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“Becoming Ambassadors of Mercy Incarnate and Ministers of Mercy Above All”  
Continuing Education Convocation of Priests  
of the Diocese of Tulsa  
During the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
January 25-27, 2016

## Considering the Revelations of Christ to St. Faustina in the life of a Priest as Disciple and Apostle

### • Introduction

- Last time we took our indications for the Year of Mercy from Jesus’ example in the Gospel, the five expressions of his visceral compassion for the crowds and how he taught, healed, fed, forgave, encouraged to pray and called others to continue the harvest of mercy.
- In this conference, I would like to continue the focus on taking our lead from Jesus, but do so in a different way, by focusing on what Jesus revealed to St. Faustina in the 1930s about divine mercy and how it implicates us as priests.
- Before delving in, I’d like to say something about private revelations
  - The Catechism is clear about their theological note: “Throughout the ages, there have been so-called ‘private’ revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ’s definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Guided by the magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church” (CCC 67).
  - Cardinal Ratzinger gave us a little more in his commentary on the Message of Fatima in 2000:
    - “The teaching of the Church distinguishes between ‘public Revelation’ and ‘private revelations.’ The two realities differ not only in degree but also in essence. The term ‘public Revelation’ refers to the revealing action of God directed to humanity as a whole and which finds its literary expression in the two parts of the Bible: the Old and New Testaments. It is called ‘Revelation’ because in it God gradually made himself known to men, to the point of becoming man himself, in order to draw to himself the whole world and unite it with himself through his Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. It is not a matter therefore of intellectual communication, but of a life-giving process in which God comes to meet man. At the same time this process naturally produces data pertaining to the mind and to the understanding of the mystery of God. It is a process that involves man in his entirety and therefore reason as well, but not reason alone. Because God is one, history, which he shares with humanity, is also one. It is valid for all time, and it has reached its fulfillment in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Christ, God has said everything, that is, he has revealed himself completely, and therefore Revelation came to an end with the fulfillment of the mystery of Christ as enunciated in the New Testament. To explain the finality and completeness of Revelation, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* quotes a text of Saint John of the Cross: “In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word—and he has no more to say... because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behavior but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty” (No. 65; Saint John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, II, 22).

- Because the single Revelation of God addressed to all peoples comes to completion with Christ and the witness borne to him in the books of the New Testament, the Church is tied to this unique event of sacred history and to the word of the Bible, which guarantees and interprets it. But this does not mean that the Church can now look only to the past and that she is condemned to sterile repetition. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says in this regard: “...even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made fully explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries” (No. 66). The way in which the Church is bound to both the uniqueness of the event and progress in understanding it is very well illustrated in the farewell discourse of the Lord when, taking leave of his disciples, he says: “I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority... He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (Jn 16:12-14). On the one hand, the Spirit acts as a guide who discloses a knowledge previously unreachable because the premise was missing—this is the boundless breadth and depth of Christian faith. On the other hand, to be guided by the Spirit is also “to draw from” the riches of Jesus Christ himself, the inexhaustible depths of which appear in the way the Spirit leads. In this regard, the *Catechism* cites profound words of Pope Gregory the Great: “The sacred Scriptures grow with the one who reads them” (No. 94; Gregory the Great, *Homilia in Ezechielem* I, 7, 8). The Second Vatican Council notes three essential ways in which the Spirit guides in the Church, and therefore three ways in which “the word grows”: through the meditation and study of the faithful, through the deep understanding which comes from spiritual experience, and through the preaching of “those who, in the succession of the episcopate, have received the sure charism of truth” (*Dei Verbum*, 8).
- In this context, it now becomes possible to understand rightly the concept of “private revelation,” which refers to all the visions and revelations which have taken place since the completion of the New Testament. This is the category to which we must assign the message of Fatima. In this respect, let us listen once again to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “Throughout the ages, there have been so-called ‘private’ revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church... It is not their role to complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history” (No. 67). This clarifies two things:
  - The authority of private revelations is essentially different from that of the definitive public Revelation. The latter demands faith; in it in fact God himself speaks to us through human words and the mediation of the living community of the Church. Faith in God and in his word is different from any other human faith, trust or opinion. The certainty that it is God who is speaking gives me the assurance that I am in touch with truth itself. It gives me a certitude that is beyond verification by any human way of knowing. It is the certitude upon which I build my life and to which I entrust myself in dying.
  - Private revelation is a help to this faith, and shows its credibility precisely by leading me back to the definitive public Revelation. In this regard, Cardinal Prospero Lambertini, the future Pope Benedict XIV, says in his classic treatise, which later became normative for beatifications and canonizations: “An assent of Catholic faith is not due to revelations approved in this way; it is not even possible. These revelations seek rather an assent of human faith in keeping with the requirements of prudence, which puts them before us as probable and credible to piety”. The Flemish theologian E. Dhanis, an eminent scholar in this field, states succinctly that ecclesiastical approval of a

