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# **Theological Thought of the Image of the Merciful Jesus in the Message of St. Faustina Kowalska**

## **1. The Problem**

**S**ister Faustina Kowalska was not a theologian either in her education, or vocation or even amateur interest.<sup>1</sup> It has to be assumed that she was not a professional theologian in a specific area of the theology of the sacred image, also called theological iconology. If her *Diary* includes unambiguously iconological issues, there is a question of where they come from. What is their source? Such questions have been answered by Sister Faustina herself, pointing to Jesus Christ as the author of the thoughts and requests she recorded. The Saviour was to pass on to her the fundamental thoughts, postulates and guidelines concerning the image which, according to His will, should form an indispensable element of the devotion to Divine Mercy.

In order to ensure the appropriate seriousness of the issue described here, the two following statements must be assumed credible (without conducting any further analysis)<sup>2</sup>: the first statement concerns the authenticity of the religious experiences of the mystical type, as sensed by Sister Faustina; while the other refers to her ability to pass on such information. Only assuming the moral certainty of these statements (as it is impossible to reach a higher level of certainty)<sup>3</sup> a theological analysis of the problem may be performed.

The moral certainty, or the high “*graduated probability*”, of the authenticity of Sister Faustina’s contacts with the Transcendence, and of the faithful description of all her experiences, allows a theologian to perceive Jesus Christ as the source of all the teaching and guidelines pointing to the fascinating theology of the image. The Saviour Himself became a teacher here. There is no point in refusing that role to Him, especially in the situation where the teaching seemed necessary. According to the tradition of the Church, especially vivid in the Eastern Christianity, an icon is one of the crucial elements of Salvation, resulting from the Incarnation and its natural consequences. The tradition has been expressed in the resolutions of ecu-

menical councils, becoming the official dogma.<sup>4</sup> The dogma, despite of its official character, was not fully appreciated in the Western Church, and the icons often did not perform the functions for which they had been designed.

Private revelations are not a proper source of faith, yet often act as reminders of the truth revealed or introduce adjustments to the established church practice. This is the specific task and the profound justification of such revelations in the history of the humanity redeemed. Therefore it is not unusual that in the message passed on by Sister Faustina, we find grounds for stressing the role of the image in experiencing authentic Christianity.

The fundamental task of the message passed on by Sister Faustina was the shifting of emphasis in certain areas of Church pastoral activities, mainly from the singularly stressed justice<sup>5</sup> to the great and boundless Divine Mercy. Mercy had not been denied before, but it had been placed in the background, which could mean that in relations with God, one should first of all take account of justice, and make it the basis of salvation. In the message passed on by Sister Faustina, Jesus placed mercy in the foreground, as the most important attribute of God. A personal proof of this attribute was Jesus Himself – the Son of God Incarnate. Since the moment of the Incarnation, one cannot proclaim the Divine Mercy without speaking of Him: His Person, owing to the Incarnation, became open to visual presentation, through which he becomes especially close to us. This is probably the cause of the special role of the icon, called the image of the Divine Mercy, which is in fact an image of Jesus Incarnate and Glorious.

This study contains three sections: 1. the request of the image; 2. the role of the image in the worship of the Divine Mercy; 3. the requested form of the image. The sections contain analyses based on the writings of Sister Faustina.

## 2. The categorical request of the image

The *Diary* of Sister Faustina points directly that the image of the Divine Mercy is to form an essential element of the devotion. This motif is seen in all her writings where she speaks of her sensations of the visionary meetings with the Saviour. Among the multiple enunciations, rather free of any imposed framework and containing varied information, let us first search for the ones referring to the creation of the image. They do not, unfortunately, appear in a pure form, free from indications concerning the shape and the tasks of the image, yet the very demand for the image prevails in them.<sup>6</sup> The request for the image was first proclaimed by Jesus in the vision, dated in the *Diary* as February, 22<sup>nd</sup> 1931. Sister Faustina described the vision as follows: “*In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw Lord Jesus in a white garment. One hand raised for blessing, and the other touched the garment at the chest. From the opening of the garment emanated two rays, one red and the other pale. (...) After a while Jesus said to me: «Paint the image*

according to the vision you see, with an inscription: *Jesus, I trust in You. I want this image to be worshipped in your chapel, and then in the entire world*».<sup>7</sup>

