

John Paul II

God's Gift for Our Times

**The homily of Pope John Paul II delivered during
the Holy Canonisation Mass on 30 April 2000**

1. *"Confitemini Domino quoniam bonus, quoniam in saeculum misericordia eius" – "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 118:1). These words are sung by the Church on the eighth day of the Easter season. In a way the Psalm echoes the words uttered by Christ himself. Resurrected Christ brings to the Cenacle the wonderful message of God's Mercy and entrusts the apostles with the role of being his shepherds: "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. (...) Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:21-23).*

Before uttering these words Jesus showed them his hands and his side. He showed the wounds inflicted upon him during his passion, especially the wounded Heart – the source from which pours the abundant stream of mercy, which extends over mankind. Sister Faustina Kowalska, the blessed one whom from today we are going to call a saint – saw two streams of light radiating from that Heart and encompassing the whole world. *"These two streams – as Jesus himself explained to her one day – stood for blood and water" (Diary, 299).*

2. Blood and water! The immediate association here is that with the testimony of John the Evangelist: when one of the soldiers transfixed Christ's side on Calvary, John could see *"blood and water"* pouring out of it. (See: John 19:34). Blood brings about associations with the sacrifice of the cross and with the Eucharist gift, while water, in John's symbolism, is not only a symbol of baptism but also of the gift of the Holy Ghost (See: John 3:5; 4 :14; 7:37-39).

Through the heart of crucified Christ, God's Mercy reaches people: *"Tell [them] my daughter that I am the love and the mercy itself"*, demanded Jesus from Sister Faustina (Diary, 1074). That mercy of Christ is poured onto the entire mankind through the descent of the Holy Ghost, who in the Holy Trinity is the Person-Love. And is not mercy the *"other name"* for love (see: *Dives in misericordia*, 7), comprising its deepest and most emotional aspects: its readiness to satisfy all the needs, and in particular its unlimited capability of forgiveness?

Today, while presenting the life and the testimony of Sister Faustina Kowalska to the whole Church as God's gift for our times, I truly experience a great joy. By the Providence's decree the life of that humble daughter of the Polish land was strictly connected with the history of the 20th century, which has just come to its end. Christ entrusted her with His message of mercy in the years between the First World War and the Second World War. Someone who can remember and who was a witness and participant of the events of those years and of the terrible suffering which they brought to millions of people knows well how necessary that message of mercy was.

Jesus said to Sister Faustina: "*Mankind will not find calming till it turns with trust to my mercy*" (*Diary*, 300). Thanks to a Polish nun this message has become forever connected with the 20th century, which closes the second millennium and constitutes a bridge towards the third one. This is not a new message, but it can be considered as a gift of special enlightenment, which gives us a deeper perception of the Passover Gospel so that we could carry it like a beam of light to the people of our times.

3. What are the coming years going to bring us? What will man's future on the Earth be? We are not allowed to know that. It is certain, however, that apart from further success we will unfortunately encounter painful experiences as well. But the light of God's Mercy, which God in a way bestowed on the world anew through Sister Faustina's charisma, will illuminate human ways in the third millennium.

However, today it is necessary for mankind to do what the apostles once did and to receive, in the Cenacle of history, resurrected Christ who shows us His wounds after crucifixion and says: "*Peace be unto you!*" It is necessary that mankind should allow themselves to be overwhelmed and transcended by the Holy Ghost sent to them by resurrected Christ. This is the Holy Ghost who heals the wounds of the heart, pulls down the walls that separate us from God and from one another, and allows us again to enjoy the love of the Father and the feeling of fraternal unity.

4. Therefore it is important for us to accept the whole message contained in the word of God for today, the Second Easter Sunday, which henceforth the whole Church is going to call the "*Sunday of God's Mercy*". The successive readings of the liturgy seem to be laying out a route of mercy, which restores the relationship of each individual with God. At the same time, it also establishes new relationships of fraternal solidarity between people. Christ taught us that "*man not only experiences and obtains the mercy of God, but he is also himself ordained to «practise» mercy towards others: «Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy»*" (Matthew, 5:7), (*Dives in misericordia*, 14). Jesus has also revealed to us the numerous ways of mercy, which not only forgives sins, but also meets all human needs. Jesus would lean over all human misery, both the material and spiritual one.