private revelation has three elements: the message contains nothing contrary to faith or morals; it is lawful to make it public; and the faithful are authorized to accept it with prudence (E. Dhanis, *Sguardo su Fatima e bilancio di una discussione*, in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 104 [1953], II, 392-406, in particular 397). Such a message can be a genuine help in understanding the Gospel and living it better at a particular moment in time; therefore it should not be disregarded. It is a help which is offered, but which one is not obliged to use.

- The criterion for the truth and value of a private revelation is therefore its orientation to Christ himself. When it leads us away from him, when it becomes independent of him or even presents itself as another and better plan of salvation, more important than the Gospel, then it certainly does not come from the Holy Spirit, who guides us more deeply into the Gospel and not away from it. This does not mean that a private revelation will not offer new emphases or give rise to new devotional forms, or deepen and spread older forms. But in all of this there must be a nurturing of faith, hope and love, which are the unchanging path to salvation for everyone. We might add that private revelations often spring from popular piety and leave their stamp on it, giving it a new impulse and opening the way for new forms of it. Nor does this exclude that they will have an effect even on the liturgy, as we see for instance in the feasts of *Corpus Christi* and of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. From one point of view, the relationship between Revelation and private revelations appears in the relationship between the liturgy and popular piety: the liturgy is the criterion, it is the living form of the Church as a whole, fed directly by the Gospel. Popular piety is a sign that the faith is spreading its roots into the heart of a people in such a way that it reaches into daily life. Popular religiosity is the first and fundamental mode of “inculturation” of the faith. While it must always take its lead and direction from the liturgy, it in turn enriches the faith by involving the heart.
- We have thus moved from the somewhat negative clarifications, initially needed, to a positive definition of private revelations. How can they be classified correctly in relation to Scripture? To which theological category do they belong? The oldest letter of Saint Paul which has been preserved, perhaps the oldest of the New Testament texts, the First Letter to the Thessalonians, seems to me to point the way. The Apostle says: “Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything, holding fast to what is good” (5:19-21). In every age the Church has received the charism of prophecy, which must be scrutinized but not scorned. On this point, it should be kept in mind that prophecy in the biblical sense does not mean to predict the future but to explain the will of God for the present, and therefore show the right path to take for the future. A person who foretells what is going to happen responds to the curiosity of the mind, which wants to draw back the veil on the future. The prophet speaks to the blindness of will and of reason, and declares the will of God as an indication and demand for the present time. In this case, prediction of the future is of secondary importance. What is essential is the actualization of the definitive Revelation, which concerns me at the deepest level. The prophetic word is a warning or a consolation, or both together. In this sense there is a link between the charism of prophecy and the category of “the signs of the times”, which Vatican II brought to light anew: “You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; why then do you not know how to interpret the present time?” (*Lk* 12:56). In this saying of Jesus, the “signs of the times” must be understood as the path he was taking, indeed it must be understood as Jesus himself. To interpret the signs of the times in the light of faith means to recognize the presence of Christ in every age. In the private revelations approved by the Church—and therefore also in Fatima—this is the point: they help us to understand the signs of the times and to respond to them rightly in faith.

