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DIVINE MERCY
IN THE BIBLE AND IN ST. FAUSTINA'S DIARY

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**FATHER MARCIN CIUNEL M.S.
SISTER MARIA EMANUELA GEMZA, ISMM**

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Introduction

We are pleased to present this book, our latest publication on the mystery of Divine mercy. It is the handbook for the first year of formation for the Faustinum Association of the Apostles of Divine Mercy, and addresses the subject of Divine mercy in the Bible and in St. Faustina's Diary. It is the textbook for the first year Scripture course of the Faustinum Association of the Apostles of Divine Mercy formation programme.

In his bull *Misericordiae Vultus* Pope Francis writes, "We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us" (MV 2). Many of us, especially the Apostles of Divine Mercy, know very well what these words mean. We have often seen how much we need to contemplate God's mercy to know it better and better and experience it more fully. It is the mercy of God that brings us the peace, hope, and joy which we long for so much in this life.

The Bible is the fundamental source from which we can learn about God in the mystery of His mercy. Every page in the Bible – from pre-history to the end times – shows us God's merciful love, which always takes the form of mercy when it addresses Man, who is weak and sinful by nature. Inspired by God, the Holy Scriptures speak to us about God, Who is merciful and makes the first move to meet sinful mankind.

Yet when we read the Bible, many of us are still unable to see God's merciful love on its pages. Tainted and injured by sin, we

have lost the ability which we had at the beginning to see things the way God sees them. We need to have the eyes of our heart enlightened (Eph. 1. 18; New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition) to read the Bible and the entire history of salvation as a poem about God's love for His children. We need individuals who — having been chosen by God and purified by grace — have received new eyes that allow them to see more deeply. Some of the people who have been granted this gift are the Saints who have been enabled to see and read the sacred writings more profoundly, and St. Faustina is certainly one of them. She is a gift from God for us; and her extraordinary charism of knowing and spreading the knowledge of God's mercy, as well as her deep mystical experience, which she describes in her Diary, may serve as a special commentary to the Scriptures.

We may ask how could that be. An uneducated woman who was not a Bible scholar writing a commentary to the Bible? Yet as soon as we start reading her Diary, we realise that many a scholar could never have managed to present a truth as important as God's mercy as aptly as Sister Faustina has done in her Diary. She neither quotes passages from the Bible, nor comments on specific verses directly, yet it would be quite right to say that Jesus' Secretary was truly biblical. Sister Faustina the Apostle of Mercy helps us to look at everything with new eyes; to see that what God has done for mankind, about which we can read in revealed Scripture, is a sign of His infinite mercy. Sister Faustina lets us see that the most important truth that God wants to reveal to mankind is His mercy.

This book takes the form of a diptych. Each of its chapters is made up of two parts presenting the truth of Divine mercy. The first part, by biblical scholar Father Marcin Ciunel M.S., gives

a first-rate account of God's merciful love as revealed in the history of our salvation right up to the ultimate revelation of God's mercy in the Incarnation of the Son of God, His Death and Resurrection, and in the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Church and the Mother of God, who has become the Mother of Mercy for us. The second part of the diptych, by Sister Maria Emanuela Gemza, OLM, presents a special commentary to the Holy Bible, showing God's infinite mercy in all that He has done for Mankind. "Whatever I look at, everything tells me of His mercy," (Diary 651) Jesus' Secretary writes. We can discover and learn more about this truth; with Sister Faustina we can contemplate His mercy, which is as faithful as a father's love, and as gentle and sympathetic as the gentlest mother's love.

This diptych will help us to understand this extraordinary mystery, that the Bible takes us to Sister Faustina's Diary, and the Diary brings us back to the Bible. We need God's light to read the Holy Scriptures and understand the spiritual message in it which is of the utmost importance for us. And often we need to be guided by a simple and straightforward explanation, which may be found in the spiritual Diary of Sister Faustina, the Apostle of Divine Mercy. As we read through her notes on Divine mercy in the work of creation, in the Incarnation and Redemption, in the gift of the Church and Mary, the Mother of the Church, we find in ourselves an urge to take the Bible into our hands and there to discover and learn ever more about God Who is rich in mercy. And also there, by meditating upon the Word of God, we may encounter Him as the living, merciful God, as God Who takes the first step to meet us.

