There are those who are spiritually dead who might be called living dead. Scripture makes a reference to them: “*you have the name of being alive, but you are dead (...) for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God*” (Rev. 3: 1-2). Everyone whose life, work and creations are only for this world, and who seeks earthly glory, is dead. This is a tragedy of the earthly life, the life of this world, the life of disbelievers. It is impossible for eternal life to grow out of a life that is empty, idle and without spirit – just as it is impossible for an oak to grow from an empty acorn. That is why, while I am still on Earth, I must live my life keeping eternity in mind – in other words, a supernatural life. I must, thus, think, wish, suffer, struggle, rejoice and love according to the principles of faith.

“*...And you also are witnesses*” (John 15: 27).

These words, addressed to the Apostles, apply also to me. I am to be the witness of Christ with my life and daily behaviour, and my testimony must be one of virtue and holiness, a testimony of word and deed, perhaps a testimony of blood and martyrdom, and - at least - a testimony of mercy for the souls and bodies of my neighbours. I know that alone I am incapable of achieving this.

Thus, Holy Spirit, support me!

I am aware that I must be a witness, but without Thy inspiration, I cannot. Create inside me, then, a new spirit!

Let the ray of Your Heavenly Glory light my fading face!
Give me wings, so I may soar up to the joy above, so I may launch out
into the deep, so my boat may not founder by the shore”.

“O Holy Spirit, give me the grace of trust – which is unwavering because
of Our Lord’s merits and fearful because of my own weakness.

When poverty comes knocking at my door: *Jesus, I trust in You*
When sickness lays me low, or injury cripples me: *Jesus, I trust in You*
When the world pushes me aside, and pursues me with its hatred:
Jesus, I trust in You
When I am besmirched by calumny, and pierced through by bitterness:
Jesus, I trust in You
When my friends abandon me, and wound me by word and deed:
Jesus, I trust in You

Spirit of Love and Mercy, be a refuge for me, a sweet consolation,
a blessed hope, that in all the most difficult circumstances of my life
I may never cease to trust in You!”

***The decisive factor
in obtaining God’s Mercy is trust.***

***Trust in God should be strong and enduring,
without doubts or hesitations.***

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MY MEMORIES OF THE LATE SISTER FAUSTINA

Father Michael Sopoćko – spiritual director of Sister Faustina
(fragments)

“I met Sister Faustina in the summer (July or August 1933) when she was a penitent in the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Vilnius, Lithuania (25 Senatorska Street) where, back then, I was an ordinary confessor. She caught my attention because of her unusual subtlety of conscience and a close union with God.

On getting to know Sister Faustina better, I discerned that the gifts of the Holy Spirit worked within her in hiding, but quite often they appeared openly, granting partially the intuition that was overwhelming her soul in a lively manner, arousing surges of love and solemn heroic acts of sacrifice and self-denial. What appeared particularly often was the influence of the gifts of understanding, knowledge and wisdom that allowed Sister Faustina to see clearly the banality of earthly matters and the importance of suffering and humiliations. In a simple way, she learnt the attributes of God and, most of all, His infinite Mercy.

On another occasion, she was gazing at the unreachable, beatific light; for some time she kept her gaze fixed at that extremely saving light, out of which emerged a figure of Christ walking, blessing the world with His right hand, and with His left hand lifting His robe around His Heart. Two rays gushed out of the open robe – one red and one pale. Sr. Faustina kept having such visions, and other sensual and mental visions, for several years. She also heard supernatural words, captured by her sense of hearing, her imagination and her mind.

For fear of Sister Faustina having illusions, hallucinations or being deluded, I turned to Mother Superior, Mother Irena, to inform me who Sr. Faustina was and what reputation she enjoyed among the Sisters and Superiors in the Congregation. I also requested her mental and physical health to be examined. Having received favourable opinions about her in every aspect, for some time I still took an expectant position. To some extent I did not believe. I was deliberating, praying and examining, as well as asking some wise priests for advice on what to do, without revealing what and whom it concerned.

This concerned the fulfilment of the alleged, firm demands of the Lord Jesus to paint that picture Sr. Faustina kept seeing and to establish the Feast of Divine Mercy on the first Sunday following Easter. Led more by curiosity of what the picture would look like than belief in the authenticity of Sister Faustina's visions, I decided to arrange the painting of the picture. I contacted an artist, Eugeniusz Kazimirowski*, who lived in the same house where I lived. He undertook the task of painting the picture for a certain amount of money.

(...) The work lasted a few months and finally, in June or July 1934, the picture was completed. Sr. Faustina complained that the picture was not as beautiful as she saw it, but the Lord Jesus comforted her and said it was enough as it was and He added: *"I am giving people a vessel with which they are to come to Me for graces. **That vessel is this image with the inscription: Jesus, I trust in You**".*

(...) The effects of Sister Faustina's visions, in her soul as well as in the souls of others, went beyond all expectations. If at the beginning Sister Faustina was rather frightened and worried about her ability to carry out orders and shirked them, later on she slowly calmed down and reached a state of complete security and certainty and a profound inner joy: she became more and more humble and obedient, more and more united with God and patient, absolutely complying with His Will in everything.

(...) She foretold, in detail, difficulties and even persecutions that I was to encounter because of spreading the cult of Divine Mercy and trying to establish the Feast of this name on Low Sunday. It was easier to bear that knowing that from the beginning it was the Will of God. On September 26, she foretold me also her own death, that she would die in ten days, and she did die on October 5. Due to the lack of time I was unable to attend her funeral.

Białystok (Poland), January 27, 1948

* Marcin Eugeniusz Kazimirowski – artist painter of the first image of Merciful Jesus, biographical note: page 165

***Paint an image according
to the pattern you see,
with the inscription: Jesus, I trust in You
(Diary, 47).***

Father Sopoćko (who sponsored the work), actively assisted in painting of the image. At the request of Kazimirowski, he put on an alb, so the painter could precisely render the instructions of Sr. Faustina with regard to the figure of Lord Jesus and the design of His the gown.

“It made it easier for the painter, after six months of work, to paint the picture, which Sr. Faustina was generally pleased with and did not complain any more about its incorrectness.

(...) The painting depicts the Christ in a walking posture on a dark background in a white gown with a sash at the waist. With His right hand raised to His shoulder He is giving a blessing, and with His left /two fingers/ He is half opening the gown nearby His (invisible) Heart, with rays streaming out of It (to the right of the viewer the white one, and to the left the red one), in different directions but mainly on the viewer. Sr. Faustina paid attention to not lifting the right hand over the arm, not bending but only moving the left foot forward to mark the movement, to the robe being long and plicated a bit, to the gaze of Lord Jesus being directed downwards as it is when someone standing looks at the point located a few steps away from the ground, to the facial expression of Lord Jesus being kind and merciful, to the right hand fingers being straight and freely adjoining, and in the left hand – the thumb and index finger holding the half opened gown, to the rays not looking like ribbons hanging down to the ground but pointing with intermittent streaks at the viewer and a bit aside tinging somewhat the hands and surrounding things, to the rays being transparent so the sash and gown can be seen through, to the rays saturation with red and white colors being the highest at it source (near heart), and then slowly diminishing and dispersing...”

Fragments of the letter from Fr. Michael Sopoćko from 24.XI. 1958 (archival document)



*There is but once price
at which souls are bought,
and that is suffering
united to My suffering on the Cross
(Diary, 324).*

*My gaze from this Image
is like My gaze from the Cross
(Diary, 326).*



*I am giving people a vessel
with which they are to come to Me for graces.
That vessel is this image
with the inscription: Jesus, I trust in You
(Diary, 327).*

*By means of this Image
I shall be granting many graces,
so let every soul have access to it
(Diary, 570).*

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST IMAGE OF MERCIFUL JESUS

Łlock [Poland] "February 22, 1931: In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand was raised in the gesture of blessing; the other was touching His garment at the breast. From beneath the garment, slightly drawn aside at the breast, there were emanating two bright rays, one red, and the other pale. In silence I kept my gaze fixed on the Lord; my soul was struck with awe, but also with great joy. After a while, Jesus said to me: paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the inscription: *Jesus, I trust in You*.

(...) I promise that the soul that venerates this image will not perish. I also promise victory over its enemies here on Earth, especially at the hour of death.

(...) I want this image, which you will paint with a brush, to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter; **that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy**. I desire that priests proclaim this great mercy of Mine towards the souls of sinners. Let the sinner not be afraid to approach Me.

(. .) Once, exhausted because of the various difficulties that had befallen me because of Jesus speaking to me and demanding me to paint this image, I made up my mind to approach Father Andrasz [S]¹⁴ before my perpetual vows, and to ask him to dispense me from all these interior inspirations and from the duty of painting this image. After having heard my confession, Father Andrasz gave me this answer: "I will dispense you from nothing, Sister; it is not right for you to turn away from these interior inspirations, but you must absolutely – and I say, absolutely – speak about them to your confessor; otherwise you will go astray despite the great graces you are receiving from God. For the present you are coming to me for confession, but understand, Sister, that you must have a permanent confessor; that is to say, a spiritual director". And now, still another torment, as I had no permanent confessor. (...) But the goodness of Jesus is infinite; He had promised me tangible help here on Earth and a little while later I received it in Vilnius, in the person of Father Sopoćko. I already knew him before I came to Vilnius, thanks to an interior vision. One day I saw him in our chapel between the altar and the confessional and suddenly heard a voice in my soul say: "**This is the tangible help for you on Earth. He will help you to carry out My will on Earth**"

(Diary, 47-53).

The task set by the Lord Jesus for Sr. Faustina was beyond her human capabilities since she lacked even basic artistic skills. She tried to obey God's will by seeking help from one of her co-sisters to paint the image. But that did not work.

On the one hand, she was being urged by the Lord Jesus to complete the work and, on the other hand, she faced disbelief of confessors and supervisors. This resulted in great personal suffering for Sr. Faustina. During her stay in Płock (over 2 years), and then in Warsaw, Sr. Faustina kept thinking about the outstanding request from the Lord Jesus, the more so because He was showing her the importance of this task in God's plans.

"Suddenly, I saw the Lord who said to me: Know, that if you neglect the matter of painting the image and the whole work of Divine Mercy, you will have to answer for a multitude of souls on the day of judgment" (Diary, 154).

After taking her perpetual vows, Sr. Faustina was moved to the convent in Vilnius (May 25, 1933). Here, she met the help she was promised – her confessor and spiritual director, Fr. Michael Sopoćko, who undertook the attempt to complete the request of the Lord Jesus.

Father Sopoćko partly introduced the mission of Sr. Faustina to the painter and swore him to secrecy. When painting the image of Merciful Jesus this esteemed and well-educated painter Eugeniusz Kazimirowski gave up his own artistic vision in order to paint diligently what he was told to by Sr. Faustina. She came to the painter's studio (accompanied by Sr. Borgia) at least once a week for six months to point out the additions and necessary corrections. Fr. Sopoćko was actively involved in painting of the image, trying to ensure that the figure of the Lord Jesus was accurately reproduced according to the instructions of Sr. Faustina.

Their time spent together on the painting became an opportunity for a more insightful understanding of the essence of the image. Any disputes were resolved by the Lord Jesus Himself (Diary 299; 326; 327; 344). The conversation between Sr. Faustina and the Lord Jesus about the painted image was very meaningful.

“When I visited the artist who was painting the image and saw that it was not as beautiful as Jesus is, I felt very sad, but I hid this deep in my heart. (...) Mother Superior stayed in town to attend to some matters while I returned home alone. I went immediately to the chapel and wept a good deal. I said to the Lord, **“who will paint You as beautiful as You are?”**. Then I heard these words: neither in the beauty of the colour, nor in the brush lies the greatness of this image, but in My grace” (Diary, 313).

From this conversation emanates the honesty of the person gifted with a supernatural grace, who saw – **in her mystical experiences – the real beauty of the resurrected Saviour.**

The Lord Jesus appeared often to Sr. Faustina in such a form as presented in the image (Diary 473; 500; 560; 1047; 1565), and He also made numerous requests for this painting, **which He sanctified with His living presence**, to be made available for public veneration.

