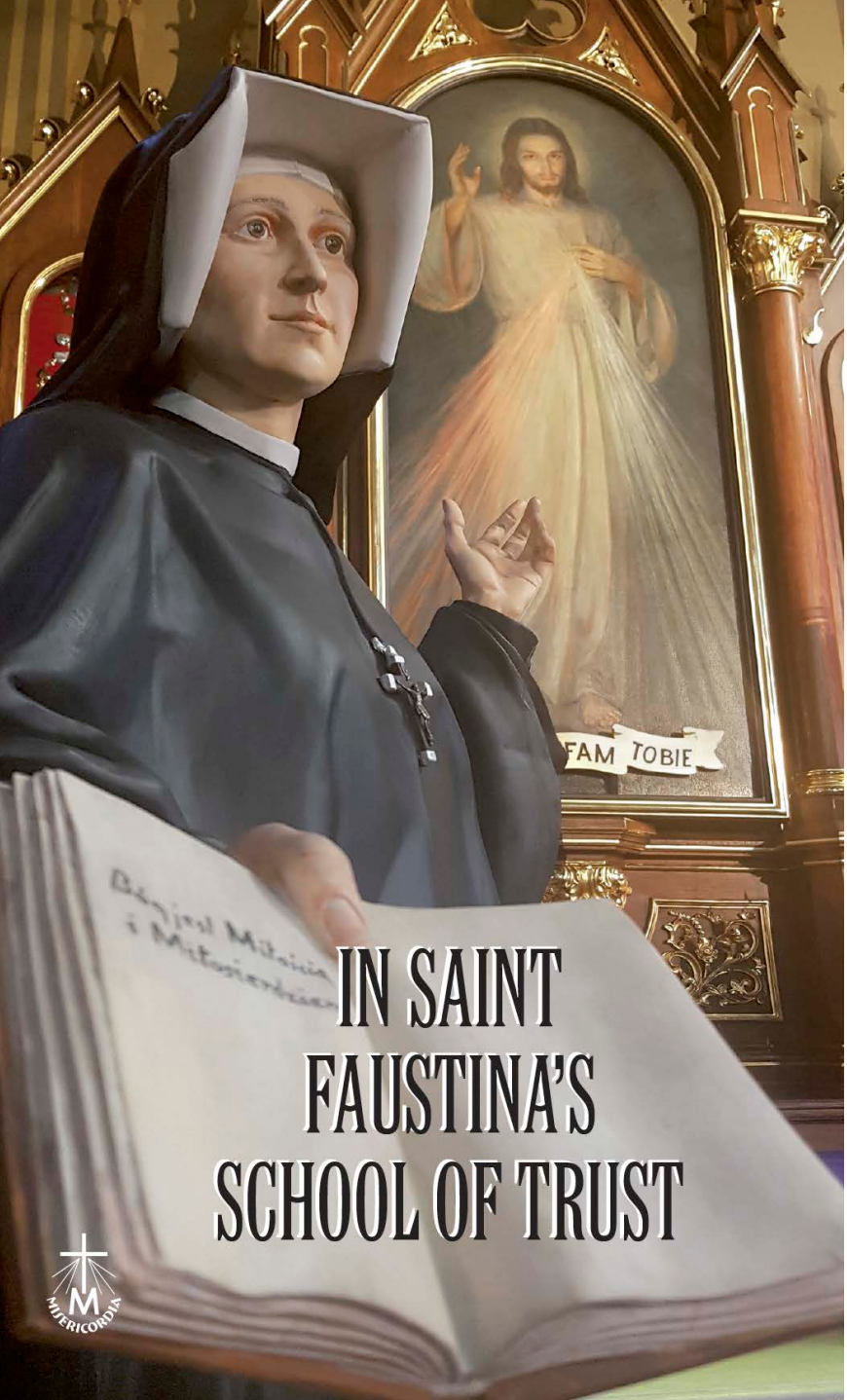




IN SAINT FAUSTINA'S SCHOOL OF TRUST



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INTRODUCTION

We place into the hands of the readers, especially the Apostles of the Divine Mercy, the next work in a series from the cycle of Saint Faustina's spirituality: *In Saint Faustina's School of Trust*. In the first, entitled *The Spirituality of Saint Faustina*, the essential features of her spirituality were outlined; namely, the knowledge of the mystery of Divine Mercy and its contemplation in everyday life; the attitude of trust towards the Lord God and mercy toward neighbor; love for the Church and concern for the rescue of lost souls; Eucharistic worship; and devotion to Our Lady of Mercy.

