

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

The Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy is nearly upon us! This Tuesday (December 8), with the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, we begin this great Jubilee Year. This is a time for each of us to enter into God's mercy in a new and more profound way, as well as a time for us to share that mercy with others. (It is no accident that Pope Francis chose this date, for it is through Our Lady, that Mercy-Incarnate – Mercy-Enfleshed – came to bring us mercy.) We look to Jesus, who is **the image of the invisible God** (cf. Colossians 1:15) to show us the Father's love. The revelation of Jesus to St. Faustina, as recorded in her *Diary*, tell us how Jesus wants in a special way to use an **image** to help us experience the Mercy of God.

In 1931, Jesus revealed Himself to St. Faustina asking that the image she saw be painted, with the signature: **“Jesus, I trust in You”** (*Diary*, 47). The rays of blood and water (red and white rays) flow from the pierced Heart of Jesus. These represent the saving sacraments of the Eucharist (blood) and Baptism (water). The image also includes the scars caused by the wounds of crucifixion (on His hands and feet). These are there to point to the great love of Almighty God – what He willingly endured so that we might have life with Him! While several different images were painted over the years (though none completely grasped the glory of Jesus), they all are good to help us grow closer to Jesus' love.

Why use an image? Because we are an incarnate people – we are embodied souls, or ensouled bodies. We encounter God precisely *through* our bodies. We use our senses in order to come to know God better. In this case, we use our sight to recognize in an image the God we cannot see.

The Divine Mercy Image helps us not only to recognize the merciful love of God for us, but also our obligation of trust in God and active love of neighbor. Jesus said to St. Faustina, **“This image is to be a reminder of the demands of My mercy, because even the strongest faith is of no avail without works”** (*Diary*, 742).

He made promises to those who would venerate the image. Now, remember that veneration is not worship (we don't worship the image... we worship the one whom the image represents – Jesus, almighty God). Veneration means showing proper and deep respect. He said, **“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), and **“I am offering people a vessel with which they are to keep coming for graces.... That vessel is this image with the signature, ‘Jesus, I trust in You.’ ... By means of this image, I shall grant many graces to souls”** (*Diary*, 327, 742). So we show respect to this picture because of the Lord we love, adore and worship represented in it, and He draws us closer to Him through this loving respect.

As such, throughout the Year of Mercy, we will be having the Image of Divine Mercy displayed in the Church. We will have three different images in different places in the Church (the “Vilnius Image,” at the main entrance, the “Hyla Image” above the Chapel entrance, and the “Skemp Image” above the choir side entrance ... go to divinemercyart.com to see the images). We are also giving away 8”x10” pictures of the Hyla image, as well as prayer cards, for you to bring home. These will be available starting on Tuesday. I invite you to frame the pictures (you can get cheap frames at the dollar store) and put them in a place of prominence in your homes. I encourage you to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet in front of the image, or just spend time repeating in your heart, “Jesus, I trust in You.” I have found this to give me great courage and consolation, and I know Jesus wants to do the same for you.

I hope that throughout the whole Year of Mercy these images will be great reminders to us of God's infinite Mercy poured out upon us! May our Church and our homes be places of giving and receiving mercy. May our hearts be conformed to Christ, the merciful One!