Thanks to the efforts of Father Sopoćko, on April 26-28, 1935, at the “Gate of Dawn” in Vilnius, the image of the Merciful Saviour was venerated publicly for the first time during the festive ceremony ending the Jubilee of the 1900 th anniversary of the Redemption of the World. On the final day of the celebrations – it was the first Sunday after Easter – the service was attended by Sr. Faustina. The homily on the Divine Mercy was delivered by Fr. Sopoćko, just as requested by the Lord Jesus.

“For three days it was exposed and received public veneration. Since it was placed at the very top of a window at the “Gate of Dawn”, it could be seen from a great distance. During these three days, the closing of the Jubilee of the Redemption of the World was being celebrated at the “Gate of Dawn”, marking the nineteen hundred years that have passed since the Passion of our Saviour. I see now that the work of Redemption is bound up with the work of mercy requested by Our Lord” (Diary, 89).

“When the image was displayed, **I saw a sudden movement of the hand of Jesus, as He made a large sign of the cross.** In the evening of the same day, (...) I saw the image going over the town, and the town was covered with what appeared to be a mesh and nets. As Jesus passed, He cut through all the nets...” (Diary, 416).



Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy in Vilnius. Current view of the Dawn Gate Chapel and Gallery.

“When I was in the “Gate of Dawn” attending the ceremony during which the image was displayed [1935], I heard a sermon given by my confessor. This sermon about Divine Mercy was the first thing that Jesus had asked for so very long ago. When he began to speak about the great Mercy of Our Lord, **the image came alive** and the rays pierced the hearts of the people gathered there, but not all to the same degree. Some received more, some less. Great joy filled my soul to see the grace of God” (Diary, 417).

“Toward the end of the service, when the priest took the Blessed Sacrament to bless the people, **I saw Our Lord Jesus as He is represented in the image.** Our Lord gave His blessing, and the rays extended over the whole world. Suddenly, I saw an impenetrable brightness in the form of a crystal dwelling place, woven together from waves of brilliance unapproachable to both creatures and spirits. Three doors led to this resplendence. At that moment, **Jesus, as He is represented in the image,** entered this resplendence through the second door to the Unity within” (Diary, 420).

The jubilee celebrations at the “Gate of Dawn” constituted for Sister Faustina a sign and the fulfilment of the graces promised earlier – a **public apparition of the power of the Divine Mercy**.

On April 4, 1937, after being positively reviewed by experts, with the permission of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Vilnius, Romuald Jałbrzykowski, the image of the Merciful Saviour was blessed and placed in Saint Michael’s Church in Vilnius. In that church, beautifully exposed in an impressive gilded frame next to the high altar, it was venerated and given numerous votive offerings. It emanated holiness, and the devotion to Divine Mercy quickly spread beyond the borders of Vilnius. Miraculously, irrespective of physical limitations, it reached millions of people all over the world.

As a result of World War II and the annexation of Lithuania by the USSR, the image of Merciful Jesus became inaccessible to pilgrims for several decades. Despite numerous dangers it was hidden in the attic, many times rolled-up, stored in unfavourable conditions (dampness and freezing), terribly restored. Thanks to Divine Providence, the painting miraculously survived the era of Communism.

In her later correspondence, Sr. Faustina wrote to Fr. Sopoćko:

“God let me know that He is pleased with what has already been done. Immersed in prayer and God’s intimacy, I have experienced great peace in my soul about this work as a whole. (...) And now, with regard to these pictures (small copies), (...) people are buying them a little so far and many souls have experienced God’s grace through this source. As with everything, this will take time. **These pictures are not as beautiful as the big painting**. They are bought by those who are attracted by the grace of God...” (Cracow, February 21, 1938).



During his pilgrimage to Lithuania, on September 5, 1993, Pope John Paul II prayed before the image of Merciful Jesus at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius. In his homily to the faithful he called this image

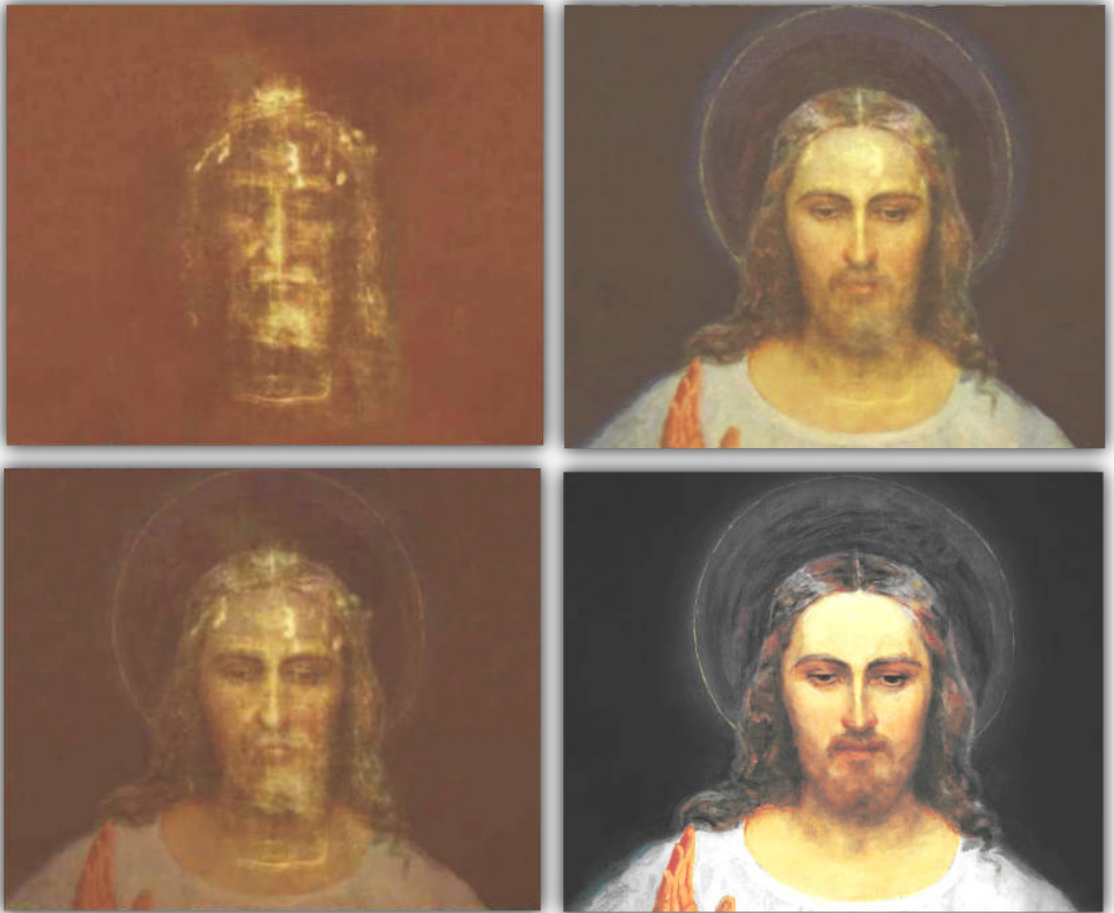
“A HOLY IMAGE”.

In the history of the apparitions, only one event is known when the Lord Jesus expressed his will to paint his picture. He himself presented and accepted his artistic image – as evidenced by his vivid presence, repeatedly shown to Sr. Faustina in a painted picture. Moreover, by promising the worshipers of this image special favors, he gave it an extraordinary religious value.

“By means of this Image I shall be granting many graces, so let every soul have access to it” (Diary, 570).

“The two rays [in the image] denote blood and water. The pale ray stands for the water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the blood that is the life of souls. These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender Mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross (...). Happy is the one who will dwell in their shelter, for the just hand of God shall not lay hold of him” (Diary, 299).

From the statements of Father Sopoćko, recorded on audio tapes, it appears that he left Sr. Faustina complete freedom to cooperate with the painter. At the same time, in his statements and the writings he left, he confirms that the image was painted precisely according to her instructions. **The Holy Image of the Saviour** memorized by Sr. Faustina was delivered with due diligence, proof of which is the fact that the image from the painting of Merciful Jesus matches identically the dimensions of the person shown in the Turin Shroud.



Animation: www.faustina-message.com

THE IMAGE OF MERCIFUL JESUS – CRACOW (POLAND)

Ten years after painting the first image of Merciful Jesus in Vilnius and six years after the death of Sr. Faustina in Cracow – a fine painter, Adolf Hyła¹⁵, came to the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Cracow-Łagiewniki. He desired to paint some image as a gift for the monastic chapel as a token of gratitude for saving his family during the war. The Sisters suggested painting the image of the Merciful Jesus.

They presented to the artist a pattern – a replica of the first image painted by Eugeniusz Kazimirowski in co-operation with Sr. Faustina. They also added its description from the Diary of Saint Faustina. Despite that, the artist completed the work according to his own idea.

Because the size of the painting did not fit the altar in the Sisters' chapel, Mother Irena Krzyżanowska commissioned a second painting, which, consecrated by the Jesuit Father J. Andrasz (St. Faustina's confessor in Krakow), was placed in the monastic chapel in Krakow, where it is venerated to this day.

In this painting the Image of Merciful Jesus was presented by the artist with the background of a meadow and, visible in the distance, bushes. After the intervention of Father Sopoćko in 1954, the background was painted over in a dark colour and a floor was painted under the feet of the Lord Jesus.

The painting donated by Adolf Hyła as a token of gratitude was placed in the church of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Wrocław (Poland).

(See footnotes of the Diary of Saint Faustina)

After the end of World War II, the first painting of the Merciful Jesus, painted by Kazimirowski in co-operation with Sr. Faustina in Vilnius, ended up in the territory of the USSR where, due to barbarous oppressions, thousands of Catholics for several decades had to keep their faith in God secret. The painting, along with its extraordinary origin, was also hidden.

The publication of the second image in Poland, perhaps providentially, distracted attention from the miraculous “Holy Image” (as Saint John Paul II called it in Vilnius in 1993), because then there were no other real possibilities of saving it.

Also, numerous unprofessional conservations, applying layers of over-paint, hid for many years the artistic values of the image. A layer of paraffin wax was applied by one of the restorers. Although it served to a large extent as a protection against the effects of humidity, in time it caused the shades of the original colours to change. Only after a thorough conservation in 2003, removing all overpaints, the painting regained the clarity of its message. The subtle figure of the Merciful Saviour appearing in the dark space, directs the attention of prayerful people **to the light of the rays of mercy** emanating from His Heart opened at the Cross.



The image painted in Sr. Faustina's presence (Eugeniusz Kazimirowski, Vilnius 1934).



The picture was painted 6 years after the death of Sr. Faustina (Adolf Hyla, Cracow, 1944).

“I saw two rays coming out from the Host, as in the Image, closely united but not intermingled...” (Diary, 344).

“When he began to speak about the great Mercy of Our Lord, **the image came alive and the rays pierced the hearts of the people gathered there...**” (Diary, 417).

“Today I saw the glory of God which flows from the Image. Many souls are receiving graces, although they do not speak of it openly. Even though it has faced all kinds of vicissitudes, God is receiving glory because of it; and the efforts of Satan and of evil men are shattered and come to naught. In spite of Satan’s anger, the Divine Mercy will triumph over the whole world and will be worshipped by all souls” (Diary, 1789).

“Today, I saw two enormous pillars planted in the ground; I had planted one of them, and a certain person, S. M. (Sopoćko M.), the other. (...). These two pillars were close to each other, in the area of the Image. And I saw the Image, raised up very high and hanging from these two pillars. In an instant, upon these two pillars, supported both from inside and outside, there stood a large temple. I saw a hand finishing the temple, but I did not see the person doing so. There was a great multitude of people, inside and outside the temple, and the torrents issuing from the Compassionate Heart of Jesus were flowing down upon everyone” (Diary, 1689).

“When I received the article about Divine Mercy with the image [on the cover], Gpd’s presence filled me in an extraordinary way. When I steeped myself in prayer of thanksgiving, I suddenly saw **the Lord Jesus in a great brightness, just as He is painted**, and at His feet I saw Father Andrasz and Father Sopoćko. Both were holding pens in their hands, and flashes of light and fire, like lightning, were coming from the tips of their pens and striking a great crowd of people who were hurrying I know not where. Anyone who was touched by the ray of light immediately turned his back on the crowd and held out his hands to Jesus. Some returned with great joy, others with great pain and compunction” (Diary, 675).