- Devotion in General
  - There's been a temptation historically for the truths of faith to remain too intellectual, and one of the reasons for private revelations is precisely to help us become pious in response.
  - We certainly see this in the private revelations of Mary in Guadalupe, Lourdes and Fatima, for example.
  - We see it in the establishment of true Eucharistic devotion, with Jesus' revelation to St. Juliana of Liège, and the establishment of the Corpus Christi devotions after the Eucharistic miracle of Bolsena-Orvieto, so that the truth about Jesus' real presence would pass from our heads, to our hearts, to our knees. The word "devotion" comes from the Latin expression *de voto*, which means we've made a vow, a total commitment of ourselves. Jesus is asking from us a covenant of love, in response to his toward us.
  - We see it in the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus with regard to his Sacred Humanity, to his Mercy, and to the way we treat him in the Eucharist. Jesus wants our devotion. He wants our love, not because of his ego, but because he knows it's essential for our growth in his image, for our happiness.
    - Pointing to his heart that was aflame with love and enveloped by a crown of thorns, Jesus said, "Behold the heart that has so much loved men that it has spared nothing, even exhausting and consuming itself in testimony of its love. Instead of gratitude, I receive from most only the difference, irreverence, sacrilege, and the coldness and scorn that men have for me in the sacrament of love."
    - The greatest sorrow of his heart, he said, comes when those who should love him more don't really love him much or at all. "What I feel the most keenly," Jesus lamented, "is that it is hearts that are consecrated to me that treat me in this way."
    - Jesus wasn't just asking for intellectual recognition of his Eucharistic love. He was asking for devotion.
  - There's something similar in what he revealed to St. Faustina. He wanted our appreciation for him in his mercy, especially through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, to pass from our heads to our hearts, to our knees, to our folded hands and to our missionary feet. There was nothing new doctrinally in the Divine Mercy devotion — it is an essence of the reminder that we need God's mercy, a call to pray for it for ourselves and the world, a call to come to receive it and to share it — but it was a means by which to adore God as he gives his mercy toward us. We'll get into the five ways he shows us this and what he reveals to priests about it.
- My conversion to Divine Mercy
  - But before we go there, I'd like to give a personal witness. I wrote this article several years back and every year around Divine Mercy Sunday it gets reprinted in various places, and I get emails and letters from priests around the world saying that it helped them, so I'd like to share it, because I'm rather late to this devotion. The article was entitled "My Conversion to Divine Mercy."
  - When I first entered Mount St. Mary's seminary in Maryland, I met some fellow seminarians with a devotion to the Divine Mercy. They would often get together and recite the chaplet together. I was invited on several occasions to join them, but I always politely declined. I thought I didn't need another devotion and preferred to use my Rosary beads for the Rosary. I also didn't want to spend the time researching the devotion to see whether it was genuinely from the Lord or merely the latest Catholic fad.
  - When I got to Rome, my thoughts remained the same, but on my way back and forth between the North American College and St. Peter's Basilica, I would always pass the Church of Santo Spirito, which was the center for the Divine Mercy devotion in Rome. One day I stopped into the Church to go to confession and the Church was packed with young people praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet. It struck me that in order to be a good priest, I minimally was going to have to study the devotion to be able to reply to young people like them should I ever be asked about whether it was salutary for their spiritual growth.

