

THE MESSAGE OF THE DIVINE MERCY
AN ACTUAL GRACE FOR THE CONVERSION AND SALVATION OF ALL SOULS
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I. THE GRACE OF GOD, JUSTIFICATION AND SANTIFICATION

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: “**Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life**” (CCC1996)

Why do we need God’s grace to become adopted sons of God and share his divine nature and eternal life?

We must go back to the beginning when God, who is Love, decided to share Himself, to share His life, His divinity. Therefore, He had to create outside of Himself. St. Faustina writes in her Diary that mercy is when God’s love acts. Therefore, we exist by God’s mercy.

We also know that God could only share Himself with only two of the creatures created to his image and likeness - the angels and we, man. Furthermore, we were the ones He chose when He made the decision that His only Son, the second Person in the Holy Trinity, would become a man and not an angel.

This decision led the angel Lucifer to rebel against God. Lucifer, as described by Holy Scriptures, was a beautiful, majestic angel who was very close to the throne of God. This angel, filled with anger, jealousy and disobedience, claiming to be like God, rejected his Creator and Master. This engendered a spiritual battle in Heavens and the fallen angel, Lucifer, took on new names that better represent who he became – Satan, Devil, Evil and Malignant Enemy – and he and all other fallen angels that followed him, were thrown into hell for all eternity. Later on, when God created man, Satan tempted our forefathers, Adam and Eve, who deceived by Satan’s lies, committed the same mortal sin of pride as Satan’s and by their action, they lost their original state of grace. As a consequence not only death came into the world, but human beings could not have access to God’s grace and thereby to authentic life, unless God Himself came to save us from this state of misery that the Church has referred to as the state of original sin. Man was placed outside the Garden of Eden - a prefiguration of the Heavens – and “**a cherubim was stationed to guard the doors so than man could not enter and have access to the tree of life**” (Gen 3:24). And in fact, man did not until the doors were opened by Jesus the day of his Ascension into Heaven.

In spite of man's actions, God, in His infinite mercy, did not judge man as He had judged Satan and the evil spirits. On the contrary, He began to pave the way for man's return to Him in Heaven.

We must always remember that we are created to the image and likeness of God. He created us free and His desire has always been for us to know Him, love Him and serve Him in this life and to be with Him in our eternal life. He does not force us, rather he provides us with the help of His grace, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call.

“Grace is a participation in the life of God” (CCC1997)

St. Paul wrote that everything is grace. God is always knocking at the door of our heart inviting us to live in His grace, meaning: to live according to his will, teachings and commandments. But our faculties were affected by the personal sin of our forefathers. The original state of the souls of Adam and Eve was completely affected by their mortal sin. Their intellect and will no longer yearned for God and consequently their lower faculties, their senses and their emotions, were no longer controlled by their intellect and will, so, the integrity, order and harmony, with which they were created no longer existed, concupiscence set in and they became subjected to sin.

Furthermore, and perhaps even worse, they lost the presence of God, the Holy Trinity, in their soul. They lost the sanctifying or habitual grace ***“that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by His love..., this permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God's call”*** (CCC 2000). They also lost the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, it is very difficult for us to live in His grace, but not impossible, thanks to the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ who redeemed and saved us on the Cross.

St. Paul says that Jesus is the new Adam, the new man. Through the old man, death came into the world; the new man, ***“came to brings us life and life abundant”*** (Jn 10:10)

It was the Son of God who had to do what no human being could do. We were all affected by sin. How could any of us conquer sin and death? Only He, who was equal to us in everything except in sin; there was no sin in Him.

Before He ascended into Heaven, Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Baptism and instructed all his disciples to ***“go to all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”*** (Mt 28:19)

It is only through the Sacrament of Baptism that we can die to sin and resurrect to a new life in Jesus Christ. We are submerged in the purifying water of Baptism which justifies us, washes,

cleanses, forgives our sins and we receive the sanctifying grace of God – the Holy Trinity again dwells in us. We become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life. We receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit and are born to a new life **“of water and the Spirit”** (Jn 3:5)

From then on the baptized is no longer enslaved by sin and the power of Satan. Jesus Christ, by His Cross and Resurrection, conquers sin, death and Satan.