Without a doubt, the image painted by Adolf Hyła contributed to a great extent to the growth of the Divine Mercy devotion. This is confirmed by testimonials of the graces received through its intercession. But its popularity did not detract from the value of the original image painted in Vilnius – **precisely according to the guidelines given by the Lord Jesus**. This image finally reached a time when it could be worthily exposed at the high altar of the Sanctuary of the Divine Mercy in Vilnius where, surrounded by the prayers of the Sisters and visiting pilgrims, it has been worshipped publicly ever since.



Perpetual adoration at the Sanctuary of the Divine Mercy in Vilnius

Live stream: www.gailestingumas.lt

“I promise that the soul that will venerate this Image will not perish.
**I also promise victory over its enemies here on Earth,
especially at the hour of death” (Diary, 47).**



Fot. Marian Paluszkiewicz

Solemn procession through the streets of Vilnius with the first image of Merciful Jesus in 2016 at the end of the National Congress of Mercy as part of the celebration of the Year of Mercy.

The Lithuanian church wanted to fulfill the promise and ask the Merciful Jesus to bless the city.

“When the image was displayed, **I saw a sudden movement of the hand of Jesus, as He made a large sign of the cross.** In the evening of the same day, (...) I saw the image going over the town, and the town was covered with what appeared to be a mesh and nets. As Jesus passed, He cut through all the nets...” (Diary, 416).

THE HISTORY OF THE IMAGE OF MERCIFUL JESUS



The house where the first image of the Merciful Jesus was painted

In the background – a church converted by the Soviet authorities into a prison (operating until 2008)

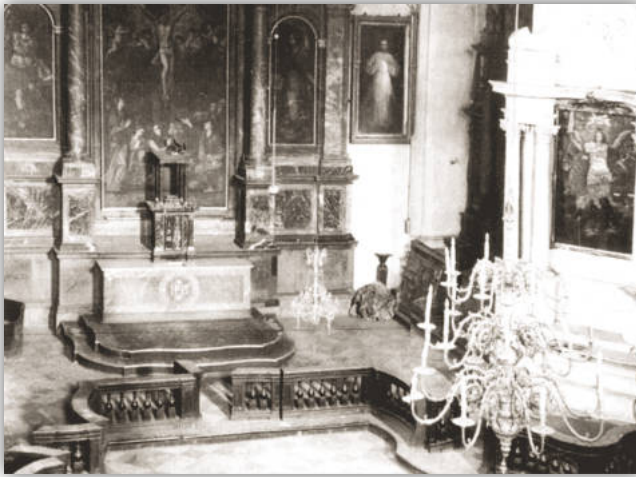
At the beginning of 1934, Father Sopoćko commissioned a Vilnius artist, Prof. Eugeniusz Kazimirowski, to paint the image of the Merciful Jesus. Sister Faustina, who stayed in Vilnius during the whole period of the painting of the image, visited the artist's studio to pass on details. Fr. Sopoćko personally made sure that the image was painted exactly according to her instructions. The process of painting took about six months and, when the image was ready, Fr. Sopoćko requested Sr. Faustina to ask Jesus how to position the inscription:

“Once my confessor asked me where the inscription should be placed, because there was not enough space on the painting for everything. I said I would pray and give him an answer the following week. When I left the confessional and was passing before the Blessed Sacrament, I received an inner understanding about the inscription. Jesus reminded me of what He had told me the first time; namely that these words must be clearly in evidence. These words are: Jesus, I trust in You” (Diary, 327).

The dictated inscription, which is a significant part of the image, was written on a separate board and placed on the frame beneath the image.

Then, as the Lord Jesus explicitly requested through Sr. Faustina, Fr. Sopoćko started making efforts to place the image in St. Michael's Church in Vilnius, where he held the post of rector.

As a result, on April 4, 1937, with the consent of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Vilnius, Romuald Jałbrzykowski, the painting of the Most Merciful Saviour, positively reviewed by experts, was hung next to the high altar in St. Michael's Church, where it was worshipped by the faithful for about eleven years. A second commission of experts, established at the request of the Archbishop in 1941, concluded that: *The painting is painted in an artistic way and is a valuable contribution to contemporary religious art* (Report of the Commission of 27 May 1941 Signed by experts: professor of art history, M. Morelowski, professor of dogmatics Theology of Fr. L. Puchata and conservator Fr. Dr. P. Śledziewski).

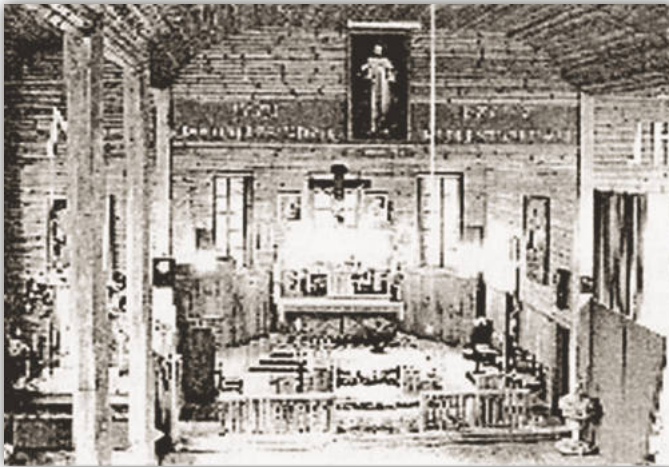


The painting
at St. Michael's
Church (1937-1948)

In 1948, after the Saint Michael's Church, was closed by the communist authorities the painting (without a frame with the inscription Jesus, I trust in you) was secretly and illegally bought from a Lithuanian worker who liquidated the temple's furnishings. Two worshipers of God's mercy (a Pole and a Lithuanian woman)¹⁶, aware of the consequences that were threatening them from the Soviet authorities, they haughty the rolled-up painting and hid it in the attic for some time to wait out the a possible threat.

Later on, it was passed on to the Church of the Holy Spirit where all the movables from the closed church had also been deposited. The parish priest of the Church of the Holy Spirit, Fr. Jan Ellert was interested neither in keeping the image nor in displaying it, so he hid it in the storage area at the back room of the church. It was not until 1956, when a friend of Fr. Sopoćko, Fr. Józef Grasewicz¹⁷, on returning to Vilnius after being released from a Soviet labour camp, undertook to find the painting. He contacted Fr. Sopoćko who was agonising over the lack of information about the image of the Merciful Jesus.

Father Grasewicz received permission to resume his priestly service in Nowa Ruda. Before leaving Vilnius, he asked the parish priest of the Church of the Holy Spirit if he could move the painting to his parish in Nowa Ruda. He received a positive response. So, Fr. Grasewicz brought the painting to Nowa Ruda and placed it in the church keeping its origin a secret. Fr. Sopoćko considered taking the painting to Poland, but he gave up his efforts when it turned out that it would be dangerous. Despite many changes in the administration of the church, the painting stayed in Nowa Ruda for about thirty years.



The painting
in Nowa Ruda,
today Belarus
(1956-1986)

In 1970, the local communist authorities in Nowa Ruda decided to convert the church into a warehouse. The furnishings from the closed church were moved to another parish. However, the painting was left in the deserted church for a seemingly trivial reason: it was hung high up and the ladder they were using to remove objects was not long enough to reach it.

At that time Father Sopoćko was in Poland and he could do nothing to protect the painting. He remained deeply concerned about it however and asked Fr. Grasewicz to move it to another, safer place. However, it was not possible for him to do so, as Fr. Grasewicz had to leave his parish. None of the priests in Belarus dared to accept the painting. The image of Merciful Jesus, left in an abandoned wooden church for many years, survived the dangerous time of communism only thanks to God's providence.

Uncertainty about the fate of the painting accompanied Fr. Sopoćko until the end of his life. He repeatedly sent confidential requests for the painting to be brought to Vilnius. He requested that the painting be placed at the "Gate of Dawn" in Vilnius, where it was originally displayed to be worshipped publicly. This request was not passed on until 1982 (after the death of Fr. Sopoćko).

Father Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz¹⁸, then the priest at the "Gate of Dawn", refused and suggested placing the painting in the Church of the Holy Spirit, where Fr. Aleksander Kaszkiewicz was the parish priest. Initially hesitant, Fr. Kaszkiewicz eventually agreed to hang the picture in the Church of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Fr. Grasewicz decided to bring the painting back to Vilnius.

In order not to provoke the interest of the communists in the unusual origin of the painting, on a November night in 1986, without the knowledge of the inhabitants of Nowa Ruda, gathering for prayer in an abandoned church, a previously prepared copy was hung in place of the original painting. With the help of the initiated nuns of the Mother of Mercy (Aušros vartai), the picture removed from the stretcher was rolled up and that same night it was transported to Grodno, and then to the church of Saint Spirit in Vilnius.

In the Church of the Holy Spirit, Fr. Kaszkiewicz ordered the restoration of the painting. Damaged areas were covered with a new layer of paint. This substantially changed the appearance of the face of Jesus. The red inscription "JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU" was added at the bottom of the painting. Moreover, to fit the painting into the recess in the altar, the bottom edge was folded-up and an additional part added at the top.

These changes were inconsistent with the artistic composition of the image painted by Prof. Kazimirowski in collaboration with Sister Faustina and Fr. Michael Sopoćko. It was a drastic interference which decreased considerably the original value of the work.

For many years the painting was placed in the side altar of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius, and it did not arouse the interest of both pilgrims and church authorities, both Polish and Lithuanian. The lack of appropriate exposure conditions for the image contributed to unfavorable changes in its matter. Thanks to the kindness of the then parish priest of the Church of Saint Spirit priest Miroslaw Grabowski, in July 2001, the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus could create a new religious house in Vilnius and take care of this unique, priceless painting. A picture with the image of Jesus the Most Merciful Savior, **which was created in the atmosphere of God's miracle – the prayer and suffering of Saint Faustina, her presence and participation.**



The painting at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius (1987-2005) before and after conservation

Thanks to the efforts of a group of lay devotees of the Divine Mercy from Łódź (Poland) and the generosity of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, in April 2003 the painting was thoroughly renovated*, which took place in the chapel of the convent in Vilnius. All paint changes applied to the painting were removed, as well as moisture stains that had been previously tried to be removed with chemicals have been removed. As a result of this restoration, the original form of the painting and the appearance of the image of Merciful Jesus were restored.

After a thorough renovation, the painting was returned to the Church of St. Spirit, the parish church for Poles living in Vilnius, where Masses and services are held only in Polish.

To create the right conditions for individual prayer, adoration of the painting with the image of Merciful Jesus for everyone at any time, regardless of national origin, the Metropolitan of Vilnius, Cardinal Audrys Juozas Bačkis decided to transfer the image to the neighboring Church of St. Trinity, reconsecrated at the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy.

The circumstances surrounding this event sparked controversial discussions in many media publications and thus, unintentionally, became a huge, positive promotion, reminding people of the existence of the original image of the Merciful Jesus in Vilnius and of the history of its origin resulting from the message of the Message of Divine Mercy transmitted through St. Faustina.

Since September 2005, the first image of Merciful Jesus has been venerated at the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy in Vilnius, where nuns and numerous pilgrims entrust the destiny of the world to God's mercy in daily prayer adoration of **the Holy Image of the Saviour**.

The Metropolitan of Vilnius entrusted the service in this Sanctuary to the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus. The Congregation promoting the worship of Merciful Jesus was founded in Vilnius in 1947 by Fr. Michael Sopoćko, spiritual director of Sr. Faustina, in response to Jesus' request: **"I desire that there be such a Congregation"** (Diary, 437).

* Documentation of conservation of the image of Merciful Jesus, pp. 162-164

In 2004, the Metropolitan of Vilnius designated two buildings for the activities of the Congregation of the Sisters Merciful Jesus. One of these buildings was intended for a religious house, the other for a stationary hospice for people with cancer.