- So I got a copy of *The Diary* of Blessed Faustina Kowalska, the 730-page journal of what this Polish nun during the 1930s said the Lord revealed to her as his “secretary.” I began to read it, but it gave me vertigo. It just seemed to repeat the same points with very minor changes, and I didn’t know what to do with the massive amounts of unsynthesized spiritual data. I read about half of it before I concluded I couldn’t take it anymore. Even though many of the points were beautiful and nothing seemed to be contrary to the faith, I determined to put off a final evaluation until I could muster the time and the willpower to return to finish it.
- Everything changed for me, however, on April 30, 2000, the day Sr. Faustina was canonized by Pope John Paul II. That morning I celebrated Mass in a closed and almost totally empty basilica of St. Peter and headed to the Blessed Sacrament chapel to make my thanksgiving. When the Pope celebrated outdoor public Masses, I normally would stay there praying the breviary until the masters of ceremony arrived to pass out surplices and stoles for those who were going to be distributing Holy Communion during the Mass, a privilege that always came with a great seat.
- That day, however, as I was finishing my thanksgiving, the unbidden thought came to me that Sr. Faustina’s canonization might be my last chance to see a papal Mass from the perspective of the piazza before returning back home to take up a pastoral assignment. So I walked through the Jubilee door about 7:30 and out into the square. Some of those who were responsible for seating must have erroneously thought that since I was leaving the closed basilica, I had to be someone important. I was able to proceed unimpeded to the back left corner of the front-right section before the altar. I wondered what I’d do for the three hours before the canonization Mass. As it turns out, I didn’t have to worry about how to occupy my time.
- After I had finished morning prayer, a young man, one of the first people to enter the square after the gates were opened at 7:30, approached and asked me in Italian whether I would be able to hear his confession. “Certo,” I replied, as he knelt down on the hard stone of St. Peter’s square in front of me. After I had given him absolution, a young girl came and queried whether I spoke Spanish. I told her that I did, and she asked whether I would be willing to hear her confession, too. I said that I would be happy to do so.
- For the next two hours and 45 minutes, until literally the opening antiphon of the Mass, I heard confessions non-stop in the back-left corner of the front-right section. Italians, Spaniards, Brazilians, French- or English-speaking Poles and Germans, as well as a few from Britain and the United States, all humbly knelt down and poured themselves out. I was blown away by the depth and tearful beauty of the penitents’ contrition and appreciation for the gift of God’s mercy. As only a priest could see from the “inside” of people’s souls, I witnessed the profound fruits that the devotion to Divine Mercy had produced in Catholics from various countries, cultures and languages. As Mass began, I thanked the Lord for having moved me to go out to the square that morning and for having used me as his instrument to share his Divine Mercy with so many.
- During John Paul’s canonization Mass homily, I was surprised and thrilled when he said, “It is important then that we accept the whole message [of God’s merciful love] that comes to us from the word of God on this Second Sunday of Easter, which from now on throughout the Church will be called ‘Divine Mercy Sunday.... By this act I intend today to pass this message on to the new millennium.’” I knew that from that point forward, I was being summoned, as all priests were, to be a particular herald of that message. I felt that the experiences of that morning were a gift from God to help me to see the greatness of the interior miracles that the devotion could effect in people. I remember rejoicing that I would have the opportunity, returning to parishes in the Diocese, to bring this message and celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday each year as the culmination of the Easter octave.
- When I came back exhilarated to the Seminary that afternoon, I couldn’t help talking about these experiences with my fellow neophyte priests and other seminarians. I asked one of the older seminarians, who had had a devotion to Divine Mercy for years, whether there was a better way to learn the devotion than through the *Diary*. He smiled, said he had had the same problem with the *Diary*, and then pulled off his shelf and lent me a great book by Fr. George Kosicki entitled *Tell My Priests*. This 123-page goldmine — in the latest edition 187 pages with various appendices — excerpts and organizes the *Diary* specifically for priests to learn the devotion and to pass it on clearly and passionately. Fr. Kosicki demonstrated, convincingly, that everything in the devotion is

just an application of what Jesus himself did and preached in the Gospels. He also highlighted the messages that Jesus had specifically asked St. Faustina to tell his priests, one of which was that whenever a priest preached on his Divine Mercy, huge sinners would return to him. I honestly have to say that every time I have, the Lord's prediction has come true.

