

Divine Mercy Sunday **April 3, 2016**

In the year 2000, the Second Sunday of Easter occurred on April 30th. On that day, the Holy Father, St. John Paul II, canonized Sr. Mary Faustina Kowalska. St. Faustina was only 33 years old when she died in 1938. She spent most of her life in convents in Poland. Yet her life has made an impact upon the world.

Her journey began when she was a little girl at Eucharistic Adoration. She felt drawn to the Lord and was determined to give her life to Him. She asked her parents if she could enter a convent when she was 16, but they told her that she had to work to support the family.

In 1924 at age 19 she attended a dance in a Park with her sister, Natalia. While at the dance she had a vision of Jesus suffering. She rushed off to the first Church she could find where she was told by the Lord to go to a convent in Warsaw. She left the next morning.

When she arrived in Warsaw she again went to the first Church she could find and spoke to a priest there who recommended a local lady where she could stay until she found a convent that would take her. Convent after convent turned her down until she was finally accepted at the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy.

In 1931 she had a vision of Jesus the author of Divine Mercy, wearing a white gown and having white and red rays flowing from His side. She was told to paint this picture and under it put the words, "Jesus, I trust in you." As a result, she was to become the apostle of the Mercy of God, letting the world know about the compassion of the Lord.

St. John Paul II said in his canonization homily that St. Faustina was told that the two rays coming from Jesus' heart represented blood and water. Blood referred to the

sacrifice of the cross, and the gift of the Eucharist. Water referred to the gifts of baptism and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told her, "My daughter, tell people that I am love and mercy personified." That was indeed a much-needed message for the people who had witnessed the sufferings of millions during the last century.

This is also a necessary message for us who still witness the horrific actions of people against others throughout the world as well as we who know the horrible results of our own personal sins.

St. John Paul II said: "This consoling message is addressed above all to those who, afflicted by a particularly harsh trial or crushed by the weight of the sins they committed, have lost all confidence in life and are tempted to give in to despair.

"To them the gentle face of Christ is offered; those rays from his heart touch them and shine upon them, warm them, show them the way and fill them with hope. How many souls have been consoled by the prayer "Jesus, I trust in you", which Providence initiated through Sr. Faustina!

"This simple act of abandonment to Jesus dispels the thickest clouds and lets a ray of light penetrate every life."

Through Mercy there is life. Our guilt destroys us. We cannot bear it. We cannot tolerate the thought that others might learn about our sins, learn who we truly are. We cannot tolerate our own hypocrisy. Sometimes we try to suppress guilt by acting as though it is not there.

But it is. Or sometimes we try to convince ourselves that we shouldn't feel so bad. We rationalize our sins, think that our actions have not been sinful, or maybe, just not all that bad. We fall for the lies that this or that is not a sin because there are a lot of people

doing the same thing.

But this doesn't work. The guilt remains, destroying our happiness and, ultimately, destroying us. The only way that we can return to being our true selves is through the love and mercy of Jesus Christ.

Remember the resurrection appearances we heard about in our Gospel reading today. The disciples are hiding out in the Upper Room. They are more than afraid; they are completely bewildered by the stories that Mary Magdalene told them. What should they make of the empty tomb that Peter and John had found? And then Jesus appeared.

His first words were, "Peace be with you." He came to bring peace, not to make them feel bad about running away. Again, a week later, Jesus appeared, and again His first words were, "Peace be with you."

The Mercy of Jesus Christ is the only reliable source of our peace. We go before Him in the face of the horrible attacks of evil that's in the world and say to Him, "I trust in you." We go before Him recognizing our own sinfulness and say to Him, "I trust in you."

St. John Paul II concluded the canonization homily by saying:
"And you, Faustina, a gift of God to our time, 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 have a living experience of it and to bear witness to it among our brothers and sisters.

"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. Today, fixing our gaze with you on the face of the risen Christ, let us make our own your prayer of trusting abandonment and say with firm hope: Christ Jesus, I trust in you!"