Renovation of devastated buildings and adapting them to the needs of the religious house and the hospice of Blessed Michael Sopoćko it was carried out thanks to the generosity of donors from many countries. In addition to the prayer service at the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy, since 2008, the Sisters have been running inpatient hospice activities in Vilnius, and by organizing secular volunteering, they help the sick in their homes.



The Hospice
and the Monastic
House
of the Sisters
of Merciful Jesus
Vilnius,
4a Rassa Street



In 2012, the Archbishop of Vilnius, Cardinal Audrys Juozas Bačkis he made a solemn blessing of the first hospice in Lithuania. In the foreword, the Metropolitan drew attention to **a special place that was the birth-place of the cult of Divine Mercy**. In the interwar period, Fr. Sopoćko, the spiritual director of Sr. Faustina, and the artist painter Kazimirowski lived here, who painted the first image of Merciful Jesus according to the instructions of Sr. Faustina. In the room where the picture was made for six months (1934), at present there is a chapel of the Religious House of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, visited by numerous pilgrims.



Chapel at the convent of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus in Vilnius

On the occasion of this ceremony, a letter-blessing was addressed by Pope Benedict XVI to the Metropolitan Archbishop of Vilnius.

“...The certainty of the future immortality and the hope for resurrection cast new light on the mystery of suffering and dying and trigger an extraordinary strength inside the believer so he can sacrifice himself solely to God.

His Holiness calls for an abundance of gifts of the Holy Spirit for the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, for the other personnel of this nascent venture, and for the volunteers working with them, so that work, following the example of Christ the Good Shepherd, may bear fruit. His Holiness, through the intercession of the Virgin Mother, with great pleasure extends his Apostolic Blessing to Your Eminence, to the Sisters, **and especially, to all patients and their families...**”

When in 1947, Father Michael Sopoćko had to leave Vilnius forever, he probably did not think that, in this place, one day mercy would be fully realized through deed, word and prayer.

*God demands
that there be a Congregation
which will proclaim
the mercy of God to the world
and, by its prayers,
obtain it for the world
(Diary, 436).*

CHAPTER IV

THE CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCIFUL JESUS

Vilnius, Lithuania "June 29, 1935

When I talked to my spiritual director [Father Michael Sopoćko] about various things that the Lord was asking of me, I thought he would tell me that I was incapable of accomplishing all those things, and that the Lord Jesus did not use miserable souls like me for the works He wanted done. But I heard words to the effect that it was just such souls that God chooses most frequently to carry out His plans. This priest is surely guided by the Spirit of God; he has penetrated the secrets of my soul, the deepest secrets of which were between me and God, about which I have not yet spoken to him, and I have not done so, because I did not understand them myself, and the Lord has not clearly ordered me to talk about it. That secret is such that God demands that there be a Congregation which will proclaim the mercy of God to the world and, by its prayers, obtain it for the world. When the priest asked me if I had not had any such inspirations, I replied that I had not had any clear orders, but at that instant a light penetrated my soul and I understood that the Lord was speaking through him. In vain had I defended myself by saying I had not received any clear orders, for at the end of our conversation I saw the Lord Jesus on the threshold, as He is in that painting, and He said to me: **I desire that there be such a Congregation.**

(...) At the very beginning of the Holy Mass on the following day, I saw Jesus in all His unspeakable beauty. He said to me that He desired that such a Congregation be founded as soon as possible – and you shall live in it together with your companions. My Spirit shall be the tenet of your life. Your life is to be modelled on Mine, from the crib to My death on the Cross. Penetrate My mysteries, and you will know the abyss of My mercy towards creatures and My unfathomable goodness – and this you shall make known to the world. Through your prayers, you shall mediate between Heaven and Earth. Then came the moment to receive Holy Communion and Jesus disappeared, and I saw a great brightness. Then I heard these words: We give you Our blessing..." (Diary, 436-439).

“...I saw a small chapel and inside it six sisters who were receiving Holy Communion from our confessor, who was wearing a surplice and stole. There were no decorations and no kneelers in the chapel. After Holy Communion, I saw the Lord Jesus as He is in that painting. Jesus was walking away and I called to Him: How can You pass me by and not say anything to me, Lord? Without You, I shall do nothing; You must stay with me, **please bless me, and this congregation, and my Homeland.** Jesus made the Sign of the Cross and said: Do not fear anything; I am always with you” (Diary, 613).

“O my Jesus, how immensely I rejoice at the assurance You have given me that the Congregation would come into being. (...) and I see how great is the glory which it will give to God. It will be the reflection of God’s greatest attribute, that is His Divine Mercy. Unceasingly will they intercede for Divine Mercy for themselves and for the entire world, and every act of mercy will flow from God’s love, that love with which they will be over-filled. They will strive to absorb that attribute of God, and to live by it, and to bring others, so they know it and trust in the goodness of the Lord”

(Diary, 664).

“I place in your care two pearls very precious to my Heart: these are the souls of priests and religious. You will pray particularly for them; their power will come from your diminishment. You will join prayers, fasts, mortifications, labours and all sufferings to My prayers, fasting, mortification, labours and sufferings and then they will have power before My Father.

(...) penetrate into the spirit of My poverty and arrange everything in such a way that the most destitute will have no reason to envy you. I find pleasure, not in large buildings and magnificent structures, but in a pure and humble heart” (Diary, 531-532).

“Today the Lord let me get to know the Convent of Divine Mercy. I saw a great spirit in this convent, but everything was poor and very scanty. O my Jesus, you are allowing me to live in spirit with these souls, but perhaps I shall never set foot there; but may Your Name be blessed, and whatever You have intended, may it be done” (Diary, 892).

In the last few weeks before Sister Faustina's death, Father Sopoćko met her twice in Cracow. During these meetings he received her last instructions, her last will, **which he carried out after her death.**

"Diary" of Father M. Sopoćko:

"I went to visit her during the week and, amongst other things, I spoke with her about that congregation which she wanted to found, and now she is dying, stressing the fact that all that was probably just an illusion, and so were all the other things which she spoke about. Sister Faustina promised to talk about this matter with the Lord Jesus during her prayers. The next day, as I was offering Holy Mass for the intention of Sister Faustina, a thought came to my mind, that just as **she had been unable to paint that picture herself**, and only instructed others, **she would have also been unable to start a new congregation**, but only provide general instructions. Meanwhile, the urgings signify the necessity of this new congregation in the terrible times which are to come. The next time I came to the hospital and I asked her whether she had something to tell me in this matter, she replied that she did not need to speak anymore, as the Lord Jesus had already enlightened me during Holy Mass.

When leaving, while saying goodbye, she told me three things that were important.

I. I should not stop spreading the cult of Divine Mercy, and especially not stop working on establishing its feast day on the first Sunday after Easter. I must never say that I've done enough. Should difficulties appear insurmountable, even if it would seem that God Himself does not want this, I must not stop. For the depth of the Divine Mercy is inexhaustible and our life is not enough to extol it. The world will not exist for much longer and God still wants to give graces to people before the end, so that no one will be able to say during the Judgment, that he did not know about the goodness of God and did not hear about His Mercy.

II. I am to be indifferent to the matters of the congregation, which will start with meager, humble affairs, and when the initiative comes from others. (...) God Himself will bring a person from the world, who will bear certain signs allowing us to recognize him as the one.

III. I am to have pure intentions in this whole matter and works. I am not to search for myself, but only for the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbours.

(...) Even if the congregation is founded, others are to govern it, not myself; I am to be prepared for the greatest difficulties and abandonment, disappointments, ingratitude and persecution (...) When after a moment I returned to her cell to give her a few more pictures, I found her in ecstasy, praying, as though not an earthly being. I felt such great pain and bitterness in my soul at having to bid farewell to this unusual being, at being so very much abandoned by everyone. But I understood that above all, it is me who had to put trust in the Divine Mercy”.

Father Michael Sopoćko stayed true to the words passed to him by Sister Faustina on her death bed. So he waited patiently for the sign of God’s Will.

In 1939, World War II broke out. During this cruel time, Fr. Sopoćko did whatever he could to speak to people about the Divine Mercy. Meetings of the Catholic Association and Marian Sodality of Academy Students took place at his house. At those meetings a graduate of classical philology from the Batory’s University of Vilnius, Jadwiga Osińska, was the one who stood out. One day she confessed to Fr. Sopoćko that she intended to offer herself solely for God’s service, but she was unable to find the right congregation. She asked for prayers and help, adding that she had a few friends who thought the same as her.

Father Sopoćko offered Osińska to spend her summer holidays at the non-habited Angelic Sisters in Pryciuny, so she could get to know better the rules of the monastic life. After her holidays, Jadwiga Osińska stated that she had decided: *“to offer herself for service to the Most Merciful Saviour and to start a new congregation, or something similar, to glorify God in His Infinite Mercy, and that she desired to take private vows”*.

Fascinated by Sister Faustina and in her memory, Osińska took her vows on October 15, 1941 (three years after death of Sister Faustina) and assumed her religious name: Faustina – becoming the first “Faustinka”.

In November 1941, the next candidate emerged out of the group led by Father Sopoćko – Izabella Naborowska (Sister Benigna). Then, on January 26, 1942, other members joined them – Ludmiła Roszko, Zofia Komorowska, Adela Alibekow and Jadwiga Malikiewiczówna. This was how “the first six” were formed. Father Sopoćko gave all of them religious names. He wrote a general set of rules for them and set a weekly conference about the inner life. The formation meetings of the six candidates for the rising congregation were held at Fr. Sopoćko’s house. The sisters planned to start community life after the war.

During the ongoing military occupation the Germans organized widely spread action against clergy. On March 3, 1942, they arrested professors and seminarians of the theological seminary and almost all the priests working in Vilnius. The trap was also set at Fr. Sopoćko’s house. He was warned in time, left in disguise, and was able to get to the convent of Ursulines in Czarny Bór (Lithuania), where he hid for two and a half years working as a carpenter. He stayed in touch with the six sisters through letters. Every now and then, taking precautionary measures, one of them would visit him. Most often it was Faustina Osińska.

The sisters who decided to offer their lives to God’s service met in Vilnius at the conferences scheduled with Prelate Żebrowski, whom Fr. Sopoćko asked for spiritual care over them. On April 11, 1942, on the eve of the Divine Mercy Feast, the six candidates took their temporary religious vows, and, even though they still lived with their families, from then on, their lives acquired the religious character of a convent. For Fr. Sopoćko this was the expected sign of Divine Providence.

Fragment of the letter Father Sopoćko wrote from Czarny Bór:

“I congratulate you, dear Sisters, on this special grace of Divine Mercy that has revealed itself in your vocation, the Chosen Ones of the Heart of Jesus, pillars of the future convent, confidantes of God’s mysteries, the most prayed for and desired ones for the past five years in each daily Holy Mass”.

After Father Sopoćko's return to Vilnius on August 19, 1944, the sisters expressed the need to renew their vows. Thus, on November 9, 1944, Father Sopoćko started with "the first six" a retreat that was to be their immediate preparation for the ceremony of their vows planned for November 16.

Father Sopoćko "Memoirs":

"After the retreat, on the appointed day, early in the morning, when it was still dark, as the curfew was still obligatory, six girls came from various parts of the city to the Zarzecze suburb, to the chapel of the Carmelite Sisters. There, in a "catacomb" atmosphere, after Holy Mass at five o'clock they took their simple private vows of loyal service to the Most Merciful Saviour and His Mother of Mercy. No words can express the joyful atmosphere that prevailed among these Brides of Christ during a simple meal, which was prepared at the convent gate by the hospitable Carmelite Sisters. How happy they were, despite different shortcomings, how rich they were, despite the poverty that was visible everywhere, how brave and full of trust they were, despite the dangers lurking at every step".



In this Carmelite Convent, 29 Popławska Street, Vilnius, the Sisters of the new congregation took their first religious vows

After the war ended in 1945 and Lithuania was annexed by the USSR, a mass resettlement of Poles from Vilnius and its region to Poland began. Archbishop Jałbrzykowski, with the entire Curia and the Seminary, was forced to leave Vilnius. Three sisters also left for Poland. Therefore, on November 16, 1945 only three sisters renewed their vows. The sisters longed to live their lives at the convent, to find even the most humble place, where as a community they could glorify the Merciful God.