Man can now resist the temptations and oppressions of the devil. Man can reject the devil in the name of Jesus, by the power of His Cross and the power of the Blood of the Lamb. The doors are opened for all those who choose to live in the grace of God by staying away from sin. He can now return to God to live his eternal life in the House of the Father in Heaven.

“This vocation of eternal life is supernatural. It depends entirely on God’s gratuitous initiative” (CCC 1998)

Let’s once again remember that it was God’s initiative to bring us into existence. **“God’s free initiative demands man’s free response, for God has created man in his image by conferring on him, along with freedom, the power to know him and love him. The soul only enters freely into the communion of love. God immediately touches and directly moves the heart of man. He has placed in man a longing for truth and goodness that only he can satisfy”** (CCC 2002)

The souls of our forefathers were created in a state of **“original justice”** (CCC 376) This is the state described above when there was integrity, order and harmony in the relationships of man with God, with his neighbor, with himself and with creation. Sin did not exist nor did any desire to commit sin. Only through God’s grace, His gratuitous initiative, can we enter the Kingdom of God in Heaven.

God’s grace justifies us. We need to be justified by grace because **“justification detaches man from sin which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin. Justification follows upon God’s merciful initiative of offering forgiveness. It reconciles man with God. It frees from the enslavement to sin, and it heals”** (CCC 1990)

When I think of the word justice, or to be just, or reach justification, I believe it means to live in the righteousness of God, to live in a state of grace, to practice the fruits of the Spirit listed in the Letter of Paul to the Galatians: **“the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self control”** (Gal 5:22)

“Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior of man. Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin

accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high” (CCC 1989) In this quote from the Catechism we can see the relationship between justification, sanctification and grace.

Once again: Grace justifies us; ***sanctifying grace justifies us***. In Baptism, our sins are forgiven; we are cleansed from sin and enter into a state of grace. We must then maintain this state of grace throughout our lives. It is not easy. We are sinners. We fall again and again and we can no longer be baptized, so we go to Confession, to the Fountain of Mercy, to the last Table of Salvation, to receive the remission of sins. Once again we are justified. God lives once again in our souls. This process of sanctification goes on and on throughout our lives. Jesus, the Divine Mercy of God, the merciful God is always there for us. Until we die, when our soul then goes before Jesus, the Just Judge; it is then that we receive our personal judgment.

In addition to the sanctifying or habitual grace, ***“God intervenes in our lives through actual graces, weather at the beginning of our conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification”*** (CCC 2000)

“The preparation of man for the reception of grace is already a work of grace” (CCC 2001) In other words, as St. Faustina wrote in her Diary: we must receive God’s grace to accept His graces. She calls this grace: ***the actual grace of cooperation*** (Diary 1150). God gives us His graces but we must cooperate. We are free to embrace God’s graces or reject them. When Luther during the Protestant Reformation declared that: “man can be saved by Sacred Scripture alone, by Grace alone and by Faith alone”, the Church answered: “by Sacred Scripture and Apostolic Tradition, by God’s grace and man’s free will (to accept it or reject it), and by Faith and its works”. God wants us to freely accept Him in our lives.

There are also ***sacramental graces*** which are gifts proper to the different sacraments and ***special graces***, also called ***charisms*** which are intended for the common good of the Church. ***“Since God’s grace belongs to the supernatural order, grace escapes our experience and cannot be known except by faith”*** (CCC 2005)

The purpose of this reflection is centered in one of these actual graces – the grace of the Message of the Divine Mercy as given to St. Faustina by Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

II. THE MESSAGE OF THE DIVINE MERCY - AN ACTUAL GRACE FOR THE CONVERSION AND SALVATION OF ALL SOULS

Franciszek Cardinal Macharski, former Archbishop of Krakow, wrote that the Devotion of the Divine Mercy is more than one devotion. His actual words were:

“This is not just one more devotion, just another booklet or picture. It is incomparable with anyone or anything. The Devotion to the Divine Mercy is determining the destiny of the world, the destiny of humanity. No diplomacy, politics, or any human faculty or skill can save that which seems to be heading for the destruction man has prepared – not just for one individual, but for humanity. Only Jesus, the Crucified One and the Risen One can do this; and, this I maintain – through Mary”.

