

THE FACE OF the Father's Mercy

By the time you read this, we will be celebrating an extraordinary moment in an already extraordinary year. The first Sunday after Easter, April 4, the Church celebrates Divine Mercy Sunday during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. The origin of this feast, devoted to God's Mercy shining forth in Jesus Christ, is quite recent. It all began with a young girl.

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Born in 1905, Helena Kowalska was a Polish farm girl who, at a young age, felt Jesus Christ calling her to belong totally to Him by living religious life. At the age of 19, she entered the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Warsaw, Poland, and lived a simple life of love for Jesus, her spouse. While cheerfully fulfilling the humble duties of cook, gardener, and doorkeeper, this young sister, now named Sister Maria Faustina, received many visions of Christ, in which He spoke to her of His longing to pour out His love into souls and of His sorrow at how many rejected Him. The Lord asked her to spread this message of His Divine Mercy to the world, especially through the Chaplet of Divine

Mercy (a series of prayers prayed on the beads of the rosary), and through a painted image, which shows the risen Jesus standing, clothed in radiant white, with red-and-white rays of light pouring out of His wounded side to bathe us in His mercy. Under His feet are the words, "Jesus, I trust in you." St. Faustina spent her short life (she died in 1938 at the age of 33) in sharing the message of Jesus' mercy with the world, and in the Jubilee Year 2000, St. John Paul II dedicated the first Sunday after Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday. Now, 16 years later, we enter into Divine Mercy Sunday during another Jubilee Year, dedicated to this mercy.

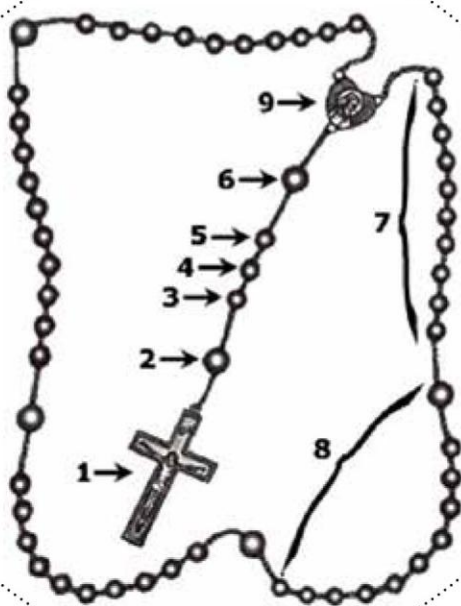


Jesus made clear to St. Faustina that He longed to pour out His overflowing mercy upon all, especially through the devotions of the Divine Mercy image, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and Divine Mercy Sunday, saying to her: "My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy...My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity" ("Divine Mercy in My Soul," #699). This is the merciful Jesus who heals and forgives sin, who leaves the 99 sheep to search for the one, whose heart was moved with compassion for the crowd for they were "like sheep without a shepherd," and who ate with sinners. This is Jesus, who, with His last breath, spoke of His thirst for our salvation and who, at the height of His mercy, poured out all: blood and water flowing from His pierced side to wash us clean and give us new life. This is Jesus who, as Pope Francis reminds us, is the "face of the Father's mercy," (Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, #1); Jesus, who is God made flesh to make visible the "Father of Mercies," who from all eternity has been longing for His beloved children to draw near and accept His love. In gazing upon the face of Jesus and letting Him look upon us, we are transformed as His merciful love penetrates our hearts.

But how do we receive this mercy that the Lord is desiring to pour upon us? Jesus tells St. Faustina that it takes only trust. He says: "I am Love and Mercy itself. When a soul approaches Me with trust, I fill it with such an abundance of graces that it cannot contain them within itself, but radiates them to other souls" ("Divine Mercy in My Soul," #1074). In the midst of our weakness and sins, all the Lord asks is trust. This is love without measure. He is consumed with the desire to pour out this love in each soul, thirsting for each heart to accept His love and love Him in return. Touched by His mercy, healed and united to Him, we are given a share in His heart and are consumed with His love, with His desire to bring this mercy to each soul: to comfort the sorrowing, give drink to the thirsty, bear wrongs patiently. This is the mercy that is "the beating heart of the Gospel" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, #12). This is the mercy that is the "foundation of the Church" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, #10), and that has been sung by the saints throughout the ages, echoing the voice of their Lord. In this Year of Mercy, as we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, this is a beautiful time to gaze upon Jesus, the "face of the Father's mercy," (*Misericordiae Vultus*, #1) and to share His mercy with the world.

How to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy

The Chaplet of Mercy is recited using ordinary rosary beads of five decades. The chaplet is preceded by two opening prayers from the Diary of Saint Faustina and followed by a closing prayer.



1. MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

2. OPTIONAL OPENING PRAYERS

You expired, Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls, and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fount of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy, envelop the whole world and empty Yourself out upon us.

O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fountain of Mercy for us, I trust in You! (Repeat three times)

3. OUR FATHER

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.

4. HAIL MARY

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst 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.

5. THE APOSTLE'S CREED

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 rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there He will 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.

6. THE ETERNAL FATHER

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.

7. ON THE TEN SMALL BEADS OF EACH DECADE

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

8. REPEAT FOR THE REMAINING DECADES

Saying the "Eternal Father" (6) on the "Our Father" bead and then 10 "For the sake of His sorrowful Passion" (7) on the following "Hail Mary" beads.

9. CONCLUDE WITH HOLY GOD

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world. (Repeat three times)

10. OPTIONAL CLOSING PRAYER

Eternal God, in whom mercy is endless and the treasury of compassion — inexhaustible, look kindly upon us and increase Your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might not despair nor become despondent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to Your holy will, which is Love and Mercy itself.