As there was no hope for this in Vilnius at that time, the ones who stayed decided to go to Poland as well. On August 24, 1946, they paid their last visit to Father Sopoćko to receive blessings and advice for their new life.

"Diary" of Sister Benigna:

"We left Vilnius quietly. One chapter of our life is closed, we go to a new life, to do the will of the One who has chosen us..."

Upon arriving in Poland, on November 16, 1946, the six sisters met in Poznań (Poland) to renew their vows. Holy Mass was celebrated by a Jesuit, Father Siwek¹⁹. At that time the sisters decided how they would implement the idea of the Divine Mercy in their lives. Some of them decided to start a religious congregation, others – a lay institute, and still others, feeling responsible for their families, to stay spiritually connected with their sisters in lay life. In this way they started to work on the three aspects of vocation about which Sister Faustina had spoken.

To start a religious congregation, Sisters Faustina Osińska and Benigna Naborowska needed to ask a bishop for permission to establish a monastic house in his diocese. They were helped in this matter by Father Władysław Wantuchowski²⁰, a Jesuit, in whom they found their spiritual guardian after their arrival to Poland. He asked the apostolic administrator of Gorzów Wielkopolski, Father Edmund Nowicki, to give his sisters permission to settle in his diocese and to assign them to service at the parish church. Father Nowicki gladly responded to this request and offered to the sisters, among others, a parish in Myślubórz.

Fragments of the Sister Faustina Osińska's "Diary" with the description of the sisters' first visit to Myślibórz:

"Myślibórz is beautifully located (...) on the left sits a great lake, which gleams as though with a metallic surface between the mists of the early morning. (...) What a joy it was, when we saw a still locked gate of a small church, and a one-storey house with a porch and a sign "Caritas". We looked at it, an ideal place for a religious house, and we sighed quietly, that it would be so good to be able to live here (...) lots of greenery, gardens, a quiet, peaceful place on Earth, with a religious house. We gave thanks to God that He directed us here, into this silence and peace..."



"Diary" of Sister Benigna Naborowska:

"On August 25, 1947 at 8 o'clock in the morning we were already in Myślibórz. The birthday of the late Sister Faustina was selected by the Lord Jesus to be our day of birth for community life (...) So we are already in Myślibórz, in the little Saint Joseph's House, the birthplace of our monastic life. We came here by a strange coincidence, or actually because this was the will of God on the day Sister Faustina was born. We cannot put our happiness into words, and, even though everything here is arranged only temporarily, our joy knows no limits. (...) Here, at this tiny house, the Merciful King is at home. Be praised, Merciful Jesus".



Sr. Faustina and Sr. Benigna
– first mothers of the new
congregation

Following numerous efforts (it was the time of communism), on August 25, 1947, Sr. Faustina and Sr. Benigna began a communal monastic life at the parish in Myślibórz – the place offered to them by the apostolic administrator in Gorzów Wielkopolski, Father Edmund Nowicki²¹.

They notified Frather Sopoćko about this, who, called by Archbishop Jałbrzykowski, arrived in Poland with the last transport of the people displaced from Lithuania, and was staying in Białystok.

In Białystok, Frather Michael Sopoćko was working and fulfilling his pastoral duties until the end of his life (about 30 years). He also regularly kept in touch with the Sisters from Myślibórz – watching over the spiritual and material development of the newly – founded Congregation.

For a couple of years also Frather Józef Andrasz, a Jesuit, the Cracow confessor of Sr. Faustina, stayed in touch with the new congregation, offering his advice and spiritual support.

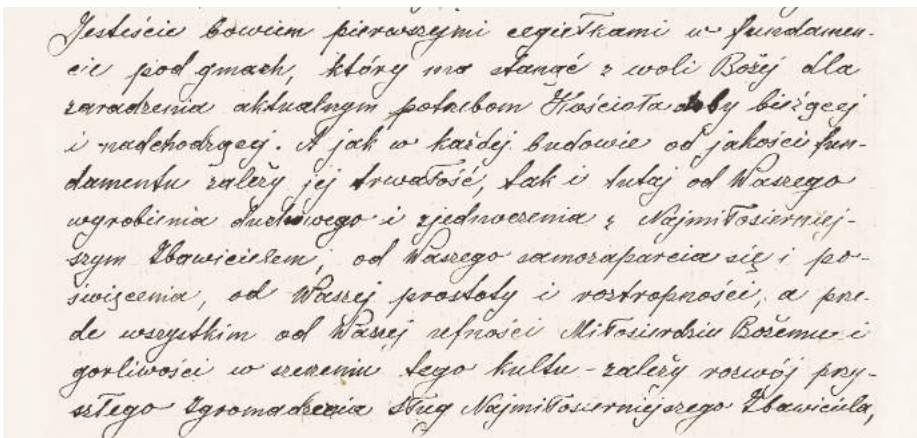
Fragments of Father Sopoćko's letter of November 12, 1947 to the newly created community of Sisters in Myślubórz (Poland):

"Jesus, I trust in You! Dear Ladies and Reverend Sisters.

(...) Three years ago you took your vows in Vilnius at the chapel of the Carmelite Sisters, which the late Sr. Faustina saw in her spirit and described in detail. These vows were made in a "catacomb" manner; you had to make your way through the streets at night, threatened at every step by the risk of being halted, and even during the service you feared some one undesirable spied on you, revealed you, or betrayed you.

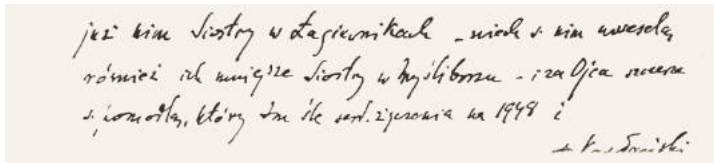
(...) I desire that each of you becomes a saint not according to one, universal pattern, but each of you individually according to your own in-born and acquired positive abilities and God's graces, that are granted by the Most Merciful Saviour to each soul according to her needs. I pray for that during each Holy Mass, for each of you individually, for each one I know and those I do not yet know, and for all of you together, as for the Brides of the Most Merciful Saviour, the keepers of His secret of Mercy, and the workers in His vineyard.

(...) You are the first bricks in the foundations of the edifice which is to be erected by God's will to meet the Church's needs in present days and in days yet to come. As in every building the durability depends on the quality of the foundations, so also here the development of the future Congregation of the Servants of the Most Merciful Saviour depends on your spiritual skill and your unification with the Most Merciful Saviour, on your perseverance and sacrifice, on your simplicity and prudence, and most of all, on your trust in the Divine Mercy, and your zeal in spreading this devotion".



Fragments of letters by Father Józef Andrasz SJ to Sisters of the new religious community in Myślubórz:

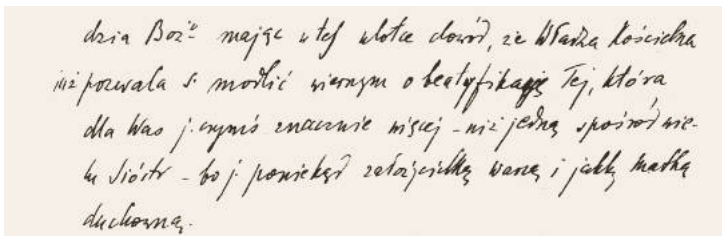
Cracow (Poland), January 7, 1948 (back of the postcard) "I know that you, my dear Sisters, rejoice at everything with regard to the development of the Divine Mercy worship. Here is a beautiful sign of that received from America. It already made the Sisters in Łagiewniki happy; let their younger Sisters in Myślubórz be happy as well - and pray sincerely for the Father who sends them his sincere wishes for year 1948 and priestly blessing".



jest miłe Siostry w Łagiewnikach - miło i miło awersola
rozmieci ich najmilsze Siostry w Myślubórze - i z całego serca
i, oczywiście, który dla ich ser. 2. stycznia na 1948 i
+ k. J. Andrasz

Cracow, October 8, 1948

"(...) I know that everything that regards Divine Mercy, and her whom the goodness of Lord Jesus deigned to call for this work - have been of great interest to you. I think that Father Sopoćko has spared no news. The hearts at the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy rejoice while looking at one of its Sisters presented in the attached leaflet as "a candidate" for beatification. I think, however, that the Servants of Divine Mercy will rejoice no less seeing in this leaflet proof that the Church authorities have already allowed the faithful to pray for the beatification of her, who is much more for you than just one of many Sisters - as, in some way, she is your founder and spiritual mother. Sincerely, Father J. Andrasz SJ".



droga Bożo! mając w tej chwili dowód, że Władza Kościelna
mi pozwoliła i modlić w sprawie o beatyfikację Tej, która
dla Was i innych znaczenie ma - nie jedyną spośród nich
w Siostry - bo jej powołanie i realizacja, wam, i jedynej, matki
duchownej.

Zakopane (Poland), December 29, 1950

"Dear Sr. Benigna, You are right when writing that your cause is close and dear to me. Merciful Jesus deigned to lay a bit of its foundation also on me - to grant through my words some light to the person you consider a spiritual Founder of yours... Sincerely, Father J. Andrasz SJ".

The Community of Sisters, which started its monastic formation under the name of the Servants of the Divine Mercy, was approved as a congregation of diocesan right on August 2, 1955, under the name Congregation of the Sisters of Jesus Christ the Merciful Redeemer. The initial name could not be used because of the then ongoing theological disputes about the new forms of the cult of the Divine Mercy. (See – page 66)

On August 21, 1955, the first sisters of the Congregation took their perpetual vows. The vows were accepted by Father Zygmunt Szczęsny²² in the presence of Fr. Michael Sopoćko. On that occasion Fr. Józef Andrasz, a Jesuit, sent the Sisters his greetings and fragments of Saint Faustina's Diary regarding the new congregation. Until then, none of the Sisters knew its content because it was kept by the "Magdalenki" (Magdalene Sisters) in Cracow.



On August 6, 1955, the sisters put on white monastic habits, which were later, at the order of the Curia, changed to black.

Fragment of a letter by Fr. Józef Andrasz SJ, Rabka, August 8, 1955:

“Dear Sister Benigna,

(...) I think that you will receive this letter still before the Assumption, thus on this day I am sincerely congratulating both of you – Sisters Benigna and Faustina – that the Merciful Jesus let you to be the first ones in the Congregation to devote yourselves through perpetual vows to complete service – sacrifice – love – in the spirit of this Congregation, which is to bring a more and more abundant flood of Divine Mercy on the evil, infatuated, and miserable contemporary world.

Dear Sisters, I will be deeply entrusting you to the Most Holy Mary Mother of God on the day of Her great triumph, so She – as the Virgin Most Prudent and the Seat of Wisdom – will send you an abundance of light, since this Congregation is to be shaped to a great extent by you, my Dear Sisters. You are the root of your traditions, of the internal passion of the Congregation and its external momentum. Let this beautiful day in your life be blessed by Heaven with smiles, that brighten a heart, and strong graces, that will build a great structure.

To the honourable Father Wantuchowski, who so graciously was involved by Divine Providence with the work of Mercy and who has been so willingly devoting himself to your Congregation, I am sending “plurimum salutem in SS Corde Jesu”. Perhaps one day such a “heavy Chevalier” as myself will visit the regions of Szczecin and Myślibórz – although I cannot find anything about this in Sr. Faustina’s prophecy; then, of course, I will pay a return visit to the House of Mercy and its residents, as well as the respectable parish priest, who did kindly visit me in Cracow. I do have a lot of work to do, including the continuation of the Biography of our dear Sr. Faustina. I send you both my Dear Sisters sincere greetings and the wishes of an abundance of God’s graces on the day of your vows and also my blessing. Sincerely, Father J. Andrasz SJ”.

Musié tak „cióska kancelaria” - jék ja - wybiéne v. kúdy v. stromy kósa-
na i Myślibórz - chorózi uprzedniácl i Faustiny nic otym wygótai
nie moze - wóciós ocynióc w. ewangélijy's dom kúós = i jéj muéntak.
Draz mam spórs - náclj do méj róimózi dáclj ciój i jéj kóla
nej i. Faustiny
He Wam obic dr. Sólj b. nácljé podróz = i jéj róimózi b.
odfýzcl Fack Strýcl nácljé i. Sólj - i b. jéj kóla
z jéj kóla
X. / M. Andrasz SJ.

