

TODAY, SUNDAY, IS THE FEAST OF DIVINE MERCY – BELOW IS A 2008 INTERVIEW WITH FR GEORGE KOSICKI (DIED 2014), ONE OF THE GREAT PROPONENTS OF THE DEVOTION REVEALED TO ST FAUSTINA (1905-38).

He was an author, speaker, and teacher. And if that's not enough, he was also a hermit and a biochemist. Father George Kosicki, CSB was also a bestselling author and longtime collaborator in spreading the message of Divine Mercy. The following is a Q&A with Fr. George in 2008 - a trip made, in part, to promote a new book he had just written:

Father George, your book, *Mercy Minutes: Daily Gems of St. Faustina to Transform Your Prayer Life* (Marian Press), focuses on St. Faustina's words. Explain your new book.

This book focuses on the words of Jesus to St. Faustina, which form the very heart of her *Diary*. It's clear that He intends the messages He gives to St. Faustina as messages for us all - each one of us - and that He's instructing us and drawing us toward having an intimacy with Him. So the book is divided into each calendar day with a message from Jesus followed by a daily prayer I wrote. My hope is that these prayers will help people absorb the words of Jesus and encourage people to respond to Christ's call.

In the Introduction, you make the point that the revelations of the Merciful Saviour to St. Faustina must always be considered in light of the Gospels and the mercy of God in Scripture as a whole. That said, why is private revelation so vital to the Church?

Twice in Ephesians it says, "We have apostles, prophets, pastors." So who are the prophets of our time? The ones who receive His voice. Saint Faustina received His voice. Margaret Mary, others, too. They were able to hear the Word of God. This is God speaking to our time. And all it does is illustrate the Scriptures. All St. Faustina was recording in her *Diary* is the application of the Word of God. It doesn't *replace* it. It fulfills it.

Why Divine Mercy? Why have you dedicated most of your life to spreading this message?

Jesus told St. Faustina to tell the whole world to turn to His mercy *now* - *now* is the time for mercy. That's as blunt as you're going to get. He tells her, "Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to My Mercy" (*Diary*, 300). Divine Mercy is the message for the Third Millennium. Look at the collapse of the world, financially. Look at the collapse of the Church - the numbers of priests and sisters have just bottomed out. Look at how our society has turned from God. It's all an attack from the Evil One. And the answer to the ultimate evil is Divine Mercy. In the Chaplet of The Divine Mercy are the words "*Have mercy on us and on the whole world.*" The Divine Mercy message is a call for a global consciousness. It's a prayer for the whole world. And if you don't realize the world is in bad shape, you are really in bad shape. Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in Mercy), explains it all well. He writes of how uneasiness - or lack of peace - in the hearts of people is the real problem in the world. The world, more than anything, needs mercy - mercy from one another and mercy from God. God redeeming us? That's mercy. Sanctifying us? That's mercy. Why did God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son to the world? Total mercy. Total gift. Total love. This message goes to the heart of the Gospel. I'm convinced of the reality that this is the message for our times, as John Paul said. The message of Divine Mercy is to prepare the world for the coming of the Lord.

What did you think when you first read Saint Faustina's *Diary*?

It struck me immediately how the Lord was telling us to "get with it!" To me, it was like an instruction manual for salvation. There's no trick to it. You don't need a degree in theology.

You must have read St. Faustina's *Diary* countless times.

Yes, I've lost track. There's always something new that I find in there - something I missed in previous readings.

You're still discovering new spiritual treasures within its pages?

Oh, am I ever! I've recently been reading it and focusing on St. Faustina's battle for souls. The *Diary* really goes into depth on spiritual warfare. That is really what it's all about right now. This is what we are experiencing in the world today. I'm very aware of the reality that God didn't just create the world and us. He also created angels. Some decided to obey, and others didn't. And the battle is on. The *Diary* really serves as a manual for us in this spiritual warfare.

And when St. Faustina writes, "Oh, if only a suffering soul knew how it is loved by God, it would die of joy and excess of happiness! Someday, we will know the value of suffering, but then we will no longer be able to suffer. The present moment is ours" (963). Really, more and more I'm discovering the value, the purpose, and the absolute necessity of suffering, because that's the way Jesus brought us salvation and mercy. So don't waste your suffering. Give it to Jesus so He can transform it by His love into salvation of souls.

How did you first learn about Divine Mercy?

Through my mother, in the early 1940s. Probably '42, '43. The same time Fr. Seraphim [Fr. Seraphim Michalenko, MIC, one of the world's most renowned experts on Divine Mercy] learned about it. The same time the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, learned about it. The Marians, who had already begun to spread the message in 1941, moved one of their houses to Detroit, where I was born and my mother lived. My mother did the Divine Mercy devotions. She prayed the Chaplet. I didn't fully understand it all at the time. But in 1972 or '73, I met Fr. Seraphim in Detroit. I was leading a prayer meeting that spawned from the charismatic renewal movement. We asked him to join our team of priests. He was with us for two years. When the ban on Divine Mercy was lifted in 1978, Fr. Seraphim gave a grand lecture on Divine Mercy. It was really inspiring. From then on, I moved more and more toward making the spread of Divine Mercy my life's work. The big leap came for me when I was living outside of Steubenville, Ohio, at a hermitage. There was a Polish hermit there, Fr. Charles Kubsz. He's the first priest I met who could really tell you what you needed and where you were at in your life without even asking you. He said: "Get into Divine Mercy full time." He kept insisting to me: "God is calling you to be an apostle of Divine Mercy."

You then came to Eden Hill, in Stockbridge, Mass., where the Marians administer the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy. You were the right man at the right time.

Well, I like to get things done yesterday. And we had plenty to do. This was in the 1980s. It was an exciting time. I helped to oversee the production of the film, "Divine Mercy - No Escape" and the publication of the English edition of St. Faustina's *Diary* and *The Life of Faustina Kowalska*, by Sr. Sophia Michalenko, CMGT. I was just one of the workhorses helping to organize everything.

Now you're a hermit living deep in the Michigan woods. How does living as a hermit help you stay focused on God?

The solitude enables silence, which enables the Word of the Lord to be heard in my heart. I live each day offering, entrusting, trusting, rejoicing, smiling at the Lord, singing of His mercies, giving thanks. And in my hermitage, I've posted 3x5 cards all over the place with a very simple, but powerful, reminder to myself: "Trust in Jesus even more."

You have a doctorate in biochemistry. Do you have any equations to share?

Suffering + Love = Joy. Everyone is suffering. Everyone wants joy. But what we are missing is love. Love is the continual spiritual communion with God.