When persons visit for the first time the Sanctuary of the Divine Mercy in Krakow, Poland and stay at the guest house of the convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, there are many possibilities that their hearts would be touched by the Grace of God and, very subtly, would respond and cooperate to His call. It is very possible that they will even understand that this Grace is in reality the Grace of the Divine Mercy for the salvation of their souls and all souls. Sometimes we realize that we have never experienced any particular devotion; that our love for our Mother in Heaven perhaps could be the closest thing to having devotion in our lives; that we have never had devotion for any of our Saints in the Church – admiration yes, a desire to imitate them yes, but not what we understand to be devotion. And when we heard about the Devotion to the Divine Mercy, we did not understand it and thought: “I am not a devotee of God, I adore, love, praise, give thanks to God, but I don’t have devotion to Him”

Yet, during those few days in the Sanctuary, little by little, pilgrims come to understand the urgency of the message, a message to all humanity that answers those questions that sooner or later man asks of himself: Who created us? Why were we created? What is the purpose of our life? What our destiny is to be after our inevitable death? This message also fills us with the love for God and neighbors, with trust in God and hope in the fulfillment of his promises.

Beginning with the painting of the image of the Divine Mercy, I must admit that I had never seen anything like it. The image was painted at the request of the Lord to St. Faustina on February 22, 1931 in the convent of Plock, Poland:

“Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You!” (St. Faustina’s Diary 47)

When I first saw the painting, two things attracted my attention: the rays emanating from the pierced Heart of Jesus and the signature: Jesus, I trust in You! I have never seen any other image in my life showing these rays and a signature underneath. The understanding of the message shown through these two visual statements will be sufficient enough to demonstrate how much we need to embrace this actual grace of God. I will try to share with you what I have understood.

When I first asked about the meaning of the rays, I found the answer in the Diary:

“The two rays denote Blood and Water. 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 very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross” (Diary 299)

What is Jesus telling us? Well, in very few words, He is reminding us that through his Passion, Death and Resurrection, He has redeemed and saved us.

He wants us to look at His pierced Heart. He was already dead when it was pierced by the lance. He had already shed his blood in agony starting at Gethsemane, through his flagellation, crown of thorns, three times falling to the ground under the weight of the Cross, nails piercing his hands and feet, and finally, the piercing of his Heart. By this time there was little blood left in his Body, and when there was not another drop of blood left, He shed water, the water of the sacrament of Baptism, the sacrament He instituted so that through the reception of this sacrament we receive the sanctifying grace that justifies us, and, once more, are able to return to the Father in Heaven.

By His blood we were set free from the enslavement of sin and eternal death. He shed his Blood so that we might have life abundantly. With the help of God’s graces, we can resist the temptations of the devil, keep ourselves in a state of grace and grow in holiness so that, when the time comes, we can present ourselves before our Lord and Savior to be justly judged, and God willing, we enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus was equal to us in everything except sin; there was no sin in Him. He became sin so that He could offer Himself to the Father and die for us so that we may have life and have it more abundantly. He was not guilty of anything; we were the ones guilty, the ones that should have been crucified, but in His greatest act of mercy:

“God so loved the world that He gave his only Son so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him” (Jn 3:16-17)

These verses of Sacred Scripture may very well comprise and explain the message of the Divine Mercy of God that Jesus brings to us through St. Faustina.

On many occasions, Jesus reminds us of ***“The Hour of Mercy”*** (Diary 1320), the hour that Jesus offered Himself to the Father in Heaven:

“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Lc 23:46). This is the hour of His mercy. His love for all of us was greater than the punishment we, us, mankind deserved for our mortal sins.

“At three o’clock, implore My mercy, especially for sinners; and, if only for a brief moment, immerse yourself in My Passion, particularly in my abandonment at the moment of agony. This is the hour of great mercy for the whole world. I will allow you to enter into my mortal sorrow. In this hour, I will refuse nothing to the soul that makes a request of Me in virtue of My Passion” (Diary 1320)

“I remind you, My daughter, that as often as you hear the clock strike the third hour, immerse yourself completely in My mercy, adoring and glorifying it” (Diary 1572)

The Sacrifice on the Cross has been the greatest act of God’s mercy for humanity. Before Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross, we were not able to return to the Father in Heaven; but Jesus resurrected from the dead and conquered sin, death and the devil.