- Over the course of time, I have grown in love and appreciation for this devotion I love the fact that praying the Divine Mercy chaplet unites the two sacraments the Lord set up for us to receive thousands of times in our lifetimes, the Mass and the Sacrament of his Mercy. I've always looked at Eucharistic adoration as one means by which the Lord has established through mystics in the Church to help his people grow in appreciation of the great sacrament that is the source and summit of any Christian life. I now look at the Divine Mercy devotion — the prayers and the image — as the means the Lord established to help us to adore and appreciate him in the Sacrament of Confession.
- The Divine Mercy is a devotion that has changed my life as a disciple and apostle and has brought me to experience much more fully the heart of the Redemption and the joy of life with the risen Christ. And that's one of the reasons why I pass it on, in the hope that others will come to know the Lord more intimately through this ever-timely and beautiful devotion as well.
- Biblical Foundation for the Devotion to Divine Mercy. There are essentially three steps:
  - To recognize our need for God's mercy — like the Prodigal Son (Lk 15), we have to realize that we have sinned, and that without God's forgiveness, we will die in our sins. But God does not desire the death of the sinner, but that the sinner return to him and live, which leads us to the second step:
  - To trust in, ask for and receive God's mercy — Here in this world, Jesus established only one ordinary way for us to receive this mercy for all the sins we've committed after our baptism: the Sacrament of Reconciliation, confessing our sins to Christ through the priest. There are a lot of people today, including Catholics, who say, "I can confess my sins directly to the Lord!" Out of real love for you, please let be very clear: you can confess your sins to whomever you want — to your best friends, husbands or wives, parents and children, coworkers, social workers, shrinks, bartenders, Oprah Winfrey, or Dr. Phil. But you can't receive forgiveness there, which is the point. The only means in this world in which we can be *sure* that the Lord forgives us is when we confess our sins to a priest, whom Jesus has ordained, and sent out from the Upper Room for this purpose. To believe in the Lord Jesus means to believe that he knew what he was doing, and he established this sacrament on the night he rose from the dead.
  - To share it with others — We're called to be merciful with others. Jesus said, "Be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful... The measure with which you measure will be measured back to you." In another place, the Lord says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy." The Lord's point is that the prerequisite for our receiving mercy is our showing mercy to others. After having taught us the Our Father in which we pray, "forgive us our trespasses as we have forgiven those who have trespassed against us," the Lord warned us, "If you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their sins, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your sins."
- The five aspects of the Devotion
  - In the Divine Mercy Devotion, Jesus didn't teach us anything new about his merciful love; he just reiterated it. What was new was that the Lord Jesus asked the Church, and that means each one of us, to grow in his Divine Mercy by five practices:
  - The image of Divine Mercy
    - The Lord revealed to St. Faustina an image that he desired to be made: "One night when I was in my cell, I perceived the presence of the Lord Jesus dressed in a white tunic. One hand was raised in blessing, the other rested on his chest. From an opening in the tunic in the chest, two great rays were coming out, one red and the other clear... After some time, Jesus said to me, "Paint an image in accordance with what you see, with the inscription, "Jesus, I trust in you." A little later, Our Lord explained to her the meaning of the two rays: "The two rays represent the Blood and the Water. The white ray represents the Water [baptism], that justifies souls; the red ray represents the Blood that is the life of souls [the Eucharist]. Both

rays flow from the depths of my Mercy when, on the Cross, my Heart in agony was opened by the lance.”

- The Hour of Mercy
  - To pray particularly at three in the afternoon, the time in which Jesus died on the Cross, invoking the Mercy of the Lord
  - Jesus said to St. Faustina, “At three in the afternoon, implore my Mercy, especially for sinners, or at least briefly reflect on my Passion, especially on the abandonment I felt at the moment of agony. This is the hour of great Mercy for the whole world. I will allow you to penetrate my mortal sadness. In that hour, I will deny nothing to the soul that asks me in the name of my Passion.”
  - Jesus gave three indispensable conditions to hear prayers made at the hour of Mercy: the prayer has to be directed to Jesus, take place at three, and invoke the value and merits of his passion.
- The Chaplet of Divine Mercy
  - This is something that people can pray on Rosary beads. It is a devotion that is happily becoming more and more popular today. St. Faustina heard an interior voice that taught her this prayer. On the larger beads of the Rosary, one says, “Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of your dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and for those of the whole world.” On the ten smaller beads, we pray, “For the sake of his sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.” You pray five “decades” in this way, after which, one prays three times the “Holy, Holy, Holy” from the Good Friday reproaches, “Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One,” “have mercy on us and on the whole world.”
  - What we’re doing in this beautiful prayer is offering Christ’s own sacrifice during the Triduum, to the Father. We’re lifting up the Eucharist — Christ’s body, blood, soul and divinity — and making Christ’s prayer our own. There is no more powerful prayer! Jesus promised, “It pleases me to grant everything they ask of Me by saying the chaplet... if it be compatible with my Will.” This is especially true of the moment of death. Jesus specifically asked priests — and I’m obeying him right now — to “recommend it to sinners as their last hope of salvation. Even if there were a sinner most hardened, if he were to recite this chaplet only once [with an attitude of trust, humility and sorrow for sin], he would receive grace from my infinite mercy.”
- The Novena of Mercy
  - To make a novena between Good Friday and Divine Mercy Sunday to implore divine mercy. He gave St. Faustina an intention for each day of the novena.
  - He said, “I desire that during these nine days you bring souls to the fount of My mercy, that they may draw from there strength and refreshment and whatever graces they need in the hardships of life and, especially, at the hour of death. On each day you will bring to my Heart a different group of souls, and you will immerse them in this ocean of My mercy, and I will bring all these souls into the house of My Father.”
  - The groups, for each of the days, are all humanity, especially sinners; priests and religious; the pious and faithful; those who do not believe in Jesus and who don’t yet know him; our separated Christian brothers and sisters; the meek and humble and children; those who venerate the mercy of Jesus; those in Purgatory; and the lukewarm.
- The Sunday of Divine Mercy
  - The Lord said, “I want... the first Sunday after Easter ... to be the Feast of Mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and a shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day, the very depths of 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. On that day are open all the divine floodgates through which graces flow.”