The Diary of Saint Sr. Faustina provides the words of the Lord Jesus, which determine the purpose and spirituality of the new religious community:

“... I saw Jesus in all His unspeakable beauty. He said to me that He desired that such a Congregation be founded as soon as possible – and you shall live in it together with your companions. My Spirit shall be the rule of your life. Your life is to be modelled on Mine, from the crib to My death on the Cross. Penetrate My mysteries, and you will know the abyss of My mercy towards creatures and My unfathomable goodness - and this you shall make known to the world. Through your prayers, you shall mediate between Heaven and Earth” (Diary, 438).

“Your purpose and that of your companions is to unite yourselves with Me as closely as possible through love; you will reconcile Earth with Heaven, you will soften the just anger of God, and you will plead for mercy for the world. I place in your care two pearls very precious to My Heart: these are the souls of priests and religious. You will pray particularly for them; their power will come from your devastation” (Diary, 531).

The first visit of Father Sopoćko to the Sisters in Myślubórz described in the religious Diary:

“It was 1947. At the railway station in Myślubórz - heavily chugging, a train stopped. A few people got off, among them one could spot the slightly stooped figure of a 59-year old priest dressed in a threadbare cassock. His curious, blue eyes were sparkling from behind glasses. His deep and penetrating gaze swept across the faces of those well-known Sisters waiting for him. Following the initial, very quick and balanced welcoming gestures, he asked: “Is there a small church near your convent?” - “Yes, Father” - the Sisters answered astonished. “And is there a stained-glass window in this church?” - “Yes, Father. And how do you know?” - “Please, take me there immediately”. The Reverend Professor was rushing, not paying attention to passers-by or streets. He entered through a gate - first, the fruit garden, and then - the church, and for a long time stayed in the church alone with the writings of the Sister, whom he believed was a saint. He knelt down and prayed, looking with emotion at the window with its slightly damaged stained-glass, which he had been told about by Sr. Faustina. Everything was as she said - the stained-glass window depicted the scene of the crucifixion, and beneath the Cross he noted entwined shoots of red roses”.



The stained-glass window in the Church of the Holy Cross in Myślubórz (Poland)
- at present the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy

Father Michael Sopoćko, "Memoirs" 1948:

"Almost everything that Sr. Faustina foretold in the matter of that Congregation happened precisely as she had said. When on November 16, 1944 in Vilnius I accepted at night the private vows of the first six Sisters, and when three years later I came to the first house of this Congregation in Myślubórz, I was amazed by the striking similarity to what the late Sr. Faustina had told me (...) In the altar's nave I noticed a slightly broken stained glass window, which portrayed Jesus' death on the Cross. I gazed at it with joy and amazement, because Sr. Faustina spoke to me of such a church and stained glass window".



The Church of the Holy Cross in Myślubórz (Poland), with the stained glass window over the high altar, built by Polish workers in 1905 (the year of Saint Faustina's birth), was the only Catholic church in the area that was then part of Germany



The Sanctuary
of Divine Mercy
- Retreat House

The Motherhouse
of the Congregation
of the Sisters
of Merciful Jesus
in Myślubórz



On August 1, 1993, Archbishop Marian Przykucki²³ solemnly brought the relics of Blessed Sister Faustina to the convent in Myślubórz. On that day, by his decree, the church and the convent were elevated to the rank of Sanctuary of Divine Mercy.

Fragment of the Archbishop's decree:

“The church and convent mentioned in the prophetic vision of Sister Faustina and described in her Diary seem to be a place indicated by Divine Providence for the special devotion of the Divine Mercy, and a support for the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus (...). Let Divine Mercy be worshipped in this place for all times, let this place, selected by Sr. Faustina, be supported through her intercession, let our faithful worshippers experience in this place a special mercy and ensure themselves earthly well-being and eternal life”.



The new house of the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus in Myślubórz with the Jesus, the King of Mercy chapel

The house fully-furnished and equipped, was given as a gift by Anna and Roman Kluska to serve as a religious home.

“I saw the convent of the new Congregation. It was a large and spacious building. I went from room to room, observing everything. I saw that Divine Providence had provided all that was necessary” (Diary, 1154).

In 1973 the Congregation assumed the new, shortened name: the Sisters of Merciful Jesus. At present, the Congregation implements its charisma, acquired from their founder, in a few dozen congregation houses in Poland and abroad. The main feature of the congregation’s spirituality is the contemplation of God in His Mercy, limitless trust, and following Jesus in practising works of mercy, especially towards the most needy. Together with a multitude of lay worshippers of the Divine Mercy, Sisters of this Congregation spreads the worship of Merciful Jesus. Through prayer and devoted service to others, they continuously obtain Divine Mercy for the world, and in particular, the grace of mercy for the dying and the grace of the Divine blessing for priests and religious.

With their apostolic activities, the Sisters try to respond to the present needs of the Church. Among other things, they run hospices and centres for the protection of unborn children, conduct retreats and catechize.

Through their daily prayer, *Jesus, I trust in You*, they entrust the apostolic works and the testimony of their lives to Divine Mercy. For them, the religious vows mean complete entrustment to God. They do not rely on their own strengths, but on Divine omnipotence.

The formula of the religious vows: “I beg You, the Merciful God, please accept this sacrifice of my heart, complete and entire, until devastation of myself in love and Your sacred service.”



A thanksgiving prayer concluding the ceremony of perpetual profession of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus Myślubórz, August 4, 2013

The Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, founded in 1947 by Fr. Michael Sopoćko, the confessor and spiritual director of Sr. Faustina, formed in obedience to the Church and its evangelical mission, on May 13, 2008, **was approved as a religious institute with papal rights.**



“His thought [of Father Sopoćko] is closely united with 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).

“O my Jesus, how immensely I rejoice at the assurance You have given me that the Congregation would come into being. (...) and I see how great is the glory which it will give to God. It will be the reflection of God’s greatest attribute, that is His Divine Mercy. Unceasingly will they intercede for Divine Mercy for themselves and for the entire world, and every act of mercy will flow from God’s love, that love with which they will be over-filled” (Diary, 664).



Chapel in the new religious house of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus in Myślíbórz*



* **Myślíbórz (Poland).** Located at the Myślíbórz Lake in the diocese of Szczecin-Kamień. The first mention of Myślíbórz is in the document dated 1238. In 1262-1270 Myślíbórz obtained municipal rights. As a result, in the town were built numerous representative buildings. The current name was approved on May 7, 1946. In 1947 in Myślíbórz, at the Holy Cross church, settled Sisters from the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus founded by the Blessed Fr. Michael Sopoćko. They continue the mission of Saint Faustina. Therefore, in 1993 the Sanctuary of the Divine Mercy was established in Myślíbórz .

*This reflection
sprang out of admiration for Jesus,
who is Mercy.
We shall be happy
if you also fall in love with Him,
and if you make your heart
a valley of trust,
which He will be able to
flood with a rain of Mercy.*

Sisters of Merciful Jesus

CONTEMPLATING THE IMAGE OF MERCIFUL JESUS

HE IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD (COL 1:15).

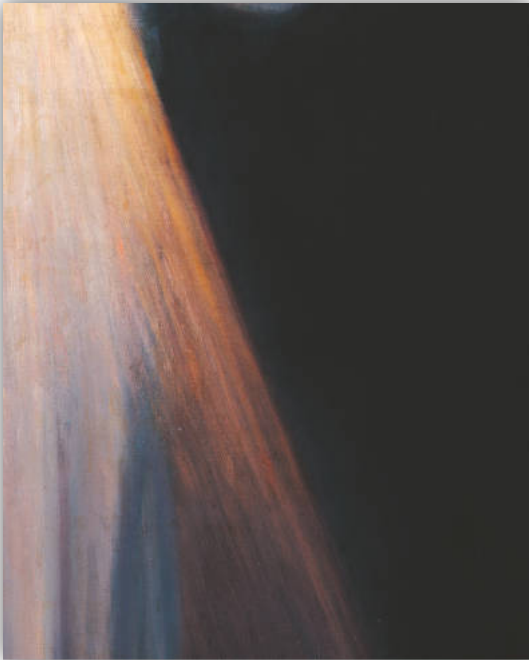


*I believe
that You come out
of this image
for me.
You do not want
to be enfolded
in the frame
of any sort of perfection
whatsoever.
You do not want to be
simply “a memento
portrait” of God.
You simply come
out to meet me today.*



*You are coming
always first in love.
You are hurrying
to love
barefoot
like a slave
asking for acceptance
of the Gift of Love.*

*Now there is only
a question of the
other,
that is of my,
step.*



*Terrifying darkness,
increasing before eyes
already wide open out of fear
in this darkness,
the colours of our life are blended
blue-gray, everyday routine
divided by stripes
of green hope,
pink joy,
orange smile,
only now can I see
that the colours of my life
are nothing
compared with You
Who are the light of the world.
I invite You: enter into my life,
let the flame of Mercy burn in me.*



*You search for me
with Your glance
in a gaze full of love.
You look
patiently,
gently,
without jealousy,
not seeking Yourself,
not getting angry,
not remembering past wrongs.
You bear all things,
believe all things,
continually put
Your hope in me.
You look at me with love.*



*You speak with gestures.
I don't have to reach up
to a particular level
to gain Your appreciation,
to delight You.
You approve
of me such
as I am.
You bless me constantly
and constantly
forgive me.*



*You reveal yourself to me.
You invite me
into the very midst of love.
Here is my place, the one
You prepared for me
and nobody else can occupy it.
You wrote me on Your hands.
I engraved myself
with a wound in Your side.
You suffered from the love for me.
That is why
I am so sure about it.
I am anxious
to lean against it.
Hug me, God.*



*Tent of encounter
beams of light
penetrating everything,
timidly entering
locked hearts.
Streams of grace.
It is not about cheap gifts.
You give Yourself.
You are the Gift.
I turn to You
like a flower to the sun.
I want to draw life
from Your rays
and I beg You
protect me with Your mercy
with a shield.*

JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU

*Jesus, I trust in You.
The secret code opening God's heart wide.
Lord, You are the only trustworthy One
and there is no other name
that I can trust in.
My Jesus,
Saviour
King,
my Mercy.*

“Be not afraid of your Saviour, O sinful soul. I make the first move to come to you, for I know that by yourself you are unable to lift yourself to Me. Child, do not run away from your Father; be willing to talk openly with your God of mercy who wants to speak words of pardon and lavish His graces on you” (Diary, 1485).

“The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is – trust” (Diary, 1578).



*Surely everything comes from the Merciful Jesus,
but all the graces we are granted come to us through Mary.
She was the one who put in our mouths the words:
“Jesus, I trust in You” and postponed the moment of eternal
and horrendous punishment.*

(Fr. Michael Sopoćko)

CHAPTER V

THE ICON OF THE HOLY MOTHER OF MERCY



The chapel in the “Gate of Dawn” in Vilnius with the Icon of the Holy Mother of Mercy

The icon of the “Gate of Dawn” Madonna was painted probably in Vilnius in the period 1620-1630. Despite numerous investigations, the painter has remained unknown. The painting, sized 200x165cm, is oil on oak boards covered with a thin chalky primer.

The double crowns and the gilded silver dress were placed on the painting at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. A distinctive feature of the picture is a votive offering in the form of a crescent moon, placed at the bottom of the painting in 1849. The silver lining of the chapel walls, where the painting of the Holy Mother of Mercy is displayed, is made up of selected votive offerings. The votive offerings covering the walls include those sent by the Holy Father, St. John Paul II. The number of exposed silver votive offerings donated by the faithful in gratitude for the graces obtained is estimated at approximately 8.000. In the chapel, the residents of Vilnius have prayed for generations for special graces for themselves and their families through the intercession of the Mother of God.

Numerous replicas of the icon of the Holy Mother of Mercy are displayed in churches in other countries, including the Basilica of Saint Peter and Paul where a replica of the image is displayed in a chapel.