By the mercy of God, we were not judged and condemned to eternal death in hell as the fallen angels were. Man’s personal sin was a sin as was Satan’s and the fallen angels’. Satan tempted and led our forefathers to commit the same sin of pride, idolatry and disobedience that he himself committed when he rebelled against God refusing to serve Him. We should have been thrown into hell as well, but God in His infinite mercy, from the first moment after our fall, began to pave the way for our return to the Father in Heaven. God’s first promise for fallen mankind of a Redeemer (Jesus) is found in the following passage when God tells the serpent (the devil):

“I will put enmity between you and the woman (Mary, our Mother in Heaven) and between your offspring and hers (Jesus); He will strike at your head while you strike at his heel” (Gn 3:15)

Beginning with the book of Genesis through the book of Revelation and beyond, to our present day (Read John Paul II’s *“Dives in Misericordia”*), we can see how God’s mercy is always present in our lives providing us with all the help we need to reach our final goal – eternal life in God’s kingdom of Heaven. God has given us the sacraments of Baptism and Reconciliation to help us regain our state of grace, to begin and continue to live a new life that will lead us to the salvation of our soul and those who we help in turn.

One day, Jesus said, teaching His disciples about the sacrament of the Eucharist:

“I am the living bread that came down from Heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink”

(Jn 6:51-55) Unfortunately, many of his disciples were shocked and found this message too harsh. Some walked away. They still do.

In the beautiful and continuous colloquium between Jesus and St. Faustina, as expressed in her Diary, we find the Lord many times expressing His sadness because many unrepentant sinners would condemn themselves by not trusting in His mercy.

“The flames of mercy are burning Me. I desire to pour them out upon human souls. ¡Oh what pain they cause Me when they do not want to accept them!” (Diary 1074)

“My daughter, write that the greater the misery of a soul, the greater its right to My mercy; urge all souls to trust in the unfathomable abyss of My mercy, because I want to save them all. On the Cross, the fountain of My mercy was opened wide by the lance for all souls – no one have I excluded” (Diary 1182)

This brings us to the second thing that attracted my attention upon first seeing the painting of the Image of the Divine Mercy, **the signature: “Jesus, I trust in You!”**

We understand that the two **essential points of the message** of the Devotion to the Divine Mercy are: **Trust and Mercy**, our trust in Him and His mercy and our daily disposition to the works and deeds of mercy.

For Jesus, our Lord and Savior, trust is the most important disposition we should have toward Him. If we do not trust Him how can we come to Him? Trust requires humbleness and this is very hard for many these days. Man has reached a level of self-sufficiency that makes him believe that he can do anything he pleases, when and wherever he pleases. He does not need God. As a matter of fact, God is an obstacle, an impediment to his freedom.

Man does not need God to tell him what to do and not to do. With this attitude it is not easy for man to come to the Lord. Perhaps in extreme needs, in times of crisis, when he finally realizes that he cannot physically heal himself or spiritually set himself free from bondage, he may give God a chance to act in his life.

We may think that it is too late, that man has been so bad and so evil, that God has abandoned him. On the contrary, we know for fact that God has never forgotten him; that He has been continuously knocking at the door of his heart and will continue to do it until man’s last breath of life. God will be merciful until the last moment of man’s life, but he wants man to come to Him, to his Fountain of Mercy where his sins will be washed away.

That’s why trust requires faith. We come to Him because we believe in Him. We believe He is the bread of life, that He is the food for our soul, that He can forgive our sins and gives us a new life. When man has this disposition, it means that he believes he can persevere in maintaining a life of grace, that God’s grace can help him to stay away from mortal sin and to grow in holiness toward Him.

He, who trusts in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the mercy of God the Father, comes to understand the love of God that in spite of our rejections and blasphemes, has offered his life for us so that we may have eternal life.

The greatest act of God's Mercy has been the Passion, Sacrifice and Death on the Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. He died for us on the Cross without being guilty. He died for us so that we could live. No one else could have conquered sin, death and the devil, only He the Son of God through a sorrowful and painful Passion and an excruciating Death. He who trusts in the merciful Jesus cries in remorse, sadness and love when meditating, reading or watching the Passion of the Christ.

