

# CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

## DIVINE MERCY

### THE DEVOTION

Devotion to Divine Mercy is a total commitment to the mercy of God. It involves 1) trust in the mercy of God, 2) a personal acceptance of his mercy, and 3) acting in such a way as to reflect his merciful heart.

The Scriptures abound in images and teaching on mercy. How many times did the chosen people forget their covenant promises and forsake God? Always, without fail, God renewed the covenant, forgave his children and renewed their hearts. In the Gospels we see mercy in the Good Shepherd, the father of the prodigal son, and the love of Jesus for the woman caught in adultery. Jesus also gave us the beatitude, *Blessed are the merciful, for mercy shall be theirs.*

Mercy has been a favorite theme of Pope John Paul II. In 1980 he wrote an encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, (*Rich in Mercy*) emphasizing the image of the merciful Father.

### THE HISTORY OF THE DEVOTION

The devotion as popularized today came to us through private revelations to Saint Faustina Kowalska, a young sister belonging to the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Poland. On February 22, 1931 Our Lord appeared to her for the first time. She wrote a diary of her visions and revelations. In 1941 the devotion came to the US through Fr. Joseph Jarzebowski, a member of the Congregation of Marians of the Immaculate Conception. His community took up the devotion and established the

international center for the Divine Mercy devotion, the Marian Helpers Center. The National Shrine of the Divine Mercy is at the same site in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

In the late 1950's the devotion was banned by Rome for twenty years. Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, archbishop of Krakow (Pope John Paul II) was instrumental in having the ban lifted and beginning the canonization process for Sr. Faustina. As pope he had the honor of declaring her Saint Faustina in the year 2000.

### THE IMAGE

In her visions Jesus asked Sr. Faustina to have a picture painted as she saw him. Jesus stands in a doorway clothed in a white robe. One hand is raised in blessing while the other gestures toward his heart. From his heart radiate a ray of red light and one of white light. Across the bottom of the picture are the words, "Jesus, I trust in you."

Later Our Lord explained, "The pale ray stands for the water which makes souls righteous; the red ray stands for the blood which is the life of souls. These two rays issued forth from the depths of my most tender mercy at that



time when my agonizing heart was opened by a lance on the cross.”

### **THE CHAPLET OF DIVINE MERCY**

A chaplet is a devotion similar to the rosary, using beads to count the prayers. Connected to this particular chaplet is the promise of mercy to people at the hour of death. These prayers are said on common rosary beads.

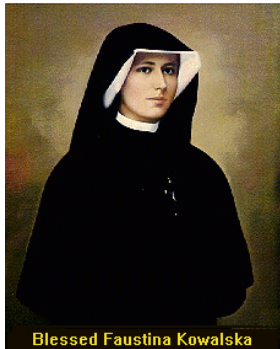
*First pray an Our Father, Hail Mary and the Creed. Then on the large beads pray:*

“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 smaller beads you pray:*  
“For the sake of his sorrowful Passion have mercy on us and on the whole world.”

*At the end the following prayer is said three times:*

“Holy God, holy Mighty One, holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.”



Blessed Faustina Kowalska

### **THE FEAST**

In the revelations to Sr. Faustina Jesus asked for a Feast of the Divine Mercy to be celebrated on the Sunday after Easter. He promised special graces of mercy to all those who go to confession and communion on that day. (If necessary, confession may be three weeks before or after.)

On the occasion of St. Faustina’s canonization, Pope John Paul II extended this feast to the universal Church.

### **THE NOVENA OF PREPARATION**

A novena to the Divine Mercy begins on Good Friday and ends on the feast of Divine Mercy, the first Sunday after Easter. There is a special intention for the prayers of each of the nine days:

1. All mankind, especially sinners.
2. Priests and religious.
3. Those who are devout and faithful .
4. Those who do not believe in God and do not know God yet.
5. Those who have separated themselves from the Church.
6. The meek, the humble, little children.
7. Those who venerate the mercy of God.
8. Souls in purgatory.
9. Those who are lukewarm. (They cause Jesus the most pain.)

### **THE WORKS OF MERCY**

In applying this devotion to practical life the Church recommends the corporal and spiritual works of mercy:

#### **Corporal Works of Mercy**

1. Feed the hungry.
2. Give drink to the thirsty.
3. Clothe the naked.
4. Shelter the homeless.
5. Visit the sick.
6. Visit the imprisoned.
7. Bury the dead.

#### **The Spiritual Works of Mercy**

1. Counsel the doubtful.
2. Instruct the ignorant.
3. Admonish the sinner.
4. Comfort the sorrowful.
5. Forgive injuries.
6. Bear wrongs patiently.
7. Pray for the living and the dead.

For more information see  
[www.divinemercysunday.com](http://www.divinemercysunday.com)