In 1773, Pope Clement XVI granted indulgences to the Fraternity of the Guardianship of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Vilnius.

By the Pope's decree of 1927, the painting of the Madonna in the "Gate of Dawn" chapel was given the name of the Icon of the Holy Mother of Mercy and was crowned with papal crowns. The coronation ceremony became an important national and religious event – the image was crowned by the papal nuncio (the crowns went missing during World War II).

Thanks to Divine Providence, a few years later (in 1935), the painting of the image of the Merciful Jesus was venerated for the first time in public next to the Icon of the Holy Mother of Mercy.

During World War II, by the decision of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Vilnius Romuald Jałbrzykowski, the Icon of the Holy Mother of Mercy was left with the faithful worshippers in the "Gate of Dawn". After the war, when Vilnius was annexed into the Soviet Union and most of the churches in Lithuania were closed, the "Gate of Dawn" chapel remained open.

THE HOLY MOTHER OF MERCY AS A MOTIVE TO TRUST

"For us, Mary is a Mother of Mercy, and her testimony of mercy began at Calvary. Since then, grace has streamed on people through the intercession of Mary: she strengthened the Disciples in their work; she obtained inspiration for the Evangelists. And particularly, after she was assumed to Heaven, she looks after us and obtains the Divine Mercy for us even more. Maybe we recognize the numerous sins in our lives; maybe somebody sank into sin – Mary obtained for him the grace of conversion. How many times this was repeated, will remain a secret known only to God, but if many times – then we became the subject of special endeavours of our Mother of Mercy. She was the one who put in our mouths the words: *Jesus, I trust in You* and postponed the moment of eternal and horrendous punishment. Surely everything comes from the Merciful Jesus, but all the graces we are granted come to us through Mary. (...). This has been proven by numerous, wonderful places where, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, people are cured from illnesses, comforted in sorrows and receive hope in despair" (Fr. Michael Sopoćko).



The Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy in Vilnius. Contemporary view of the Dawn Gate Chapel and Gallery during the celebration of the Feast of Divine Mercy.

It was not a coincidence that the picture of the Most Merciful Saviour, enjoying worship and granting graces all over the world, was originally displayed **at the foot of the Holy Mother of Mercy (April 28, 1935) on Low Sunday – one might say for her to approve and recommend it”** (Fr. Michael Sopoćko).

PRAYER FOR THE PROTECTION AND INTERCESSION OF THE HOLY MOTHER OF MERCY

*O our Lady, Holy Mary!
To Your mercy, special protection and Your compassion,
today and everyday and in the hour of my death,
I entrust my soul and my body to You.
My every hope and happiness, oppressions and concerns,
my life and the end of my life I confide to You,
so that through your merits all my deeds
are done according to Your will and that of Your Son. Amen.*



*Fragment of the letter
from Sister Faustina to Father Sopoćko, April 1936*

***“I see clearly that not only will
there be a female and male religious congregation,
but there will be a big community of lay people
which would welcome everybody
to practice the mercy of God with one another”.***

ASSOCIATION OF THE APOSTLES OF DIVINE MERCY „FAUSTINUM”
3 Siostry Faustyny Street, 30-608 CRACOW, POLAND
[www. faustinum.pl](http://www.faustinum.pl)

The Faustinum Association exists throughout the world as a lay institute,
to which all those who wish to serve the message of God's mercy,
including consecrated persons.

FROM THE AUTHOR

Publication of the book "Jesus, I Trust in You. Love and Mercy" is a culmination of my over multi-year of service in spreading the Divine Mercy worship. That service included distributing Divine Mercy images, in various forms and languages, with the information about the graces promised through Saint Faustina in the Divine Mercy Message. Thanks to God's Providence, for many years I was able to continue this apostolic ministry, which put on my path good-natured priests, nuns and lay devotees of God's Mercy who help in various forms.

*Thank you for the spiritual care of the Sisters from the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, and especially for the kindness and help of **Sr. Maria Kalinowska** (in 1997-2013, the Superior General of the Congregation), **Sr. Teresa Szalkowska** for taking care of the theological correctness of the text.*

*I would like to extend special thanks to **Fr. Paweł Mazanka, CSsR, PhD**, professor at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (Poland), whom I met at the retreat at the Redemptorist Fathers in Rowy (Poland), and who was leading that retreat. His valuable suggestions systemized and significantly enriched the book. To me, they constitute another visible sign of Divine providence.*

*My long-term involvement in the activities of evangelization is documented in the published testimony "**The Gift of Mercy**".*

Urszula Grzegorzcyk

The publication "The Gift of Mercy" is available as an e-book:
www.faustina-message.com

UMOWA

Zawarta w dniu 1 kwietnia 2003 r. pomiędzy Fundacją Apostołów Jezusa Miłosiernego w Łodzi reprezentowaną przez Panią Urszulę Grzegorzczyk a Parafią p.w. Ducha Świętego w Wilnie, reprezentowaną przez ks. proboszcza Mirosława Grabowskiego.

Niniejsza umowa zostaje zawarta w związku z konserwacją Obrazu Jezusa Miłosiernego, namalowanego przez prof. Eugeniusza Kazimirowskiego w 1934 roku, który obecnie znajduje się w kościele p.w. Ducha Świętego w Wilnie.

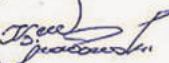
Fundacja Apostołów Jezusa Miłosiernego w Łodzi zobowiązuje się do pokrycia wszystkich kosztów, związanych z konserwacją obrazu Jezusa Miłosiernego i rozliczenia się z p. mgr Edytą Hańkowską-Czerwińską, konserwator tego obrazu.

Umowa niniejsza została sporządzona w dwóch jednobrzmiących egzemplarzach po jednym dla każdej ze stron.



Fundacja Apostołów
Jezusa Miłosiernego w Łodzi
p. Urszula Grzegorzczyk

FUNDACJA
APOSTOŁÓW JEZUSA MIŁOSIERNEGO
90-058 Łódź, ul. Sienkiewicza 60
Regon 472552195



Parafia p.w. Ducha Świętego
Wilnie

ks. proboszcz Mirosław Grabowski

Wilno, 1 kwietnia 2003 r.

Contract

Concluded on April 1, 2003 between the Foundation of the Apostles of the Merciful Jesus in Łódź represented by Mrs. Urszula Grzegorzczyk and the Holy Spirit Parish in Vilnius represented by the parish priest Mirosław Grabowski.

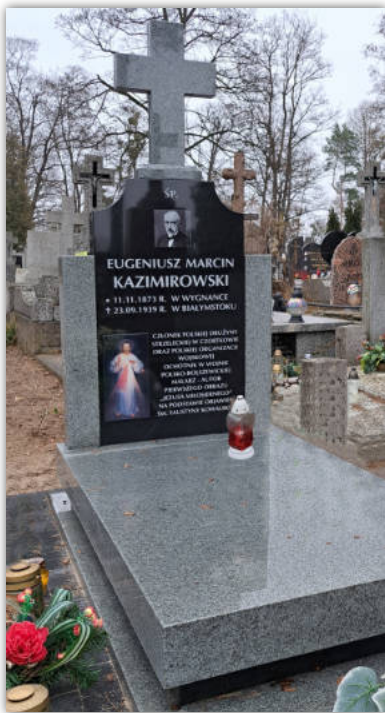
This contract has been concluded with regard to the conservation of the Painting of the Merciful Jesus, painted by prof. Eugeniusz Kazimirowski in 1934, and which at present is located at the church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius.

The Foundation of the Apostles of the Merciful Jesus in Łódź undertakes to cover all costs with regard to the conservation of the painting of the Merciful Jesus and to clear all the costs with Mrs. Edyta Hańkowska-Czerwińska, MA, the restorer of the painting.

The contract was made in two counterparts, one for each party.

[stamps and signatures]
Vilnius, April 1, 2003

On the initiative of the Foundation of the Apostles of Merciful Jesus operating at the Church of the Society of Jesus in Łódź, Poland (the organizer and sponsor of the 2003 conservation works on the Divine Mercy painting), in March 2004 a professional photographic session of the first painting of the Merciful Jesus was held at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius. Photocopies of 20 cm slides taken with a specialised camera were made available for printing and general evangelisation in 2009.



Biographical note:

Eugeniusz Marcin Kazimirowski, son of August and Maria née Kossakowska, was born in 1873 in Wygnanka, Podole region. He studied in Krakow at the WSSP, and also studied in Munich and in Paris. In 1900 he participated in the classes of the Academy of Saint. Łukasz in Rome. After returning to Poland, he lived in Cracow but often travelled to Ukraine and to Vilnius region painting numerous landscapes and religious images. He participated in independence movements and willingly served in the Polish Army. After 1914 he lived in Vilnius where he was a long-term teacher at the Teacher's College in Vilnius and scene painter at the Grand Theatre and Polish Theatre in Vilnius. His works left in Cracow and Lviv were lost during World War II. Only a few paintings from the Vilnius period have survived.

In 1934 in Vilnius, on the request of Fr. Michael Sopoćko, he painted the first image of the Merciful Jesus according to the instructions of Saint Sr. Faustina.

From 1936 he lived in Bialystok, where in 1939 he died of pneumonia. Kazimirowski's tomb is in a Catholic parish cemetery.

Fragment of the parish deaths records

N-rus. Cognomina	Annus, mensis, dies, locus et causa obitus; nomen, cognomen et aetas defuncti; sacramentorum susceptio	Nomina parentum defuncti; si uxoratus, coniugis et liberorum superstitium	Tempus, locus tumulationis et sacerdos sepeliens
Bejtmann	276 Roku tysiąc dziewięćset trzydziestego dziewiątego dnia dwudziestego trzeciego września w Białymstoku, ul. Dworkianina 19, par. Farniej, zmarła z choroby płuc Kazimirowa Bejtmann z Białostockich, lat 77, opalczona 3. S. Sakramentami.	Córka Antoniego i Józefy Wdowa. Zmarła z wiatry i w wieku 58. c. d. z mężem i 57. c. Bronisława i 44. c. Jadwigi i 42. c. Wacława i 31. c.	Zwłoki jego dnia 24/IX n.b. zostały pogrzebane przez x. Stanisława Urbana na ementarszu parafialnym.
Kazimirowski	277 Roku tysiąc dziewięćset trzydziestego dziewiątego dnia dwudziestego trzeciego września w Białymstoku, ul. Kilińskiego 15, par. Farniej, zmarł z zapalenia płuc Eugeniusz Kazimirowski, lat 66, nie opalczony 3. S. Sakramentami.	Syn Augusta i Elżbiety - małżonki z domu nie uślalono. Kawaler.	Zwłoki jego dnia 25/IX n.b. zostały pogrzebane przez x. Stanisława Urbana na ementarszu parafialnym.

No.			
277 Kazimirowski	On the twenty third of September nineteen thirty nine, in Bialystok, 15 Kilińskiego St., died of pneumonia Eugeniusz Kazimirowski, age 66, without receiving sacraments.	Son of August and Maria – mother's maiden name unknown Never married	His body was buried on September 25 of this year by father Stanislaw Urban at the parish cemetery.

PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION THE CONSERVATION

The restoration of the first image of Merciful Jesus was carried out in 2003 by Edyta Hankowska-Czerwińska of Włocławek, an art restorer, graduate of the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (Poland).



Removal of the overpaint

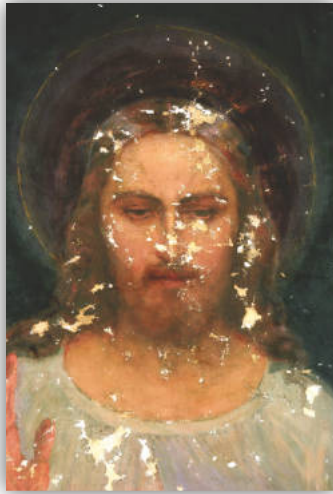


Fold the bottom edge of the image.

Visible nail holes, which remained after a few changes to the stretcher and the folding of about 4 cm of the bottom edge, in 1987, when the painting was adapted to the side altar in the church of St. Spirit. These defects, although invisible to the outside, are, among others, unique feature of this original painting. During conservation in 2003, the painting was re-attached to the stretcher with clips. (photos from the archive of conservation documentation from 2003, © Edyta Hankowska-Czerwińska).