We can understand why Jesus insists in the signature at the bottom of His feet in the painting of His image of Divine Mercy: "**Jesu Ufam Tobie!**" (Jesus, I trust in You!). Without trusting in Him, there is little we can achieve.

It is obvious to me that the Lord wants us to equip ourselves with the graces of conversion and perseverance. It is also obvious that he wants us to be saved, but not just Catholics, but the whole world. "**I have opened my Heart as a living fountain of mercy. Let all souls draw life from it. Let them approach this sea of mercy with great trust. Sinners will attain justification (conversion), and the just will be confirmed in good (perseverance).**"

(Diary 1520)

We must be instruments for the salvation of others, but we also must attend to our own salvation. God gives us the tools, the helps, the gifts, the graces, through the understanding of the message of the Divine Mercy – its applications and teachings found in the Diary and spirituality of St. Faustina.

God wants us to be aware that the time will come when our soul will come before Him and we will be judged. "**Before I come as the Just Judge, I am coming first as the King of Mercy**" "**He desires everyone to know this before He comes again as Judge. He wants souls to come to know Him first as King of Mercy**" (Diary 378)

Let's pay attention to the urgency of the message: "**My daughter: Speak to the world about My mercy; let all mankind recognize my unfathomable mercy. It is a sign for the end of times; after it will come the day of justice. While there is time, let them have recourse to the fountain of My mercy; let them profit from the Blood and Water which gushed forth for them**" (Diary 848).

Notice Jesus' insistence and urgency in asking us to come to the sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance. In another passage He calls it the Tribunal of His mercy. "**Pray for souls that they be not afraid to approach the Tribunal of My mercy**" (Diary 975) "**Tell souls where they are to look for solace; that is, in the Tribunal of Mercy, the sacrament of**

Reconciliation. There, the greatest miracles take place and are incessantly repeated
(Diary 1448) Oh, what a tribunal! Have you ever heard of a tribunal that does not condemn, that it rather forgives?

When mortal sin takes control of our soul, it is very difficult for us to cooperate with God's graces. Mortal sin, as well as all sins, is forgiven after being properly confessed to a priest who has received God's power to forgive them in the name of The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and in the name of the Church. **"Whose sins you forgive, are forgiven, and whose sins you retain, are retained"** Jn 20:23

So, it is imperative and necessary for us to come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

"It suffices to come with faith to the feet of My representative (the priest) and to reveal to him one's misery, and the miracle of Divine Mercy will be fully demonstrated. When a soul looks like a decaying corpse so that, from a human standpoint, there would be no hope of restoration and everything would already be lost, it is not so with God. The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full. Oh, how miserable are those who do not take advantage of the miracle of God's mercy! You will call out in vain, but it will be too late" (Diary 1448)

Jesus emphasizes the urgency of His message. When he appoints her His secretary and apostle of His mercy, in fact, He is telling us that His instructions are not only for her, but for all humanity.

"You will prepare the world for My second coming" (Diary 429)

"My daughter, look into the abyss of My mercy and give praise and glory to this mercy of Mine. Do it in this way: Gather all sinners from the entire world and immerse them in the abyss of My mercy" (Diary 206)

"Jesus looked at me and said: Souls perish in spite of my bitter Passion... If they will not adore My mercy, they will perish for all eternity, Secretary of My mercy, write, tell souls about this great mercy of Mine, because the awful day, the day of My justice, is near" (Diary 965)

God is so patient, loving and merciful that He is always giving us the opportunity to collaborate with His graces by humbling ourselves and coming to Him to receive forgiveness for our sins.

"I am giving mankind the last hope of salvation; that is: recourse to My mercy" (Diary 998)

"I have eternity for punishing, and so I am prolonging the time of mercy for the sake of sinners" (Diary 1160)

Reading through St. Faustina's biography one can see how she was chosen by God to be the Apostle of His message of Divine Mercy. First her vocation to a religious life followed by her acceptance in her congregation. It is very revealing to read how she knocked at the doors of so many convents and yet, none would accept her, except the very last one, the convent of The Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy.