- Pope John Paul II, in 2000, said, “It is important that we accept in its entirety the message that comes to us from God's Word on this second Sunday of Easter. From now on, throughout the whole Church, this day will take the name of 'Divine Mercy Sunday.'”
      - But we have to live it, seek confession within eight days of the feast and properly receive Holy Communion.
- Promises to Priests — On five occasions, Jesus told St. Faustina to tell priests about his mercy. The five things were:
  - They are to receive mercy
    - “My daughter, speak to priests about this inconceivable mercy of Mine. The flames of mercy are burning me, clamoring to be spent; I want to keep pouring them out upon souls; souls just don’t want to believe in my goodness.
      - Priests need themselves to know the Lord’s mercy and trust Him.
  - They are to tell everyone about the Lord’s great and unfathomable mercy
    - No soul will be justified until it turns with confidence to my mercy, and this is why the first Sunday after Easter is to be the Feast of Mercy. On that day, priests are to tell everyone about my great and unfathomable mercy. I am making you the administrator of my mercy. Tell the confessor that the Image is to be on view in the Church and not within the enclosure in that convent. By means of this Image, I shall be granting many graces to souls; so let every soul have access to it.
      - Souls need mercy for salvation
      - The Feast of Mercy is a day of forgiveness and atonement
      - Priests are to tell *everyone* of the Lord’s great Mercy.
      - The image of Divine Mercy is a vessel of grace.
    - They are to proclaim mercy to sinners
      - “I desire that priests proclaim this great mercy of mine towards souls of sinners. Let the sinner not be afraid to approach me. The flames of mercy are burning me, clamoring to be spent; I want to pour them out upon these souls.
        - Preach the Lord’s great mercy
        - Reach out to sinners
        - Tell them of God’s desire to pour out his mercy on them.
      - Hardened sinners will repent on hearing their words of mercy and wondrous power to touch hearts will be given to priests who proclaim God’s mercy
        - My daughter, do not tire of proclaiming my mercy. In this way you will refresh this Heart of Mine, which burns with a flame of pity for sinners. Tell my priests that hardened sinners will repent on hearing their words when they speak about my unfathomable mercy, about the compassion I have for them in my heart. To priests who will proclaim and extol my mercy, I will give wondrous power; I will anoint their words and touch the hearts of those to whom they will speak.
          - Glorify the Lord’s mercy
          - Proclaim His mercy
          - Wondrous power will be given
          - Hearts will be opened
        - Personal witness over the course of my priesthood, especially at St. Bernadette’s
      - Priests are to recommend the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy to sinners.
        - Once as I was going down the hall to the kitchen, I heard these words in my soul: Say unceasingly the chaplet that I have taught you. Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death. Priests will recommend it to sinners as their last hope of salvation. 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. I desire that the whole world know my infinite mercy. I desire to grant unimaginable graces to those souls who trust in my mercy.
          - Pray the Chaplet