With this request for the image, Sister Faustina addressed her confessor<sup>8</sup>, who did not engage in the task, but limited the issue to painting the image in her soul. This solution, directed by reason, did not, however, prove efficient, that is did not meet the Lord's intentions. Sister Faustina wrote that when she left the confessional, she heard the words: *"My image in your soul already exists. I desire a feast of Mercy established. I want the image painted with a brush to be consecrated on the first Sunday after Easter, and the Sunday is to be the Divine Mercy Sunday."*<sup>9</sup>

Treating the request of the Lord with the appropriate seriousness, Sister Faustina addressed her Mother Superior, who, similarly to the confessor, assessed the issue with a reserve stating that they needed to wait for clearer indications from Heaven. The plea for such indications was answered in Sister Faustina's soul with the words: *"I shall let [this] be known to your superiors by grace I shall grant through this image."*<sup>10</sup>

The imperative to paint the image exceeded the abilities and strength of Sister Faustina, which was proved by her failing efforts to fulfil this request.<sup>11</sup> The task imposed on her was a serious burden to her conscience, becoming a life task. Sister Faustina felt this burden, and tried to liberate herself from it. She mentions in her writings that she asked the confessor to liberate her from *"the duty to paint the image."* The confessor did not agree with her, and ordered all the inspirations and postulates to be presented to him.<sup>12</sup>

This commandment of the confessor did not actually solve anything, especially concerning the suffering of Sister Faustina, about which she complained to the reader and even more to Jesus. She wrote: *"I suffered a lot because of painting this image."* Later she stated she did not know what to believe: on the one hand she was told that this was all hallucination, while on the other hand the priest said that perhaps God wished to be adored through this image, therefore it should be painted. When she complained about this to Jesus, she apparently heard: *"My daughter, your suffering will not last long."*<sup>13</sup>

The Lord's demand for the image did not cease, rather on the contrary, it increased. This was proved by the decisive, and threatening words addressed to Sister Faustina: *"Know that if you neglect the issue of painting the image and the entire act of mercy, you shall be held responsible for a great number of souls on the Day of Judgement."*<sup>14</sup> It is easily understandable that after such words, fear took over in the Visionary's soul. Responsibility for other people is a heavy burden for those who are hastened by the commandments from above. Knowing the weight of the burden, Sister Faustina tried to fulfil the task by all possible means.

This proved possible only in Vilnius, where she was moved in 1933. The issue of painting the image interested her confessor, Fr. Michał Sopoćko, who ordered

the painting from Eugeniusz Kazimirowski, to be done according to Sister Faustina's indications. The painting was finished in June 1934, and immediately afterwards placed in the corridor of the Bernardine Convent, at St. Michael's Church where Fr Sopoćko performed the function of the rector.<sup>15</sup> The first public adoration of the image occurred, according to God's will, between April, 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> 1935 at the Pointed Gate (Ostra Brama), where the end of the Anniversary Year was celebrated on the White Sunday.

Further information on the history of the image, related to the perfection of its workshop and to its worship, should be searched for in historical studies.<sup>16</sup> This information seems secondary to a theologian. A theologian is mainly intrigued by the fact that Jesus Christ demanded the image and the granting of a special role to the image in the worship of the Divine Mercy. Why such a request and why so persistent?

The answer to such question may be formulated as a reasonable assumption, having a certain degree of probability, yet far from certainty. A theologian has no means to understand God's thinking and intentions; he may at the most propose probable suppositions, justifying their probability with logical links to the faith.

Why does the Saviour demand the image and in such categorical manner? The iconological dogma might be of help here, formulated at Church Councils, and passed onto the believers. The history states that the Councils: Second of Nice (787), the Fourth of Constantinople (869/70) and of Trent (1563), categorically imposed the religious worship of the icons. The proclamations of these Councils, although differing in form, conform in the content, that is the imperative to preserve the icons and the worship of those icons in the Church. The icons enumerated always start from the image of "*The Lord, God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ*", followed by the image "*of the Holy Mother of God*", and then by the images of angels and saints.<sup>17</sup>

Early Councils motivated the imperative with the Incarnation, which not only justifies, but even requires the visual presentation of God who became man. The Son of God Incarnate is the "*image of the invisible God*" (Colossians 1,15) and the "*stamp of God's very being*" (Hebrews 1,3), which causes everyone who sees the Son to see the Father. The Son, incarnated for us and our Salvation, presented all the Divine attributes, with the attribute of mercy at the foreground. The image of the Son, therefore, becomes the image of the Divine Mercy, who took human form in the person of Jesus Christ. This form is the most accessible to man of all times and cultures. Jesus insists, as seen in the *Diary* of Sister Faustina, that it should be presented in this way to man of our times. In the light of these facts, one may perceive how the name of the image is justified: *the Image of the Divine Mercy*.<sup>18</sup>

The first question, of why Jesus wanted the image, is related to the other question, of why this Lord's request occurred in our religious and cultural environment, and in our times. The answer to this question may also be only probable, without any claim to certainty.