And it is also very revealing being told by the Mother Superior of the convent, that if the Master of the house would accept her, she would also accept her. God inserted Sr. Faustina into a community totally guided by their mission of love for others in need. They really were and still are very merciful religious Sisters.

Her earlier years of religious life were years of preparation for the task awaiting her. The Lord begins to reveal His message to her and she, with the little schooling she had, but with the incredible spiritual formation she had received from her parents, the teachings received from her community and her confessors and spiritual directors, but above all, under the guidance and the charisms of the Holy Spirit and Jesus Himself, learned and grew in knowledge of Jesus' message of His unfathomable mercy for her and for the whole world.

The following passages in her Diary are samples of the Lord's feelings and desires entrusted to her to share them with souls like yours and mine to induce us to personal holiness and the salvation of all souls:

"I thirst for the salvation of souls. Help Me, My daughter, to save souls. Join your sufferings to My Passion and offer them to the Heavenly Father for sinners" (Diary 1032)

"My daughter, do whatever is within your power to spread devotion to My mercy. I will make up for what you lack. Tell aching mankind to snuggle close to my merciful Heart, and I will fill it with peace." (Diary 1074)

"Happy is the soul that during its lifetime immersed itself in the Fountain of Mercy, because justice will have no hold on it" (Diary 1075)

"How painfully distrust of My mercy wounds Me! Sins of distrust would Me most painfully" (Diary 1076)

"My mercy is greater than your sins and those of the entire world. Who can measure the extent of My goodness? For you I descended from Heaven to earth; for you I allowed myself to be nailed to the Cross; for you I let My Sacred Heart be pierced with a lance, thus opening wide the source of My mercy for you. Come, then, with trust to draw graces from this fountain. I never reject a contrite heart. Your misery has disappeared in the depths of My mercy...You will give me pleasure if you hand over to me all your troubles and grieve. I shall pour upon you the treasures of My grace" (Diary 1485)

“The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is – trust”
(Diary 1578)

The Diary is filled with many more quotes from her colloquium with Jesus. It’s good for us to read it slowly – little by little – sometimes going back to read certain passages again. Some persons have expressed that while reading the Diary, they have felt like in their first moment of conversion; like rediscovering the joy and happiness they found after having attended a Cursillo of Christianity, a Life in the Spirit Seminar, a Marriage Encounter, etc.

All the new forms of devotion to the Divine Mercy of God that Jesus revealed to St. Faustina are directed for the same purpose – the conversion and salvation of all souls. The Image, the Chaplets, the Feast, the Hour, and the Novena – are all given to her by Jesus Himself. All focus on the salvation of all souls. They all come together on the day of the Feast of the Divine Mercy, and the veneration and praying of all provide us with the most profound promise: ***“Complete remission of sins and punishment”*** (Diary 300)

“My daughter, tell the whole world about my inconceivable mercy. 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 Fountain of My Mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishments” (Diary 699)

“The Novena of the Divine Mercy that Jesus instructed me to write down and make before the Feast of Mercy. It begins on Good Friday” (Diary 1209)

“Every time you enter the chapel, immediately recite the prayer which I taught you yesterday. When I had said the prayer, in my soul I heard these words: This prayer will serve to appease my wrath. You will recite it for nine days, on the beads of the rosary, in the following manner: First of all, you will say one OUR FATHER and HAIL MARY and the I BELIEVE IN GOD. Then on the OUR FATHER beads you will say the following words: ‘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 HAIL MARY beads you will say the following words: ‘For the sake of His sorrowful Passion have mercy on us and on the whole world’ In conclusion, three times you will recite these words: ‘Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world’ (Diary 476)

“The Lord told me to say this Chaplet for nine days before the Feast of Mercy. It is to begin on Good Friday” (Diary 796). With these words, St. Faustina is telling us that when we pray the Novena during the previous nine days before the Feast of the Divine Mercy, we must end each day with the prayer of the Chaplet.

We understand that the Chaplet can be prayed indeed at any time. In the Diary we find several instances in which St. Faustina prays the Chaplet, other than at the Hour of Mercy – for a sick person, a soul in Purgatory; to intercede for Poland, her country; for a storm to change its direction; for the unrepentant sinners; for a person that is about to die, etc.