- Recommend the Chaplet to the dying and to sinners
  - The Lord wants the whole world to know, receive and trust in his infinite mercy.
- Magisterial Words on Divine Mercy
  - Leo the Great — On exhausting all possibilities of eloquence in preaching about God’s mercy
    - The priest does not have the right to refrain from preaching about so great a mystery, all the more since there cannot be lacking to him material for discourse on the topic about which enough is never spoken; and, if in the face of God’s glory, we do not find ourselves in a position to comment on the works of mercy, still, let us apply our efforts and dedicate our intelligence to the point of exhausting all the possibilities of eloquence (Sermon 1 on the Passion).
  - John Paul II
    - The Church of our time, constantly pondering the eloquence of these inspired words, and applying them to the sufferings of the great human family, must become more particularly and profoundly conscious of the need to bear witness in her whole mission to God's mercy, following in the footsteps of the tradition of the Old and the New Covenant, and above all of Jesus Christ Himself and His Apostles. ... The Church must consider it one of her principal duties-at every stage of history and especially in our modern age-to proclaim and to introduce into life the mystery of mercy, supremely revealed in Jesus Christ. (DM 12,14).
    - “Right from the beginning of my ministry in St. Peter’s See in Rome, I considered this message my special task. Providence has assigned it to me in the present situation of man, the Church and the world. It could be said that precisely this situation assigned that message to me as my task before God.” (Nov 22, 1981)
    - To understand the depth of this mystery, we should take Jesus’ disconcerting revelation seriously: "... there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance" (Lk 15:7). God is truly the Shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep to go in search of the one that has strayed (Lk 15:4-6); he is the Father who is always ready to welcome a lost son (Lk 15:11-31). Who can say he is free from sin and does not need God’s mercy? As people of this restless time of ours, wavering between the emptiness of self-exaltation and the humiliation of despair, we have a greater need than ever for a regenerating experience of mercy. We should learn to say repeatedly to God with the faith and simplicity of children: "Great is our sin, but even greater is your love!" (Vespers hymn during the season of Lent) (April 10, 1994 Angelus)
    - In a special way, today is the Sunday of thanksgiving for the goodness God has shown man in the whole Easter mystery. This is why it is also called *the Sunday of Divine Mercy*. Essentially, God’s mercy, as the mystical experience of Blessed Faustina Kowalska, who was raised to the honors of the altar two years ago, helps us to understand, reveals precisely this truth: good triumphs over evil, life is stronger than death and God’s love is more powerful than sin. All this is manifested in Christ’s paschal mystery, in which God appears to us as he is: a tender-hearted *Father*, who does not give up in the face of his children’s ingratitude and is always ready to forgive. Dear brothers and sisters, we must personally experience this mercy if, in turn, we want to be capable of mercy. Let us learn to forgive! The spiral of hatred and violence which stains with blood the path of so many individuals and nations can only be broken by the *miracle of forgiveness*. (April 23, 1995)
    - “There is nothing that man needs more than Divine Mercy — that love which is benevolent, which is compassionate, which raises man above his weakness to the infinite heights of the holiness of God. ... The message of Divine Mercy has always been near and dear to me. It is as if history had inscribed it in the tragic experience of the Second World War. In those difficult years it was *a particular support and an inexhaustible source of hope*, not only for the people of Krakow but for the entire nation. This was also my personal experience, which I took with me to the See of Peter and which it in a sense forms the image of this Pontificate.” (June 7, 1997, Lagiewniki)

