

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

This weekend's Gospel speaks about the poor widow's generosity: she puts her whole livelihood into the Temple treasury. Her liberality is lauded by Jesus for it is a reflection of God's generosity. God did not hold back anything – he even gave His only begotten Son so that we could have life, eternal life abundantly. This is the generous and infinite merciful love of God – that He will do anything (except hinder our free will) in order to draw us to Himself. He grants pardon and mercy if we but turn to Him in repentance! As we continue to prepare for this extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, we should spend time reflecting on this gift of mercy. As we become more devoted to Divine Mercy, we open ourselves more to receive His Gift. When Jesus appeared to St. Faustina in the early part of the last century, He gave her several ways to help reflect on His mercy, and open the world to that mercy. The acronym **FINCH** can help us remember these graces.

Jesus asked St. Faustina that the world celebrate His **Feast** of Divine Mercy on the Second Sunday of Easter (the Sunday after Easter Sunday). Since 2000, the whole Church has celebrated this day remembering God's great gift of mercy. Jesus said to St. Faustina, "**On that day, the very depths of my tender mercy are opened. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. ... On that day, all the divine floodgates through which graces flow are opened** (*Diary of St. Faustina*, 699). He also said, "**The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment**" (*ibid.*). This is GREAT! No other "strings attached"! It truly is a day of Jubilee, when all sin is forgotten, all sin is gone simply by using the grace of Confession and the Eucharist. You might want to mark your calendars – this coming year, **Divine Mercy Sunday is Sunday, April 3, 2016.**

The **Image of Divine Mercy**, which Faustina had painted, has rays of red and white coming out of the Heart of Jesus – these symbolize the Blood and Water that flowed from Jesus' side, as well as the wellspring of the Sacraments: Eucharist and Baptism. At the bottom of the picture are the key words, "*Jesus, I Trust in You.*" In my times of great struggle, I have repeated these words over and over to remember Jesus' faithfulness and mercy. Jesus said about the image, "**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**" (*Diary* 48). What a promise!

A **Novena** is a prayer which is usually prayed over the course of nine days ("novena" comes from the word for "nine"). The **Novena of Divine Mercy** is done by praying Chaplets (to be discussed next) over nine consecutive days. This prayer can be done anytime, but is especially asked for in the nine days before Divine Mercy Sunday. This means starting on Good Friday. Jesus promised, "**By this novena, I will grant every possible grace to souls**" (*Diary*, 796).

C is for **Chaplet**. The Divine Mercy Chaplet is very powerful, for it draws its strength from the Mass ("Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ..." – this means we offer the EUCHARIST, Jesus Himself, to the Father). St. Faustina was able to stop storms with this prayer, and I have found it powerful in my own life. It is prayed on ordinary Rosary beads, and takes about seven minutes to pray. Jesus said, "**The souls that say this chaplet will be embraced by My mercy during their lifetime and especially at the hour of their death**" (*Diary*, 754) and "**Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death. ... Even if there were a sinner most hardened, if he were to recite this chaplet only once, he would receive grace from My infinite mercy**" (*Diary*, 687).

Finally, we come to **H** for **Hour**. The **Hour of Divine Mercy** is **3:00pm**, when Jesus breathed His last. At His death, and all was finished, Divine Mercy was poured out on the world. So from 3:00-4:00, we celebrate the Hour of Great Mercy. He asks of us to spend time, even if we can only spare a few seconds because of our duties, to console His Heart during the Hour of Mercy. If we take time to think about His loving sacrifice on the Cross during this hour, He promises, "**This is the hour of great mercy for the whole world. ... I will refuse nothing to the soul that makes a request of Me in virtue of My Passion**" (*Diary*, 1320). I have my alarm set to go off every day at 3:00 to remind me to take some time with Jesus.

I hope that you will be able to prepare yourself for this time of great mercy! Embrace FINCH, and see God's grace.