Christ's message of mercy constantly reaches us in the gesture of His arms outstretched towards the suffering people. He was seen that way by Sister Faustina who described and announced Him to people of all continents. Remaining in the seclusion of her convent in Łagiewniki in Cracow, she transformed her life into a hymn in praise of mercy: *Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo* (Psalm 89 [88]:2).

5. The canonisation of Sister Faustina has a particular significance. Today, through that canonisation I wish to pass over the message of mercy to the new millennium. I address it to all people so that they could learn, in a more and more complete way, how to perceive the real face of God and the real face of man.

For the love of God and the love of man are inseparable, as we are reminded in the First Epistle General of St. John: "*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments*" (5:2). In these words the Apostle expresses the truth about love, pointing out that keeping the commandments is its measure and criterion.

It is not easy to love with a deep love, which consists in making a real gift of oneself. This love can only be learnt through penetrating into the mystery of God's love. By gazing at Him and becoming united with His fatherly Heart we become capable of looking at our brothers with new eyes, assuming the attitude of disinterestedness, solidarity, generosity and forgiveness. Mercy consists of all that!

While mankind keeps penetrating into the mystery of that merciful outlook, the ideal about which we have learnt in the first reading of today will manifest itself as something possible to attain. "*And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common*" (The Acts, 4:32). Thus mercy shapes human relations and the community life and it lays out the principle of sharing the goods. "*Merciful deeds*" towards body and soul had their source in it. Thus, mercy assumes a particular form – that of becoming a "*fellow-man*" for the brothers who are in the utmost need.

6. Sister Faustina Kowalska wrote in her *Diary*: "*I feel such a terrible pain when I see the suffering of the fellow-men; all the suffering of the fellow-men is reflected in my heart. I carry all their torments in my heart and they exhaust me physically. I would like all the pains to become my pains, in order to give relief to the fellow-men*" (*Diary*, 1039). This shows to what degree of compassion the love that is measured by God's love leads!

This love should inspire the contemporary man, the contemporary humanity, to become capable of facing the crisis of the sense of life, to take the challenges connected with various needs, but above all to fulfil the duty of defending the dignity of any human being. In this way the message of God's mercy will indirectly become a message of the unique dignity and value of each man. In the eyes of God each person is precious. Christ sacrificed His life for everyone and the Father gives everyone his Ghost and makes everyone close to Himself.

7. In the first place, this comforting message is addressed to people who live in anguish because of some particularly painful experience or who yield under the burden of the committed sins, as well as to those who, having lost all hope in their lives, are about to give in to the temptation of despair. The mild face of Christ reveals itself to such people and the beams coming out of His Heart descent onto them, enlighten and animate them, point them the way and fill them with hope. How many hearts found comfort in the call “Jesus I trust in You!” which was suggested to us by the Providence through the offices of Sister Faustina! This simple act of trusting Jesus transfixes the thickest clouds and makes the beam of light penetrate into the life of each man. “*Jesus I trust in You!*”

8. *Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo* (Psalm 89 [88]:2). Let us, the pilgrimaging Church, join our voices with the voice of the Holy Virgin Mary, the “Mother of Mercy”, and with the voice of the new Saint, who in the heavenly Jerusalem sings a hymn in praise of mercy together with the friends of God.

And you, Faustina, who are God’s gift for our epoch and a gift of the Polish land for the whole Church, would you please grant us the gift of understanding the depth of God’s Mercy. Help us to experience it and to be able to bear witness of it to our brothers. May your message of light and hope be circulated all over the world. May it induce the sinners to repentance, soothe disputes and hatred and make people and nations capable of showing active brotherhood. Today, while looking with you at the face of resurrected Christ, we are repeating your prayer of trustful belief and we say with unshaken hope: “*Jesus, I trust in You!*”

Source: *L’Osservatore Romano*, 6/2000, p. 25-26.