

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend we again celebrate **Divine Mercy Sunday**. St. Maria Faustina Kowalska had been having visions and inner locutions (hearing a voice speak to her in her heart) of Jesus for several years by the time, in 1931, Jesus appeared to requesting a Feast of Mercy be established on the Sunday after Easter (cf. *Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska* 49). On this Feast of Mercy, Jesus asks that we worship His great mercy in a special way. Even though we have sinned terribly against Almighty God, He forgives all, ALL that we surrender to His mercy!

When Faustina tried to start spreading this Feast, she met with resistance. Some resistance was because there already was a Feast of Mercy in the Church. When she brought this concern to Jesus, He responded:

**And who knows anything about this feast? No one! Even those who should be proclaiming My mercy and teaching people about it often do not know about it themselves. That is why I want the image [of Divine Mercy] to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter, and I want it to be venerated publicly so that every soul may know about it.** (*Diary* 341)

So true! I think about growing up before 2000, before Saint John Paul II had established the Feast of Mercy for the universal Church – I never knew about a Feast of Mercy!

Jesus does not just *ask* for us to do something for Him, He also makes huge promises of *what He will do for us!* He pours out incredible graces on this Feast of 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 on My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment.... Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet.... Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy.** (*Diary* 699)

This is a huge gift! Jesus promises us that if we go to Confession and Communion on Divine Mercy Sunday, we will return to our Baptismal purity! When we sin, not only do we offend God (guilt), but attachment to the sin is created (punishment). Purgatory is about having our sins, *which have been forgiven, purified* of this attachment or punishment. What does this look like? Let's say that you have a sugar addiction. You work really hard throughout Lent to break yourself of that addiction. Then on Easter Sunday, you binge, having eaten five chocolate bunnies! Won't you find that all the work you did throughout Lent is down the tubes, and the addiction is back in force?! This happens with all sin. All sin, freely chosen, leads us more easily away from God, away from the best version of ourselves. This attachment to "not-God" (as it were) needs to be purified before we get to heaven – either here or afterward (in Purgatory). Jesus says going to Confession and Communion on Divine Mercy Sunday will take all of that punishment away!!!!

I want to write about sin for a moment. As a culture we have dismissed the idea of personal sin. The culture tells us that there is no objective morality – in other words, we get to choose what is good for me and what is bad for me, and there is no external, universal measure of right and wrong, good and evil. My sisters and brothers, if this were the case, then we could NEVER condemn the actions of Hitler and Stalin, bin Laden or Dahmer, Tsarnaev or Lanza. Do we really want to say this? Do we want to say there is no moral compass that says that the 1994 Tutsi genocide in Rwanda was wrong, because the majority of the government and culture said it was okay at the time?

My brothers and sisters: to side with *moral relativism* is to say these acts were neutral, at best, and maybe even to say that they were "good" for the people who did them. I think that we could agree that this goes against what is in our hearts.

There really is PERSONAL SIN. There is a natural, universal moral law which God has placed in the universe and in our hearts; a law that we can repeal no more easily than repealing the law of gravity. When we violate this law by sin, when we violate our *relationship* with God by sin, we experience the repercussions from it. AND IT IS THIS VERY SIN, TOWARD WHICH GOD IS INFINITELY MERCIFUL. The *only* thing that stops God's mercy is when we refuse to recognize our sin as sin, refuse to repent of it and bring it to God for healing and forgiveness.

In light of this, I invite you to reread, prayerfully the quote from Jesus to Faustina above (*Diary* 699). See the hope that God gives us, the grace and love He pours upon us. I invite you to join me in preparing ourselves for mercy by: 1) **Celebrating** the Feast of Mercy; 2) sincerely **repenting** of our sins; 3) completely **trusting** Jesus; 4) going to **Confession** (on or before the Feast); 5) receiving **Holy Communion** on the Feast of Divine Mercy; 6) **Venerating the Image** of Divine Mercy; 7) **Being merciful** to others.