



# What's What

*A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.*

## Divine Mercy Sunday

Divine Mercy is a central biblical theme of God's benevolent, compassionate love.

The modern devotion to Christ as Divine Mercy is based on the private revelations of a Polish nun, St Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938). St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, and St Catherine of Siena also spoke, wrote, and taught about Divine Mercy. Their teachings are echoed in the teaching of Pope John Paul II.

In the convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Warsaw, Sister Maria Faustina of the Most Blessed Sacrament (Helena Kowalska) immersed herself in prayer, and the prac-

tice of the virtues. Christ gradually led her into a special intimacy with his merciful heart, and she began to receive mystical revelations centered on the theme of God's mercy for those lost in sin or broken by anxiety and suffering. At the command of her spiritual director, Father Michael Sopocko, she wrote a diary, which is now regarded as a spiritual classic of the twentieth century.

In a revelation in 1931, Jesus requested that an image of himself as he had appeared to her, with the words, "Jesus, I trust in you," be made and venerated, first in her convent and later throughout the world. Christ gave her the

Divine Mercy chaplet and requested that she and her confessor labor to establish a Feast of the Divine Mercy for the universal Church.

Unable to paint the Image of Mercy herself, or to propagate the feast, St Faustina recorded all of the Lord's requests to her in her diary, and trusted that her mission would be completed through Father

Sopocko. She died of tuberculosis at the age of thirty-three.

The devotion to the Divine Mercy does not consist primarily in the adoption of a set of pious practices but in entering of faith and hope in the merciful love of God, and the desire to let his mercy flow through one's heart toward those in need.

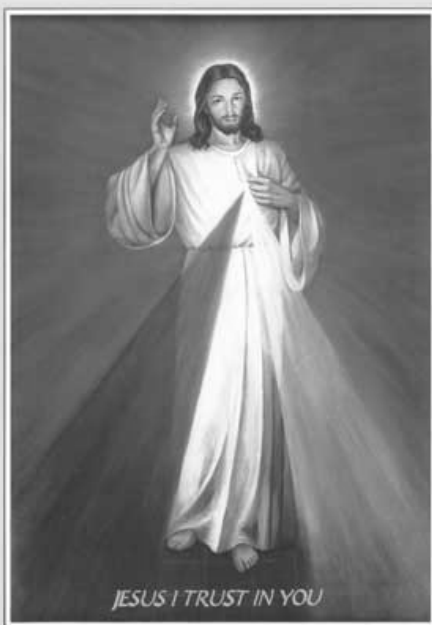
"Divine Mercy Sunday" is the title of the second Sunday after Easter.

*From Encyclopedia of Catholic Devotions and Practice, by Ann Ball, "Our Sunday Visitor", 2003, pg 174-175*

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### *Things to talk about:*

- Where do you think God's divine mercy is needed most in our world today?
- When have you experienced God's divine mercy?
- What in the readings of the Second Sunday of Easter makes it appropriate to be Divine Mercy Sunday?



Heavenly Father and God of mercy,  
we no longer look for Jesus among the dead,  
for he is alive and has become the Lord of life.

From the waters of death you raise us with him  
and renew your gift of life within us.

Increase in our minds and hearts  
the risen life we share with Christ  
and help us to grow as your people  
toward the fullness of eternal life with you

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

*Alternate Opening Prayer  
for Divine Mercy Sunday*



## St. Faustina Kowalska

The story of St. Faustina Kowalska reveals the inspiration behind the Divine Mercy devotion. Helena Kowalska was born in Poland on August 25, 1905. She was the third child of a devout Catholic family. As a small child she reported seeing bright lights during her night prayers. At age 16 she went to work as a servant in a neighboring city. She soon resigned after a fainting spell, even though a doctor said she was healthy.

Helena told her parents that she wanted to enter religious life but failed to obtain her father’s permission because he felt she was too young. She took another post as a servant and made friends with a circle of young women. At a dance, she experienced a vision of Christ suffering that touched her conscience and revived her desire to be a nun. She soon left her job and sought entrance in a religious congregation.

In 1925, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, taking the name Faustina. She served as a cook, gardener and doorkeeper in Krakow and several other community convents. The sisters liked her but did not appreciate or understand her deep interior life, which included visions and prophecies. On February 22, 1931, Sister Faustina experienced a new and life-changing vision of Christ. She saw him wearing a white robe and raising his right hand in blessing with his left hand resting on his heart from which flowed two rays of light. Jesus told her, “Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the prayer, Jesus, I trust in you.”

Faustina could not paint, and struggled to convince her incredulous sisters about the truth of her vision. Ultimately she persuaded her spiritual director,

Father Michael Sopocho, that the vision was real. He found an artist to create the painting that was named The Divine Mercy and shown to the world for the first time on April 28, 1935.

Father Sopocho advised Sister Faustina to record her visions in a diary. At one point she wrote that “Jesus said I was his secretary and an apostle of his divine mercy.” She devoted the rest of her life to spreading the message of divine mercy and the growth of popular devotion to it. Her mystical writings have been translated into many languages. She died of tuberculosis at age 33. Pope John Paul II canonized her on April 30, 2000.

The revelations experienced by St. Faustina were of a private nature, which are not essential to anyone’s acceptance of the Catholic faith. These types of visions and revelations are described in 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. 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” (#67).

In another section, the Catechism describes popular piety, which helps us to put St. Faustina’s revelations into a broader context: “The religious sense of the Christian people has always found expression in various forms of piety surrounding the Church’s sacramental life, such as veneration of relics, visits to sanctuaries, pilgrimages, processions, the stations of the cross, religious dances, the rosary, medals, etc. These expressions of piety extend the liturgical life of the Church, but do not replace it....Pastoral discernment is needed to sustain and support popular piety” (#1674-76).

So we see that devotion to divine mercy in no way replaces any of our rich liturgical traditions. The Divine Mercy devotion fosters the virtue of trust in God’s mercy that finds its fulfillment in the liturgy of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist. Popular piety animates the faith attitudes that make participation in the sacraments more vital and fruitful.

*/www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/ CU/ac0308.asp*



### Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about Divine Mercy Sunday? Check out the following websites for more information:

- <http://www.americancatholic.org>
- Pope John Paul II’s Homily on the first celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday, 2001: [www.divinemercysunday.com/popes-homily.htm](http://www.divinemercysunday.com/popes-homily.htm)

*These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.*

“What’s What” is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement [Draft]:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.