

THE IMAGE OF DIVINE MERCY

I SAW THE LORD JESUS AS HE IS REPRESENTED IN THE IMAGE

How can an image of Jesus help our families and our country? Well, if you were God and wanted to find a way to reach out to people, especially to those furthest away, and to those who were not coming to you, what would you do? How would you remind people you exist? What means would you use as a “fount of mercy?”

Well, the Lord chose His image as His means. He told Saint Faustina:

By means of this image I shall be granting many graces to souls; so, let every soul have access to it. (*Diary*¹, 570)

This is an incredible promise and inspiring plea, especially for these times in which many souls throughout the world fail to come to Jesus either in prayer or in worship or in the Sacraments. By means of His image Jesus can be taken to them, and in a very real way. His promise is to touch hearts and fill them with His grace, something that has been witnessed from the time the Image was first publicly displayed and continues to this day.

Today there are many versions of the Image of The Divine Mercy. All may be a vehicle of grace for those who revere them with trust. The image presented on this site is known as the Vilnius Image. It was painted in 1934 in Vilnius (then Poland, now Lithuania) by artist Eugene Kazimirowski who had been hired by St. Faustina’s spiritual director Blessed Fr. Michael Sopocko. This is the only image painted under the explicit direction of St. Faustina.

At first the young nun was disappointed because she felt the artist had not been able to capture the heavenly glory of the Lord. “Who will paint You as beautiful as You are?” she complained to the Lord. Jesus consoled her saying:

Not in the beauty of the color, nor of the brush lies the greatness of this image, but in My grace. (313)

At times The Divine Mercy showed her exactly what He meant.

THE IMAGE COMES ALIVE

In April 1935, Blessed Fr. Michael arranged for the original painting completed in May of the previous year to be adorned and prominently displayed at the Ostra Brama or Eastern Gate for the ceremonies commemorating the Jubilee Year of the Redemption of the World. These celebrations took place the weekend after Easter and naturally coincided with the Lord’s request for the celebration of the Feast of Mercy. Many including St. Faustina attended the services where the painting was displayed high over the crowd for all to see. Saint Faustina sees even more:

April 26. On Friday, when I was at Ostra Brama to attend the ceremony during which the image was displayed, I heard a sermon given by my confessor [Father Sopocko]. This sermon about Divine Mercy was the first of the things that Jesus had asked for so very long ago. When he began to speak about the great mercy of the Lord, *the image came alive* and the rays pierced the hearts of the people gathered there, but not all to the same degree. Some received more, some less. Great joy filled my soul to see the grace of God. (417)

April 28, [The Feast of The Divine Mercy] Toward the end of the service, when the priest took the Blessed Sacrament to bless the people, *I saw the Lord Jesus as He is represented in the image*. The Lord gave His blessing, and the rays extended over the whole world. . . Jesus, *as He is represented in the image*, entered this resplendence through the second door to the Unity within. It is a triple Unity, which is incomprehensible - which is infinity. (420)

Another *Diary* entry citing the power and greatness of the Image is number 441. Note the order in which the rays extend between the Image and the Sacred Host:

[June 20, 1935] Once, the image was being exhibited over the altar during the Corpus Christi procession. When the priest exposed the Blessed Sacrament, and the choir began to sing, *the rays from the image pierced the Sacred Host and spread out all over the world*.

The rays extending from the Image to the Host, rather than from the Host to the Image, suggests the True Presence of Jesus in the Image. The Icon is the portal or doorway through which the heavenly graces flow. In this example we see the graces as they come from Jesus and are magnified by the Sacred Host to cover the entire world. We should now know the importance of having this image available to all and for it to be publicly venerated.

JESUS APPEARS JUST AS SEEN IN THE IMAGE

In addition to the image coming alive, St. Faustina records several instances in which the Lord appeared *just as He is represented* in the painted image. In the following passage St. Faustina seizes the opportunity to obtain blessings for her community and country:

After Holy Communion, I saw the Lord Jesus as He is represented in the image. Jesus was walking away, and I called to Him, “How can You pass me by and not say anything to me, Lord? Without You, I shall do nothing; You must stay with me and bless me, and this community and my country as well.” Jesus made the sign of the cross and said, **Do not fear anything; I am always with you.** (613)

THE VILNIUS IMAGE AND THE SHROUD OF TURIN

Although most of us will not enjoy the same visions of the Image of Mercy as St. Faustina, many today have been amazed to witness the correlation between the Vilnius Image and the Shroud of Turin. The Shroud of Turin is believed to be the burial cloth of Jesus. In the mid 1990’s it was discovered that the two images are proportionately exact. According to leading Shroud authority Dr. John Jackson², a five percent difference in size has been measured in the hair, the shoulders, the chest, and even the fingers. Since the Divine Mercy Image was painted solely under the direction of St. Faustina, without any reference or image of the Shroud involved, the correlation is nothing less than amazing.

World-renowned Divine Mercy authority, Father Seraphim Michalenko, MIC, explains that it is theologically sound for the two images to be so related. Each image is of the same Person, Jesus the Christ and these two images together form a dramatic portrayal of the very core of our faith, the belief in the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Mercy of Jesus.