Before the restoration (2003)



After the removal of the overpaint



After the restoration



Before the restoration



After the removal of the overpaint

NOTES

- ¹ **The Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy**, in which Saint Faustina lived and died, was founded by Mother Teresa countess Potocka. After the novitiate at the House of Mercy in Laval (France), at the invitation of the archbishop Zygmunt Szczęśny Feliński she took over the Warsaw “Shelter” for girls who needed moral renewal. On November 1, 1862, archbishop Feliński consecrated the chapel and house for girls and that day is adopted to be the date of the foundation of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Poland. The Congregation runs the Youth Educational Centre for girls, shelters for single mothers, therapeutic centres and kindergartens. It spreads the Divine Mercy message in Poland and abroad, shapes the apostles of the Divine Mercy in the international organization “Faustinum”, trying in all their work to spread the gospel values of the Divine and human mercy.
- ² **Głogowiec**. A small village in Świnice Wrackie parish region where Sr. Faustina was born (as Helena Kowalska), serves as a centre of her worship. At present, the church in Świnice Wrackie is a Sanctuary of birth and baptism of Saint Faustina.
- ³ **Saint Stanisław Kostka Cathedral in Łódź**.
The Archdiocese of Łódź – one of the 14 archdioceses of the Latin rite in the Polish Catholic Church, established as a diocese in 1920, an archdiocese reporting directly to the Holy See in 1992, the capital of the new metropolis created together with the diocese of Łowicz in 2004.
- ⁴ **Bishop Stanisław Rospond** (1877-1958). Polish Roman-Catholic priest, doctor of theology, rector of the seminary in Cracow, 1920-1927, Cracow auxiliary bishop, 1927-1958. In his presence Saint Faustina made her initial religious vows.
- ⁵ **World War I** – between Great Britain, France, Russia, Serbia, Japan, Italy (since 1915), United States (since 1917), Austria-Hungary and Germany supported by the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. It lasted from July 28, 1914 to November 11, 1918. It was the greatest armed conflict in Europe since the Napoleonic Wars at the turn of the 19th century. The war ended with the defeat of the Central Powers and the establishment in Central and Southern Europe of numerous nation states. The economic ruin and the fear of hunger were the main reason for the February revolution in Russia in 1917 which led to the overthrowing of the tsarist system and October Revolution (seizing of power by the Bolsheviks), and then to the establishing the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1922.
- ⁶ **Archbishop Jerzy Bolesław Matulewicz** (1871-1927). Lithuanian catholic priest, bishop of Vilnius, renovator and general of the Marians, a Blessed of the Catholic Church.
- ⁷ **Józef Klemens Piłsudski** (1867-1935) – politician, Polish independence activist, statesman: Chief of State (1918-1922), Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army (1918), the first Marshal of Poland (1920), Prime Minister of Poland (1926-1928, 1930). He was a great influence on the internal and foreign policy of the Second Polish Republic.

- ⁸ **The Soviet Army (the Red Army).** On June 15, 1940, about 70 000 soldiers of the Red Army and NKVD troops entered Lithuania to take power over the country. The People's Seimas, elected under pressure, losing its independence adopted the legislation on annexing the Lithuania by the Soviet Union. The arrests and deportation of all ethnic groups (Lithuanians, Poles, Belarusians) started to occur. In 1940-1953 over 280 000 Lithuanian citizens either died or were arrested and deported deep into Russia. Some of them died while fighting – the groups of the Lithuanian resistance movement were active until the mid 50s. The occupation ended in 1990.
- ⁹ **Cardinal August Hlond** (1881-1948). Polish Roman-Catholic priest, Salesian, diocesan bishop of Katowice in 1926, metropolitan archbishop of Gniezno and Poznań. 1926-1946, metropolitan archbishop of Gniezno and Warsaw in 1946-1948, Primate of Poland in 1926-1948.
- ¹⁰ **World War II (the Soviet-German war)** – the name for all the war operations during World War II in the Northern, Eastern, Central and Southern Europe between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union and their respective allies. This war began with the German aggression against Poland on 1 September 1939. Over the 6 years of the war (1939-1945), over 60 mln people died, not including millions of people of various nations who died from starvation and diseases. The German occupiers conducted numerous mass executions and deportations, especially of Polish, Jewish and Soviet people and concentration camp prisoners of various nationalities. On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany invaded Soviet Union – officially its ally. In December 1941, the German Army suffered a crushing defeat at Stalingrad. After that, the Soviet Army was in counter-offensive along the Eastern Front. The fighting was characterized by unusual cruelty, mass deportations and enormous mortality due to the fights, starvation, bleeding, diseases and massacres. It was the deadliest conflict in human history.
- ¹¹ **Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski** (1876-1955). Polish Roman-Catholic priest, Sejny auxiliary bishop, 1918-1925, general secretary of the Polish Episcopal Conference, 1925-1926, diocesan bishop of Łomża in 1926, metropolitan archbishop of Vilnius, 1926-1955. He was laid to rest at the Archcathedral Basilica of the Assumption of Mary in Białystok.
- ¹² **Siberia** – an extensive geographical area extending from the Urals to the Pacific Ocean and including 8 time zones. The harsh climate made Siberia a natural prison. From the beginning of the Russian presence over there, it constituted a place of punishment and exile. As a part of the repressions for political activity or being war prisoners, a hundreds of thousands Poles and prisoners of various nationalities were sent by the Soviet authorities to Siberia – for hard labour in fortresses, mines and factories, or forcibly conscripted into the Russian army.

- ¹³ **The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth** (1569-1795). A dual state. At the time of Sr. Faustina's stay in Vilnius (1933-1936), the Polish and Lithuanian states had a federal system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The commonwealth was established in 1569 by the Union of Lublin between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland. It was a real union where both states shared a common ruler, parliament and economic policy and separate army, law, national treasury and offices. As a result of the loss of independence in 1795 there was a partition of the area of the Polish state, which was annexed for 123 years into Austria, Prussia and Russia as their provinces. In 1918 Poland regained independence. After the outbreak of the Polish-Soviet war (1919-1921) and repulse of the Red Army in 1920 (the so called Miracle of the Vistula River), Lithuania was again annexed to Poland.
- ¹⁴ **Father Józef Andrasz, SJ** (1891-1963). Confessor and spiritual director of Saint Faustina Kowalska at the beginning of her religious life and close to the end of it, until her death in 1938. Associate of the publishing house Apostleship of Prayer in 1920-1928 and 1930-1952. He was also the editor-in-chief of the "Messenger of the Heart of Jesus" magazine. He wrote numerous religious brochures and historical articles. In 1943, in Cracow-Łagiewniki, he initiated the Divine Mercy devotion.
- ¹⁵ **Adolf Kazimierz Hyła** (1897-1965). Artist, painter. He studied the history of art and philosophy at the Jagiellonian University. He learned drafting and painting at Jacek Malczewski studio. In his work he concentrated mainly on religious themes. His most famous painting is the "Divine Mercy" painting which he painted in 1944. He repeated that theme 260 times painting the images for various churches. He painted also a few dozens of portraits and landscapes.
- ¹⁶ **The Lithuanian and the Pole** were the pupils of Fr. Michael Sopoćko during the studies at Vilnius University and they were informed about the new forms of Divine Mercy worship and the value of the painting. According to the account of the Lithuanian (passed to Jadwiga Adaśko who took care of her before her death), Fr. Sopoćko was forced to leave Vilnius and in concern for the painting, he authorized his fellow priest to keep custody of it. That priest, whose last name was not remembered by Jadwiga Adaśko, controlled the situation and gave 300 rubles to buy the painting from the liquidated church.
- ¹⁷ **Reverend Prelate Józef Grasewicz** (1904-2000). He received holy orders from bishop Romuald Jabłrzykowski. He was the editor of the "Catholic Weekly" magazine in Vilnius and the chaplain of Christian youth associations. For some time, he lived at Fr. Sopoćko's home. He recalled it: "The stay at his place was providential for me; it affected my entire life". On March 3, 1942, in Vilnius, he was imprisoned together with 29 priests and 81 seminarians. As most Poles, he was deported to Siberia. He was at the camp in Prowieniszki and then in Komi in USSR. Only after the death of Stalin he returned to the church in Nowa Ruda where he was also controlled by the secret services, called to interrogations and humiliated. The history of the first image of the Merciful Jesus was well known to Rev. Józef Grasewicz. He knew about its miraculous origin and thus, right after the return from exile, he started making efforts to find it.

- ¹⁸ **Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz.** Born on January 3, 1945 in Odelsk. He studied at the Faculty of Power Engineering and Machine Construction at the Leningrad University of Technology (1964-1970). He graduated from the Seminary in Kaunas and in 1981 received holy orders. He worked in Lithuania and Belarus. In 1988 he obtained the degree of doctor of theology. In 1989, in Rome, he anointed bishop. From 1991 he worked in Russia, first as the archbishop and Apostolic Administrator for the Latin rite Catholics, and then as Metropolitan Bishop. Since 2007 he has been the Metropolitan Bishop in Minsk and Mogilev.
- ¹⁹ **Father Władysław Siwek, SJ (1905-1973).** In 1934 he received holy orders. In 1936-1939 he managed the “Eucharistic Crusade”, “Sodality of Our Lady”, and the Association of Physicians at the Warsaw University. In 1939-1945 he worked in Cracow, Tuligłowy and Piotrków, and from 1945 to 1949 in Poznań where in 1949-1951 he studied sociology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Toruń graduating with the PhD degree in social sciences. In 1950-1969 he was the diocesan academic chaplain of Szczecin. In 1969, under the pressure of the communist authorities, he was moved to Bydgoszcz. From 1971 until his death he was the supervisor of the Jesuit Convent at Świętojańska street in Warsaw.
- ²⁰ **Father Władysław Wantuchowski, SJ (1895-1961).** Philosopher and theologian. He conducted his pastoral work in Poland and abroad. He preached missions and retreats in Chicago (1936-1938). Shortly before World War II, he was appointed as a rector at the Vilnius College. In 1942-1944 he was imprisoned by the Germans. He worked in various Jesuit institutions. Exceptional preacher. Protector of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus in Poland after they had to leave Vilnius after the WWII.
- ²¹ **Bishop Edmund Nowicki (1900-1971).** Polish Roman-Catholic priest, Apostolic Administrator in Gorzów Wielkopolski, 1945-1951, coadjutor of Gdańsk Diocese in 1951-1964, diocesan bishop in Gdańsk, 1964-1971. On October 3, 1939, he was arrested by the Nazis and imprisoned in Poznań from where he was interned to the Bernardine monastery in Kazimierz Biskupi. After a few months in separation he was imprisoned in Poznań and on May 4, 1940 he became a prisoner at Dachau camp. Later in August that year he was moved to Gusen and in December 1940 again he returned to Dachau. In February 1941 he was released from the camp under the condition that he would abandon the priesthood, which he did not do.
- ²² **Reverent Zygmunt Szelażek,** Apostolic Administrator. On August 2, 1955, he issued the decree approving the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus at diocesan rights and issued the consent for wearing habits. At that time Sisters Faustina Osińska and Benigna Naborowska took their perpetual religious vows.
- ²³ **Archbishop Marian Przykucki (1924-2009).** Polish Roman-Catholic priest, auxiliary bishop in Poznań in 1974-1981, diocesan bishop in Chełmno in 1992-1999, metropolitan archbishop of Szczecin and Kamieniec in 1992-1999. By his decree, on August 1, 1993, the Holy Cross church in Myślubórz – mentioned in a prophetic vision of Sr. Faustina – was elevated to the rank of the Divine Mercy Sanctuary.

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4. Publication of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus - "Contemplation of Jesus. A window through which God is seen".
5. Publication of Rev. Grasewicz - "Memoirs".
6. Reflection by Pope Benedict XVI before the "Angelus" prayer on Sunday, September 28, 2008 from Casetel Gandolfo.
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The sarcophagus with remains of Saint Sister Faustina Kowalska

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