Among the possible and reasonable assumptions, there is God's intention to enliven the iconological dogma and its implications in the Catholic Church. The dogma has always existed in the Western Church, concealed in the formulas of the Council dogmatic statements, yet it did not perform its function well, as if waiting for revitalisation. It did not take part in the life of the Church, serving as an additional element, almost as a decoration. It was said that beauty should serve the glory of God, yet it was perceived externally, as an adornment of the essential religious acts. The marginal treatment of art in the Church is testified by the decisions of the Church offices, including the Second Vatican Council. The standard, written in Rule No 125 on the liturgy (*Sacrosanctum concilium*), imposes the tradition of exhibiting the paintings for the believers, yet at the same time treats them with reserve, both as concerns the number and the order of the images presented. When reading the standard, a question pops up spontaneously whether the issue was important for religious life, or perhaps the images were a permissible and hardly tolerated addition.<sup>19</sup> Taking all the above into account, it is possible that Jesus Christ, the Lord and the Head of the Church, wanted to remind His people that the iconological dogma was still binding, and as a consequence the icons should serve to facilitate close contact between man and God. The message of Sister Faustina testifies that Jesus Himself perceives such task of the icons.

### 3. The task of the image

Jesus, requiring His image, from the start defined the appropriate place for it in the life of believers, as well as tasks to be performed.<sup>20</sup> The very first words of the Lord are clearly about the image (*imago sacra*, *icon* in its function, but not necessarily in its form), before which one should adopt appropriate behaviour, and which one should adore.<sup>21</sup> Words of Jesus are quite clear: "*I want this image to be worshipped in your chapel, and then in the entire world.*"<sup>22</sup>

This wish was to be fulfilled slowly, but efficiently, although there were many obstacles. The image was first publicly adored at the Pointed Gate in Vilnius on April 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> 1935, during *the triduum* closing the Anniversary of Salvation. By a strange coincidence, this adoration occurred several days before and on the very Sunday desired to be the Divine Mercy Sunday. Fr Michał Sopoćko, pointing to the image, said in his sermon that the Divine Mercy requested public adoration.<sup>23</sup>

Another coincidence, which was probably not a coincidence for Heaven, concerned the fact that the adoration took place in the church of Our Lady the Merciful at the Pointed Gate. The image of Our Lady from the Pointed Gate, without the Child, seems to request a completion in the form of the centrally positioned image of Christ. These two images are a part of the iconographic setting called "*Deeis*", which could be completed with the image of St. John the Baptist.

This was the beginning of the worship of the Divine Mercy. It was marked with difficult moments which could decide about its failure, yet to the contrary, the

cult spread not only in the convent chapel of Our Lady the Merciful, but keeps spreading all over the Christian world, according to Christ's wish.<sup>24</sup> The barriers put against the devotion to the Divine Mercy were forgotten on the beatification of Sister Faustyna Kowalska (Sister Faustina). This event put an end to the opinions that the image, resulting from private revelations, did not suit the requirements of liturgy, and that it was not correct in the theological and biblical aspect.<sup>25</sup>

The above evidence shows that Christ requested public adoration for the image, that is adoration which forms part of church worship, and not is limited to private apartments. The Lord did not seem to state what the public adoration should be like. Christ was not specific here. Therefore we may assume that He wanted to apply, the generally adopted, customary worship of icons. The standards for worship result from the Tradition of the Church where, according to the Second Council of Nice, the Holy Spirit acts. The Holy Spirit first caused the preservation of the icons, and then guided their worship in the liturgical and para-liturgical life of the Church.<sup>26</sup>

In the devotion to the Divine Mercy, the image is to play a double function – it is a tool for granting mercy to people; and it should remind people of the duty to perform mercy to others. The first function is fundamental, as it embarks on the most significant relations between sinful man and merciful God; and this is the heart of the devotion. The other role is secondary. It does not constitute the heart of the devotion, but is one of the closely related elements.