The depiction of this phenomenon has been a highlight of many Divine Mercy presentations by Mother of Mercy Messengers³. Many are moved to tears as the Lord is seen passing from His passion and death as revealed in the Shroud back to life in His glorified body as Jesus, The Divine Mercy. The power and meaning of the Resurrection comes to light and it becomes clear that Jesus is

as alive today as He was 2000 years ago. His gaze is one of love and tenderness and His desire is to touch each and every one of us.

PROMISES FOR VENERATION OF THE IMAGE OF THE DIVINE MERCY

Jesus promises great graces to us when we show respect for His image just as if He were bodily standing before us:

I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish. I also promise victory over its enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death. I myself will defend it as My own glory. (48)

These rays shield souls from the wrath of My Father. Happy is the one who will dwell in their shelter, for the just hand of God shall not lay hold of him. (299)

By means of this image I shall grant many graces to souls; so let every soul have access to it. (570)

Blessed Fr. Michael listened carefully to the words of Jesus and had holy cards and pamphlets published which included an image of The Divine Mercy. In Diary entries 916 and 917 St. Faustina describes her great joy when the image on a pamphlet helps to save a soul:

This day is so special for me; even though I encountered so many sufferings, my soul is overflowing with great joy. In a private room next to mine, there was a Jewish woman who was seriously ill. I went to see her three days ago and was deeply pained at the thought that she would soon die without having her soul cleansed by the grace of Baptism. I had an understanding with her nurse, a [religious] Sister, that when her last moment would be approaching, she would baptize her. There was this difficulty however, that there were always some Jewish people with her. However, I felt inspired to pray before the image which Jesus had instructed me to have painted. I have a leaflet with the Image of the Divine Mercy on the cover. And I said to the Lord, "Jesus, You Yourself told me that You would grant many graces through this image. I ask You, then, for the grace of Holy Baptism for this Jewish lady. It makes no difference who will baptize her, as long as she is baptized."

After these words, I felt strangely at peace, and I was quite sure that, despite the difficulties, the waters of Holy Baptism would be poured upon her soul. That night, when she was very low, I got out of bed three times to see her, watching for the right moment to give her this grace. The next morning, she seemed to feel a little better. In the afternoon her last moment began to approach. The Sister who was her nurse said that Baptism would be difficult because they were with her. The moment came when the sick woman began to lose consciousness, and as a result, in order to save her, they began to run about; some [went] to fetch the doctor, while others went off in other directions to find help.

And so the patient was left alone, and Sister baptized her, and before they had all rushed back, her soul was beautiful, adorned with God's grace. Her final agony began immediately, but it did not last long. It was as if she fell asleep. All of a sudden, I saw her soul ascending to heaven in wondrous beauty. Oh, how beautiful is a soul with sanctifying grace! Joy flooded my heart that before this image I had received so great a grace for this soul. (916)

Oh, how great is God's mercy; let every soul praise it. O my Jesus, that soul for all eternity will be singing You a hymn of mercy. I shall not forget the impression this day has made on my soul. This is the second great grace which I have received here for souls before this image. Oh, how good the Lord is, and how full of compassion; Jesus, how heartily I thank You for these graces. (917)

Since St. Faustina's time, no doubt millions have received grace from the Image of Divine Mercy, and they continue to do so.

LET EVERY SOUL HAVE ACCESS TO IT.

We all have family members, friends, co-workers and neighbors that we may have a difficult time reaching out to and sharing the Faith with. Sometimes they shut us out and don't want to hear about God or about going to church or confession any more from us. Other times we may not know how to help or what to say. We may not even know the person or family, so what can you do? Share the Image of The Divine Mercy with them.

Enthroning and venerating the image of Jesus in our homes, parishes, schools, hospitals and workplaces is one sure way to bring Christ into our very midst, and it is clearly the Lord's desire:

Tell the confessor that the Image is to be on view in the church and not within the enclosure in that convent. By means of this Image I shall be granting many graces to souls; so, let every soul have access to it. (570)

Let us respond well to the Lord's directive. Post billboards and banners with the Lord's image in full public view to bless all who pass by. Distribute blessed holy cards and images to family and friends and offer them a source of conversion, reconciliation and healing of all kinds. Send or take the Lord into prisons and onto battlefields. Place His image in cards and letters for any and all occasions such as birthdays, Christmas, and get well wishes. Have some handy to pass along when the need arises. Framed images make thoughtful gifts for weddings, house-warmings, and even college dorms! Our online store⁴ has several image options to choose from to help you. Be creative and be sincere. Working to distribute, venerate and spread the knowledge of this image's power and glory is an easy and simple way to save souls and bless our country with God's grace. The impact of the image is one of the last things St. Faustina wrote about. On June 5, 1938, exactly four months before her death she recorded:

Today I saw the glory of God which flows from the image. Many souls are receiving graces, although they do not speak of it openly. Even though it has met up with all sorts of vicissitudes, God is receiving glory because of it; and the efforts of Satan and of evil men are shattered and come to naught. In spite of Satan's anger, The Divine Mercy will triumph over the whole world and will be worshiped by all souls. (1789)

¹ All references to Diary: Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul © 1987 Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M, Stockbridge, MA 01263. All rights reserved. www.marian.org

² Visit: www.ShroudofTurin.com

³ Visit: www.TheDivineMercy.org/MOMM

⁴ Visit: <http://divinemercyforamerica.org/category/products/images>

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