

Easter – Week Two of Easter 2021 (Divine Mercy)

Acts 4:32-35; Psalm 117; 1 John 5:1-6; John 20:19-31

This is Divine Mercy Sunday. It is important for all of us gathered here because it reminds us of the most basic truths of the faith we have received: that the Son of God came into the world to save sinners. Today's reading from the First Letter of St John is a helpful place in starting to remember this truth:

*Who can overcome the world?
Only that man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God:
Jesus Christ who came by water and blood,
Not with water only,
But with water and blood.¹*

I want to draw your attention to this painting on our church, which is intimately associated with the feast of Divine Mercy, but before I do I want you to tell you some of its history. It begins with St Maria Faustina Kowalska. When I quote her I am drawing on her own writings.

St Faustina was born in Poland in 1905 and she died in 1938, just 33 years old, and she was declared a Saint in the year 2000 by Pope St John Paul the Second.² At a very young age she joined the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. She did not have an easy time: her health was poor and she was often misunderstood. She

often felt unequal to the tasks allotted to her by God; *'Jesus have mercy on; me; do not entrust such great things on me, as you see that I am a bit of dust and completely inept'*, she once cried.³ When she had occasion to complain to God that people were obstructing His will and she could not accomplish what he asked of her He replied: *By obedience you give great glory to Me and gain merit for yourself.*⁴

I tell you this because I want you to look at this picture, I want you to see Jesus, but I also want you to remember St Faustina. She did not feel up to the tasks that God called her to, but even when she faced failure God loved her simply for doing what she was told to do, not for success. I think this bears repeating and remembering:: Faustina was not loved for her success; God loved her for her love.

She already had a very close relationship with God when at the age of 26 she received her first vision of the Merciful Jesus and the command to:

'Paint an image according to the pattern you see... I want this image to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter: that Sunday is the Feast of Mercy. '

The image that she saw was this: Our Lord emerging from darkness with his hand raised in blessing. Two rays emanated from his heart: one ray pale and translucent, like water; the other ray red like blood. Now, St

¹ 1 John 5:5-6 'and blood' reinforces the Incarnation and the bodily life and death of Christ.

² Pope John Paul II pronounced that the 2nd Sunday of Easter would be 'Divine Mercy' Sunday in the year 2000, the same day on which canonised St Faustina on Divine Mercy Sunday. Interestingly he died on the Vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday in 2005 and a miracle associated with his own

canonisation occurred on the same day as his own beatification which was on Divine Mercy Sunday in 2005.

³Notebook 1- 53

⁴ Notebook 1 - 28

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Faustina could not paint so she commissioned an artist under her guidance to do so, and it was completed in June 1934.

When she saw the final painted image she cried because it was not as beautiful as the vision she had seen of it, but it is probably as good as human hands can paint the Divine. The water is a sign of Baptism, of our spiritual blessings and our heavenly inheritance that we receive from God through Jesus. The blood is a sign that Jesus was truly a man like us, and that he truly shed it for us upon the cross. This is his blessing. And he offers it all to us, all we need to do is to accept it. We receive at our Baptism, at Communion, and when we when we pray before the Blessed Sacrament.

In Sept 1935 St Faustina was given a prayer to recite daily which accompanies the image of the Divine Mercy very well and you can pray it on your Rosary. The two repetitive prayers associated with it are: *'Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of your most beloved Son our Lord, Jesus Christ in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.'* and *'For the sake of his sorrowful passion have mercy on us and on the whole world.'*⁵

The link between these prayers and the image of Christ from whose heart flows blood and water is clear: both his suffering and his gift of life are offered for the world. Through this image we are asked to look at the Divine Mercy and then enter into the Divine Life by accepting that same Mercy. We are then to pray for, and live out that Mercy for ourselves and for the whole world. This is what St Faustina did.

Who can overcome the world?

*Only that man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God:
Jesus Christ who came by water and blood,
Not with water only,
But with water and blood.⁶*



⁵ Notebook 1-476

⁶ 1 John 5:5-6