The words of Christ were not limited to the request for the worship of the image, but – what is important – defined the task of the image in the creation of the relationship between sinful man and merciful God. At the very beginning, Christ made a promise: *"I promise that the soul who adores this image shall not be lost... I Myself shall defend it as my Glory."*<sup>27</sup> When Sister Faustina had problems convincing her superiors to the issue of the image, Christ promised to support her efforts with the gifts granted through that image.<sup>28</sup> The lack of due diligence concerning the image and the devotion to the Divine Mercy could endanger many souls, for which Sister Faustina could be held responsible. Such strictness may lead to a conclusion that the Lord intended the image as a means for many people to establish relationship with God. The lack of the image could negatively affect their fate, which especially Sister Faustina should avoid; but rather on the contrary, everything should be done to provide them with this simple facilitation on their way to salvation.<sup>29</sup>

When defining the role of the image in detail, the Saviour stated directly that this was a vessel with which people should come to the source of mercy. Thus the image with the inscription *"Jesus, I trust in You"* becomes the vessel for availing oneself with mercy. This is the metaphorical description of the image's function, where the metaphor is simple.<sup>30</sup> The promise was visually confirmed in Sister Faustina's vision at the time of the adoration at the Pointed Gate.<sup>31</sup> In the *Diary* we read that the image became a live person and the beams crossed people's hearts, however not to the equal extent: some received more, some received less.<sup>32</sup>

The words of the Lord prove that the image is indispensable in the devotion to Divine Mercy. Is it something new in Christianity? Not at all, it is simply a reminder of the ancient iconological dogma, which has been almost forgotten in our religious culture, but which should still be valid for Salvation. Christ stands in the centre of Salvation, as He submitted His Person to the rules of human perception, becoming tangible and accessible through the image.<sup>33</sup> The image of Christ, and the same can be said of the image of Our Lady, does not come in a vacuum, and is not deprived of impersonation, but is actually full of the condensed presence of the Person.<sup>34</sup> The presence of this Person is possible despite of spatial limitations. Space cannot hold the Person, as the Person stands above all rules of dimensions. Yet the presence is full and complete. A man coming to pray before the icon faces such full presence. These relations are well verbalised by Sister Faustina's vision, where "*the image becomes a live person*" and spread the beams of His grace according to people's capacity, granting more to some, and less to others. The vision suggests that it was not the image which started the action of distributing grace, but the Lord acting through it.

Concluding this section, it may be said that the *Diary* points to the significant meaning of the iconological dogma: the dogma is presented in the very form it should function in the Church. How could a simple nun, who had no ambition to perform theological studies, know these issues? This question must be left unanswered here.<sup>35</sup> However, the very question itself testifies that we face something that may be seen as a MYSTERY by a person enlightened with the faith.

#### 4. The graphic form of the image

Sacred images, which are the objects of religious worship serving as means for establishing contact with the transcendent world, should have a special character, allowing for the adoration of the Person. This issue has not been solved in the iconological dogma as formulated by the Church Councils, yet it constitutes a significant element of the iconographic canon formed by the Church tradition. This iconographic canon regulates the art of the Orthodox Church, where it is the binding standard. The basic rule of the canon may be formulated according to one of the Orthodox theologians: "*The icon shows not the everyday, banal face of a man, but an adorable and eternal face.*"<sup>36</sup> An icon presents the heirs to eternal kingdom intimated in the icons. When we apply this definition to Jesus, His image should be made in a way showing His glory resulting from forming part of the Trinity with God the Father and the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup> A question thus arises whether the image of the Divine Mercy meets this criterion.

The answer may be found in the manner Jesus appeared to Sister Faustina as the prototype for the image, and then in the technical means of the artist in expressing the vision on canvas. The first issue is related to Sister Faustina's vision of February, 22<sup>nd</sup> 1931 at the convent in Płock. Let us quote the vision again:

