

# THE FEAST OF DIVINE MERCY

**Divine Mercy Sunday** (also known as the **Feast of the Divine Mercy**) is celebrated on the Second Sunday of Easter, which concludes the Octave of Easter. The feast day was originally based on the Catholic devotion to the Divine Mercy that St Faustina Kowalska (1905-38) reported as part of her encounter with Jesus, and is associated with special promises from Jesus and indulgences issued by the Catholic Church.

## Devotion to the Divine Mercy

Faustina Kowalska, a Polish nun, reported visions and visitations from Jesus and conversations with him. He asked her to paint the vision of his merciful divinity being poured from his Sacred Heart and specifically asked for a feast of Divine Mercy to be established on the first Sunday after Easter Sunday, so that mankind would take refuge in him:

*I want the image solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter, and I want it to be venerated publicly so that every soul may know about it — Jesus' words, Diary 341*

*Let all mankind recognize My unfathomable mercy. It is a sign for the end times; after it will come the day of justice. — Diary 848*

*Souls perish in spite of My bitter Passion. I am giving them the last hope of salvation; that is, the Feast of My Mercy. If they will not adore My mercy, they will perish for all eternity... tell souls about this great mercy of Mine, because the awful day, the day of My justice, is near — Diary 965*

*Sunday, April 28, 1935. Low Sunday; that is, the Feast of The Divine Mercy, the conclusion of the Jubilee of Redemption. When we went to take part in the celebrations, my heart leapt with joy that the two solemnities were so closely united — Faustina's words, Diary 420*

*This Feast emerged from the very depths of My mercy, and it is confirmed in the vast depths of my tender mercies. Every soul believing and trusting in My mercy will obtain it. — Jesus' words, Diary 420*

*Yes, the first Sunday after Easter is the Feast of Mercy, but there must also be deeds of mercy, which are to arise out of love for Me. You are to show mercy to our neighbours always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to absolve yourself from it — Diary 742*

**In several entries in her diary, Kowalska reported promises of grace and mercy associated to the Feast of Divine Mercy on Mercy Sunday:**

*Ask of my faithful servant [a priest] that, on this day, he tell the whole world of My great mercy; that whoever approaches the Fountain of Life on this day will be granted complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to My mercy. — Diary 300*

*I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day, the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain the complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day all the divine floodgates through which grace flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet — Diary 699*

*I want to grant a complete pardon to the souls that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion on the Feast of My Mercy. - — Diary 1109*

On March 23, 1937, Kowalska wrote in her diary (Notebook III, item 1044) that she had a vision that the feast of Divine Mercy would be celebrated in her local chapel, and would be attended by large crowds, and that the same celebration would be held in Rome attended by the pope. She wrote: "*The crowd was so enormous that the eye could not take it all in. Everyone was participating in the celebrations.*"

Divine Mercy Sunday is also the day after the culmination of the novena of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Kowalska wrote Jesus instructed her that the Feast of Mercy (the Sunday after Easter) be preceded by a Divine Mercy Novena which would begin on Good Friday.

The first Mass during which the Divine Mercy image was displayed was on April 28, 1935 (the Feast of Divine Mercy), the second Sunday of Easter, and was attended by Kowalska. (Diary of St. Faustina, item 420). April 28, 1935 was also the celebration of the end of the *Jubilee of the Redemption* by Pope Pius XI. Fr Michael Sopocko (Kowalska's confessor) celebrated the Mass that Sunday and obtained permission to place the image within the Gate of Dawn church in Vilnius during the Mass.

## Vatican approval

The first Divine Mercy painting by Kazimierowski (1934) at the Divine Mercy Sanctuary (Vilnius). The devotion was actively promoted by Pope John Paul II. On April 30, 2000, the Canonization of Faustina Kowalska took place and the second Sunday of Easter was officially designated as the Sunday of the Divine Mercy (*Dominica II Paschae seu de divina misericordia*) in the General Roman Calendar. On April 22, 2001, which was one year after establishing Divine Mercy Sunday, Pope John Paul II re-emphasized its message in the resurrection context of Easter:

*Jesus said to St. Faustina one day: "Humanity will never find peace until it turns with trust to Divine Mercy". Divine Mercy! This is the Easter gift that the Church receives from the risen Christ and offers to humanity.*

The devotion to Divine Mercy Sunday grew rapidly after its designation by Pope John Paul II and is now widely celebrated by Catholics. The *Divine Mercy image* is often carried in processions on Divine Mercy Sunday, and is placed in a location in the church so that it can be venerated by those who attended the Mass.

The liturgical celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday reflects the devotional elements of Divine Mercy – the first prayer of that Mass beginning with: ‘*Heavenly Father and God of Mercy, We no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for He is alive and has become the Lord of Life.*’ This opening prayer refers to divine mercy as the key element in the plan of God for salvation and emphasizes the belief that it was through mercy that God gave his only son for the redemption of mankind, after the fall of Adam.

*Divine Mercy Sunday, May 1, 2011, at the Vatican included the beatification of Pope John Paul II, for which over a million pilgrims went to Rome.*

John Paul II, who died in April 2005 on the vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday, was himself beatified on Divine Mercy Sunday, May 1, 2011, by his successor, Pope Benedict XVI, and was canonized together with Pope John XXIII on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 27, 2014, by Pope Francis.

## A New Serenity Prayer

by James Martin SJ and Terre Roche

*God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the people I cannot change,  
which is pretty much everyone,  
since I'm clearly not you, God.  
At least not the last time I checked.  
And while you're at it, God,  
please give me the courage  
to change what I need to change about myself,  
which is frankly a lot, since once again  
I'm not you, which means I'm not perfect.*

*It's better for me to focus on changing myself  
than to worry on changing other people  
who, as you'll no doubt remember me saying,  
I can't change anyway.*

*Finally, give me the wisdom to just shut up  
whenever I think that I'm clearly smarter  
than everyone else in the room,  
that no one knows what they are talking about  
except me,  
or that I alone have all the answers.*

*Basically, God,  
grant me the wisdom  
to remember that I'm  
not you.*

*Amen*