The present work presents a broad discussion of the attitude of trust towards the Lord God, which is characteristic of Saint Faustina's spirituality and therewith of the apostles of the Divine Mercy who strive to acquire it. We would like to stress, already in this introduction, that trust in the life and writings of Sister Faustina is neither a pious feeling nor an intellectual acceptance of the truths of the faith, but an attitude towards the Lord

God involving the entire person. And this attitude of trust expresses itself in fulfilling God's will contained in the commandments, in the duties of one's state in life, as well as in the recognized inspirations of the Holy Spirit. At the basis of such an attitude lies the knowledge of the mystery of Divine Mercy and its contemplation in everyday life; its growth is effected by the practice of the virtues, especially of those that make up this attitude (faith, hope, love, humility, and contrition), by the sacramental life, and by the conscientious and faithful fulfillment of the will of God. The development of the attitude of trust leads to unceasing prayer and close union with Christ.

Sister Faustina is the model of childlike abandonment to the Lord God, and therefore it is worthwhile to study her quest for heroic trust, so that we might be able to imitate her in this. Doing this, we will deepen our spiritual life, unite ourselves ever more closely to Christ, and fully participate in His salvific work.

The book *In Saint Faustina's School of Trust* was written based on conferences prepared for persons in the second year of formation in the Faustinum Association of Apostles of the Divine Mercy (cycle: *The Spirituality and Mission of Saint Faustina*); its goal is to help the Divine Mercy devotee enter upon and walk along the path of Christian trust shown by Saint Faustina.

FAITH AS THE SOURCE OF THE ATTITUDE OF TRUST

We meet the word *trust* in common language every day. To trust in somebody means to be so convinced of somebody's goodness, loyalty, help, and greatness of soul that we reveal to him without fear or anxiety the most intimate things; that we share our secret pains; that we lay bare the whole truth; simply speaking, that we commit ourselves to his care. Inherent in every person is a very deep desire to have someone in whom we can trust completely, in other words, into whose hands we can place ourselves. Furthermore, without trust deeper relations between people are out of the question, such as, e.g., a relationship of friendship or love. When there is a lack of trust, everything wastes away. Elementary trust lays the groundwork for communications between people, all interpersonal events, and communal processes. In interpersonal contacts, for example, one can observe that the greater the trust in the partner, the greater

the friendship and love, while mutual trust deepens as the friendship grows.¹

The word *trust* refers not only to relations between people, but above all to the relationship between God and man. God first trusted man; He expects the same attitude from him. In theological dictionaries the word *trust* most often plays an auxiliary function to express the content of the concepts of faith and hope; whereas in Sister Faustina's *Diary* it signifies an attitude toward God that embraces one's whole life, an attitude that consists in expecting the Lord's favor in a way that is voluntary, humble, unwavering, and enlightened by faith.² At the same time, it is expressed in fulfilling His holy will. Trust is an attitude of faith, of complete abandonment, which Jesus desired from His followers when He said, *If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you* (Mt 17:20). St. Paul and the whole of Christian theology call this attitude of life hope, which *springs from living faith in the infinity of God's love and goodness toward us*.³

¹ Cf. M. Rusecki, ed., *Być chrześcijaninem dziś* [To Be a Christian Today], Lublin 1994, p. 64.

² Cf. I. Różycki, *Nabożeństwo do Miłosierdzia Bożego* [Devotion to the Divine Mercy], Kraków 1999, p. 119.

³ Rev. I. Różycki, *Essential Features of the Devotion to the Divine Mercy* (Stockbridge: Congregation of Marians, 2000), p. 14.

In Sister Faustina's life, trust is precisely a total surrender to God that is full of childlike intimacy. Thus, it denotes not only an attitude flowing from the virtues of faith and hope, but also a particular bond of love with God. Besides the theological virtues (faith, hope and love), it also requires moral virtues such as humility, contrition, and sorrow for sin as well constant metanoia, that is to say, turning away from sin in order to turn ever more fully to God. Widely understood, the attitude of trust is a result of one's cooperation with God, strengthened by sacramental life and prayer. It is, moreover, a vessel for drawing graces and a condition for obtaining them. The source and foundation of the attitude of trust towards God is the supernatural virtue of faith, which the Christian receives in Baptism.