- It is important then that we accept the whole message that comes to us from the word of God on this Second Sunday of Easter, which from now on throughout the Church will be called "Divine Mercy Sunday." In the various readings, the liturgy seems to indicate the path of mercy which, while re-establishing the relationship of each person with God, also creates new relations of fraternal solidarity among human beings. Christ has taught us that "man not only receives and experiences the mercy of God, but is also called" to practice mercy towards others: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5: 7) (*Dives en Misericordia*, n. 14). He also showed us the many paths of mercy, which not only forgives sins but reaches out to all human needs. Jesus bent over every kind of human poverty, material and spiritual. (April 30, 2000)
  - Like Saint Faustina, we wish to proclaim that apart from the mercy of God there is no other source of hope for mankind. We desire to repeat with faith: Jesus, I trust in you! This proclamation, this confession of trust in the all-powerful love of God, is especially needed in our own time, when mankind is experiencing bewilderment in the face of many manifestations of evil. ... Today, therefore, in this Shrine, I wish solemnly to entrust the world to Divine Mercy. I do so with the burning desire that the message of God's merciful love, proclaimed here through Saint Faustina, may be made known to all the peoples of the earth and fill their hearts with hope. May this message radiate from this place to our beloved homeland and throughout the world. May the binding promise of the Lord Jesus be fulfilled: from here there must go forth "the spark which will prepare the world for His final coming" (cf. *Diary*, 1732). This spark needs to be lighted by the grace of God. This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world. In the mercy of God the world will find peace and mankind will find happiness! (August 17, 2002)
  - Everything I said in the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* I brought with me from Poland. Likewise, the reflections offered in *Dives in Misericordia* were the fruit of my pastoral experience in Poland, especially in Krakow. That is where Saint Faustina Kowalska is buried, she who was chosen by Christ to be a particularly enlightened interpreter of the truth of Divine Mercy. For Sister Faustina, this truth led to an extraordinarily rich mystical life. She was a simple, uneducated person, and yet those who read the *Diary* of her revelations are astounded by the depth of her mystical experience. I mention Sister Faustina because her revelations, focused on the mystery of Divine Mercy, occurred during the period preceding the Second World War. This was precisely the time when those ideologies of evil, nazism and communism, were taking shape. Sister Faustina became the herald of the one message capable of off-setting the evil of those ideologies, the fact that God is Mercy—the truth of the merciful Christ. And for this reason, when I was called to the See of Peter, I felt impelled to pass on those experiences of a fellow Pole that deserve a place in the treasury of the universal Church. ... I have chosen here to speak of Sister Faustina and the devotion to the merciful Christ which she promoted, because she too belongs to our time. She lived in the first decades of the twentieth century and died before the Second World War. In that very period the mystery of Divine Mercy was revealed to her, and what she experienced she then recorded in her Diary. To those who survived the Second World War, Saint Faustina's Diary appears as a particular Gospel of Divine Mercy, written from a twentieth-century perspective. The people of that time understood her message. They understood it in the light of the dramatic buildup of evil during the Second World War and the cruelty of the totalitarian systems. It was as if Christ had wanted to reveal that the limit imposed upon evil, of which man is both perpetrator and victim, is ultimately Divine Mercy. ... God can always draw good from evil, he wills that all should be saved and come to knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim 2:4): God is Love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8). Christ, crucified and risen, just as he appeared to Sister Faustina, is the supreme revelation of this truth
- Pope Benedict XVI
  - Indeed, mercy is the central nucleus of the Gospel message; it is the very name of God, the Face with which he revealed himself in the Old Covenant and fully in Jesus Christ, the incarnation of creative and redemptive Love. May this merciful love also shine on the face of

the Church and show itself through the sacraments, in particular that of Reconciliation, and in works of charity, both communitarian and individual. May all that the Church says and does manifest the mercy God feels for man, and therefore for us. When the Church has to recall an unrecognized truth or a betrayed good, she always does so impelled by merciful love, so that men and women may have life and have it abundantly (cf. Jn 10: 10). From divine mercy, which brings peace to hearts, genuine peace flows into the world, peace between different peoples, cultures and religions. (Angelus March 30, 2008)

- Decree on Indulgences for Divine Mercy Sunday
  - Priests who exercise pastoral ministry, especially parish priests, should inform the faithful in the most suitable way of the Church's salutary provision. They should promptly and generously be willing to hear their confessions. On Divine Mercy Sunday, after celebrating Mass or Vespers, or during devotions in honor of Divine Mercy, with the dignity that is in accord with the rite, they should lead the recitation of the prayers that have been given above. Finally, since "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5,7), when they instruct their people, priests should gently encourage the faithful to practice works of charity or mercy as often as they can, following the example of, and in obeying the commandment of Jesus Christ, as is listed for the second general concession of indulgence in the "*Enchiridion Indulgentiarum*"
- This is the Year of Mercy and a Year to Grow in Devotion to God's mercy through these means.
- It is also a year for us to allow Christ to work through us.