*“In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw Lord Jesus in a white garment. One hand raised for blessing, and the other touched the garment at the chest. From the opening of the garment emanated two rays, one red and the other pale. I looked at the Lord, while my soul was full of fear and great joy. After a while Jesus said to me: ‘Paint the image according to the vision you see, with an inscription: Jesus, I trust in You.’”* The description, given in simple words, shows without doubt that the image concerned Christ the Glorious, whose apparition is close to the post-paschal Christophanies. He may freely enter closed spaces and appear wherever and whenever He wishes. No one and nothing may hinder His doing so, yet in order to see Him, one needs to have his “eyes open” (See Luke 24,31). The special indicator of the Glory are the two rays coming out from the heart. The light in each form (including rays) is a biblical sign of the transforming action (Cf. The Transfiguration as described by Matthew 17, 1-8).<sup>38</sup> In the *Diary* we read that Sister Faustina looked at the Lord, experiencing fear and joy simultaneously. This note, paralleled by the statement that the looking occurred in silence, means that the Visionary had the time to imprint the image in her mind. After a while, she heard the order: *“Paint the image according to the vision you see.”* The “image” (or “drawing” in the exact translation) may be treated as a primitive wording of Sister Faustina, or as an expression consciously used by the Lord, defining what was imprinted in the Visionary’s mind. We know from her *Diary*, how she struggled for having this image painted on canvas. Her efforts resulted in the image painted by an artist from Vilnius, Eugeniusz Kazimirowski. This painting, however, did not satisfy the Visionary; she perceived it as one not apt to the experienced and remembered “drawing” in her mind. This was a painful experience to her. She expressed this pain saying to Christ: *“Who can paint You as beautiful as You are?”* and the answer she received was as follows: *“The greatness of this painting lies not in the beauty of the paint or the brush, but in My Mercy.”*<sup>39</sup> These words of the Lord have great significance for religious iconography in general, and are crucial for this particular image. They express the Lord’s acceptance of the image. Jesus does not require or expect anything better than what has been done. Therefore the image by Kazimirowski, although criticised by human critics<sup>40</sup>, was approved by the Divine Customer. The words of God, referring to iconography in general, show that the religious value of the image may not be measured by its artistic value. The true beauty is more profound than the perfection of the execution. It consists in giving us a glimpse of the transcendent world in the richness of forms and colours. This glimpse is not equal to full representation, therefore there will always be a distance between the image and the model represented; while transcendence of this distance will be an instance of Divine Grace, descending to our earthly existence.<sup>41</sup> God does not require a man, or an artist, to go beyond his limited powers, but lowers Himself to human level. This action takes the form of incarnation dynamics, present in the entire history of Salvation, crowned with the Incarnation of the Son of God. Sacred images, apart from the Holy Bible and the sacraments, participated in this permanent process of the dynamic incarnation. The me-

ditionation over the image of Divine Mercy, based on the *Diary* of Sister Faustina, results in the following conclusions:

1. Christ requires the image as a necessary element in the devotion to Divine Mercy.
2. The image should receive the appropriate private and public worship.
3. The image should be made according to the 'drawing' imprinted in the mind of Sister Faustina as a result of her vision.
4. The vision presented Christ the Glorious, as in the post-paschal situation.
5. The image painted by man presents (imperfectly) the Glory of the Saviour; that is why it may constitute a foundation for His presence and redeeming action. In front of this image one may experience Divine Mercy to the extent needed - and God promises it to be so.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> The person of Sister Faustina has been described in numerous studies. The most significant and easily accessible sources are: I. Borkiewicz, *Kowalska Helena, S. Maria Faustyna*, in: *Hagiografia polska*, vol. 1, Poznań – Warszawa – Lublin 1971, pp. 837-849; R. Forycki: *Duchowość sługi Bożej s. Faustyny w kontekście charyzmatu Zgromadzenia Sióstr Matki Bożej Miłosierdzia*, in: *Posłannictwo siostry Faustyny*, Kraków 1991, pp. 141-154; W. Kluz, *Siostra Faustyna Kowalska (1905-1938)*, in: *Chrześcijananie*, vol. 10, Warszawa 1983, pp. 9-101.

<sup>2</sup> Indirect justification of these assumptions may be seen in the rigorous research required by the law before her beatification. Results of this research have been published in: *Iuridicum alterius theologi censoris super scriptis eidem Servae Dei tributis' in Sacra Congregatio pro Causis Sanctorum, Positio super scriptis*, Roma 1980.

<sup>3</sup> I do not mean here absolute certainty, but a "graduated probability". Cf. R. Laurentin *Współczesne objawienia Najświętszej Maryi Panny*, Gdańsk 1994, pp. 49-67.

<sup>4</sup> DS. 600-603 (Nicaenum II); 653-656 (Constantinopolitanum IV); 1823 (Tridentinum)

<sup>5</sup> The one-side approach and its consequences have been described by J. Delumeau *La péché et la peur* (transl. A. Szymanowski) Warszawa 1994. The titles of chapters speak for themselves, stressing *The Priesthood of Fear* or *The Possible Bankruptcy of Redemption*.