The purpose of this book is not only to help us to know and understand the mystery of Divine mercy, but above all to help

us personally encounter the God of Mercy. Exactly this personal experience of God and His merciful love can convince us of the unchanging truth that we have always been loved, are loved now, and will be loved forever. That's why each chapter contains aids to help readers make a connection between what they have read in this book and their own lives. And so, at the end of each biblical section we have put some questions for readers' personal reflection; and at the end of each of the sections based on St. Faustina's Diary we have put in points for meditation to help with personal prayer.

If we treat the truth of Divine mercy not just as a fine and admirable idea but as a truth that completely transforms our image of God, ourselves, and our fellow Man, then the words of Pope Francis, that "Mercy [is] the bridge that connects God and [M]an, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness" (MV 2) will come true for us.

We hope all of our Dear Readers, especially the Apostles of Divine Mercy, who start out on the road of knowing and contemplating the God of mercy, will discover the genuine happiness, peace, and joy that comes from the fact that all the time each and every one of us is loved, supported, led, and is being formed by the merciful love of God, Who loved us even before He created the world. And we hope that each and every one of us will be able to say after Sister Faustina: "I have come to know You, O God, as the fount of mercy by which all manner of souls are nourished and invigorated. O, how great is the Lord's mercy, greater than all His other attributes; mercy is God's greatest attribute; all that surrounds me tells me this" (Diary 611).

Sister Miriam Janiec, ISMM

List of symbols used throughout the book

Each chapter is divided into two parts:



Part One is on the Bible



Part Two is on St. Faustina's Diary



Reading material



Passages from the Bible
or the Diary of St. Faustina for prayer and reflection



Questions for reflection



Points for personal prayer



Notes





CHAPTER 1

GOD
REVEALS HIMSELF

FROM THE BIBLE

1

”” *In giving us [H]is Son, [H]is only Word (for [H]e possesses no other), [H]e spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word – and [He] has no more to say . . . because what [H]e spoke before to the prophets in parts, [H]e has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is [H]is Son*

St. John of the Cross

In the Church the recent decades have been a time of exceptional interest in the Word of God. After centuries of distrust, when an air of suspicion tended to be attached to individual persons who take the Holy Scriptures for their private reading, there has now come a time when church communities and congregations, spiritual movements and a variety of Bible groups have been turning with a growing sense of commitment to a study of the Bible. On the one hand, it has been a critical kind of reading. Encouraged by the scholarly work of theologians, contemporary Man has not hesitated to put the Bible to analytical examination, just as he would any other work of literature. Yet on the other hand, there is a growing feeling that the power of God’s Word transcends far beyond all that we are capable of understanding. For ages God has been speaking to Man, and the Word of God has been firmly shaping the lives of individuals, communities, and all of God’s people.



In the beginning was the Word

The first words of the Bible send us back to the beginning of the world: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth” (NJB *[New Jerusalem Bible]). According to these words, the first event in the history of the world was God’s act of creation. Out of a deep void God drew out heaven, earth, water, dry land, the plant and animal world, and finally Man. Why, and what was the purpose of His work?

Contemplating the beginning of the world, St John wrote in his Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word,” (Jn1:1) [NJB]. This brief statement expresses an intuition which the last of the evangelists develops in his other writings. A word has a sender and a recipient. A speaker does not send his words out into a void, instead he addresses them to his listeners. God addresses Man, who is listening to Him, because He wants to tell Man something. This attitude entails a choice, an interest, a specific direction of existence and action.

Both the work of creation itself as well as the whole of Man’s subsequent history are an expression of God’s love. God summons the world into existence – and in this very act shows that He wants to share Himself. He gives of Himself to Man and leads Man to meet Him. By creating the world and time, God, as it were, created a stage on which He then put Man to start a dialogue with Him. But before Man could begin to record the words of God, he had to learn God’s language. For centuries before the first verses of the Bible were written down, God had been patiently teaching Man to read His signs.

* Bible citations taken from The New Jerusalem Bible unless otherwise indicated.

DIVINE MERCY

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Introduction

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