1. The supernatural virtue of faith

In defining the concept of faith, theology makes a distinction between its objective aspect, that is, a revealed truth proposed for belief, and its subjective aspect, that is, man's personal response to divine Revelation.⁴

⁴ G. O'Collins, S.J., E. Farrugia, S.J., *Zwięzły słownik teologiczny* [A Concise Theological Dictionary], Kraków 1993, p. 288.

By natural reason, man can know God on the basis of His works. There is, however, another order of knowledge which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation. By virtue of His utterly free decision, God reveals and gives Himself to men. Through Jesus Christ He unveils most fully the mystery of His life and His plan of loving kindness toward man. Everything that God revealed to us for our salvation is contained in Sacred Scripture and handed on in the Tradition of the Church. The Church preserves, expounds and proposes for belief divinely revealed truths and faithfully proclaims them. The objective aspect of faith is thus a collection of truths revealed and proposed for belief by the Church.

Man remains free in the face of divinely revealed truths. He may accept or reject them; he may remain indifferent to them or fight against them. Man's personal relation to revealed truths is called the subjective aspect of faith.⁵ According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *faith is a personal adherence of the whole man to God who reveals himself. It involves an assent of the intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words* (CCC 176).⁶

⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1994).

The adherence of the mind and will to what God revealed is possible through the supernatural virtue of faith which we receive in Baptism. Faith makes us capable of accepting divine truths, of responding to God who reveals Himself. Faith is the acceptance of revealed truths on the authority of God himself who reveals, as the truths revealed by Him are not obvious to our intellect.

Saint Thomas defines faith as an act of intellect assenting to divine truths at the command of the will moved by grace. Thus, the act of faith involves: the intellect, which knows divine truths; the will, which in perceiving the good in divine Revelation, commands the intellect to assent to truths that are above its cognitive capacities, truths that are inscrutable to it; as well as grace, which moves and assists the acts of the intellect and will.

The Second Vatican Council emphasizes that faith is a free human act, by which man freely commits his entire self to God. *"The obedience of faith" must be given to God as he reveals himself. By faith man freely commits his entire self to God, making "the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals" and willingly assenting to the Revelation given by him. Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must*

have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and "makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth" (DV 5). The grace of God always precedes man's response. Without prevenient grace, a special grace that enlightens the mind and moves the will, man is incapable of believing in God. Faith is, therefore, a gift of God which man receives freely. However, all voluntary striving implies knowledge of the goal to be attained. And so, man cannot strive toward God as his supernatural end if he does not have supernatural knowledge of God. It is precisely faith which makes this possible. The God who reveals is a God of love and mercy, and it is in the act of faith that man comes to know and accepts God rich in mercy. Knowledge of God in the mystery of His merciful love leads man to surrender to Him, in effect, to entrust himself with complete abandonment to God.

Saint Thomas' analysis of perfect faith or the development of this virtue distinguishes three close-knit, hierarchical stages. The first may be summarized with these words: *I believe that God exists*. Faith, however, cannot be limited only to the assent of the mind to the truths of the faith taught by the Church. The personal response to God is still missing at this stage; there is merely an intellectual approval of the truths contained

The present work presents a broad discussion of the attitude of trust towards the Lord God, which is characteristic of Saint Faustina's spirituality and therewith of the apostles of the Divine Mercy who strive to acquire it. We would like to stress, already in this introduction, that trust in the life and writings of Sister Faustina is neither a pious feeling nor an intellectual acceptance of the truths of the faith, but an attitude towards the Lord God involving the entire person. And this attitude of trust expresses itself in fulfilling God's will contained in the commandments, in the duties of one's state in life, as well as in the recognized inspirations of the Holy Spirit. At the basis of such an attitude lies the knowledge of the mystery of Divine Mercy and its contemplation in everyday life; its growth is effected by the practice of the virtues, especially of those that make up this attitude (faith, hope, love, humility, and contrition), by the sacramental life, and by the conscientious and faithful fulfillment of the will of God. The development of the attitude of trust leads to unceasing prayer and close union with Christ.



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