<sup>6</sup> The issue of the required form and the indicated tasks of the image will be discussed in the following sections of this article.

<sup>7</sup> *Diary*, Kraków 1983, No 47. In the further quoted references to the *Diary* will be marked as D., and the appropriate number.

<sup>8</sup> The confessor, whose name was not noted down by Sister Faustina, could be A. Modzelewski, L. Wilkowski, or W. Jezusek. Today, it is difficult to define who of these priests met Sister Faustina at the time and was faced with the task.

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<sup>9</sup> D. 49

<sup>10</sup> D. 51

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Jerzy Mrówczyński *Przypisy do Dzienniczka Sługi Bożej Siostry Marii Faustyny Kowalskiej ze Zgromadzenia Matki Bożej Miłosierdzia* [Footnotes to the Diary], D. 603

<sup>12</sup> D. 52.

<sup>13</sup> D. 152.

<sup>14</sup> D. 154.

<sup>15</sup> Information about the painter and the time of painting the image come from: J. Mrówczyński, *Przypisy...* D. p. 603

<sup>16</sup> See: A. Witko: *Obraz Bożego Miłosierdzia*, Kraków 1993

<sup>17</sup> DS. 600; 653-656; 1823.

<sup>18</sup> The adopted name: The Image of the Divine Mercy was strongly opposed to. The opposition argued that it was impossible to paint an attribute. They would be right if there had been no Incarnation, owing to which we could see the Divine Mercy in the human shape. For more information see: A. Witko, *Nabożeństwo do Miłosierdzia Bożego według Błogosławionej Faustyny Kowalskiej*, Kraków 1994 (mps) p. 83 and following.

<sup>19</sup> KL 125. Comparing this standard with other treating on the crucial elements of Christian life, the subordinated and marginal importance of art is visible. For comparison, see the statements on sacraments, sacramentals, or the breviary.

<sup>20</sup> The *Diary* is not systematic. It is characterised by emotion and passion. These emotions do not, however, go beyond the orthodox understanding, or even the orthopraxis. Can we possibly perceive it as inspiration by the Spirit?

<sup>21</sup> *Icon*, in: *Zwięzły słownik teologiczny*, Kraków 1993, p. 97.

<sup>22</sup> D. 47.

<sup>23</sup> D. 417.

<sup>24</sup> The spread of the worship of the Divine Mercy is described in: A. Witko, *Obraz Bożego Miłosierdzia*, Kraków 1993.

<sup>25</sup> For allegations see: A. Witko, *Nabożeństwo...*, p. 124 and following.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. I Różycki, *Miłosierdzie Boże*, in: *Zasadnicze rysy nabożeństwa do Miłosierdzia Bożego*, Kraków 1982, p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> D. 48.

<sup>28</sup> D. 51.

<sup>29</sup> D. 154.

<sup>30</sup> D. 327.

<sup>31</sup> As described above.

<sup>32</sup> D. 417.

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<sup>33</sup> See *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

<sup>34</sup> This impersonation has always been recognised by the Orthodox theology, while nowadays the Catholic theology begins to recognise it. Cf. S. Bułgakow, *Prawosławie*, Warszawa 1992, p. 156.

<sup>35</sup> The answer to this question may be found in the long process preceding the beatification. The answers given during this process are highly accurate. The conclusion opts for the supernatural origin of the message.

<sup>36</sup> L. Uspieński *Teologia i ikony*, Poznań 1993, p. 134.

<sup>37</sup> More detailed data concerning the canon may be found in special studies, called 'podlinniki' in Old Slavonic. This is not necessary for our needs here.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. A. Feuillet and P. Grelot, *Światło i ciemności* in: *Słownik teologii biblijnej*, Poznań 1990, pp. 958-963

<sup>39</sup> D. 313.

<sup>40</sup> As a result of the criticism, there were later attempts to present Sister Faustina's suggestions on canvas. The attempts were taken by: A. Hyla, S. Kaczor-Batowski and others. Nowadays, the most popular image is the one by A. Hyla, specially adored at the Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Kraków-Łagiewniki.

<sup>41</sup> The requirement of "co-existence" proclaimed by the iconoclasts proved unrealistic and was rejected by the Church. Cf. Ch. Schonborn, *L'icone du Christ. Fondaments theologiques* Fribourg Suisse 1976, pp. 161-164.

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