We can also experience in our lives that the practice of the new forms of Devotion to the Divine Mercy help us to immerse ourselves in the content and meaning of the message of Jesus to St. Faustina.

III. PERSONAL TESTIMONY

I have dedicated the last 35 years of my life to the works of evangelization. These works were accompanied by the charisms of the Holy Spirit – praying in tongues, prophetic words in tongues and interpretation of tongues, prophecies, physical and spiritual healing, preaching, teaching, leading in praise and worship, etc. I have always been conscious of the manifestation of these graces in my life which have helped me so much in my diaconal ministry of service to others. This I knew because it was confirmed by the different communities I served through the years and also because I can personally witness to it.

As years went by, little by little, I kind of became accustomed to all of these manifestations. As a result, the awe, amazement, admiration for the mystery of God and His works began to “disappear”. I never lost my focus on the Lord, but I was starting to be and complain like Martha did in the Gospel. ***“Lord, do you not care that my sister Mary has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me”*** *The Lord said in reply: “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need for only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her”* (Lc 10:42)

Is the Lord telling Martha to stop working? Of course not! We have to tend to our responsibilities and material deeds that God has given us, but it is obvious that the most important ones are our souls and our salvation. ***“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well”*** (Matt. 6:33). It is all too common to see that many persons begin their conversion process under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit, and even though they are much involved in programs, projects, apostolate and

ministries in the Church, end up drifting away from the Lord because they do not frequent the Sacraments and spend time with the Lord in prayer, listening to and learning from Him.

How many times have we heard that charity begins at home, and that you cannot give from what you do not have, and, if we add to this what the Lord tells us in the parable of the vine and the branches: ***“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing”*** (John 15:5), it is very clear then that we need to know and personally love Jesus, before serving Him and His people.

Nowadays, I have learned that if I am to get involved in something, I am to make sure that a day does not go by, when I perform at least one work of Mercy (Diary 742). I have learned that I must trust the Lord in everything and do only His will. I have learned to delegate in others what I was concerned in doing by myself.

My gifts of being organized and disciplined always led me to be in control of everything and looking into every detail; these days I trust that other brothers and sisters can do it and I limit myself to keeping informed, and in this way, I can fulfill my ecclesial obligations pertaining to matters of faith and moral. This has freed me and allows me to lean my head on the Lord and learn from Him who is meek and humble of heart.

I needed the attitude of Maria in my life, but I was too busy and distracted doing things that were good but ***“not the better part”*** (Lc 10:42)

Then, the Lord called me to Krakow, Poland, to meet His secretary and apostle of His mercy. I have shared this reflection with you with the hope of demonstrating that the message of the Divine Mercy is really an actual grace that we receive in our life when we most needed. It is a grace for all souls. It is a grace especially for sinners because the Lord has always shown a preference for the sinner and the poor. The sinner will receive the grace of conversion, but conversion is not a moment but a process that lasts throughout all our life. That's why it's a grace of perseverance for all of us because it awakens and helps us persevere in faith and in the state of grace that will eventually lead us to Heaven.

Is like if the Lord spoke to me as St. John did to the Church in Ephesus in the book of Revelation: ***“I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate the wicked; you have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and discovered that they are impostors; moreover, you have endurance and have suffered for My name, and you have not grown weary. Yet, I hold this against you: you have lost the love you had at first. Realize how far you have fallen. Repent, and do the works you did at first”*** (Rev 2:2-5)

In conclusion, the reception of this actual grace in my soul is helping me daily in my spiritual growth. The Message of the Divine Mercy has actualized in me once again the actual graces that I received during the first moments of conversion. Specifically, it has revived in me the gifts of the Holy Spirit; it has led me more and more into experiencing and manifesting some of the fruits of the Spirit and helped me with those fruits that I am still lacking. I am more aware today of the path to holiness that we are all called to achieve, if not on Earth, eventually in Purgatory and lived forever in Heaven.

The devotion to the Divine Mercy and its message, as received and passed on to us by St. Faustina, is essential to understanding the effects of this actual grace in our soul. Let us return to our first love!

Jesus, I trust in You!