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# MISSION OF MERCY

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# MISSION OF MERCY

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## Introduction

The Apostles of Divine Mercy have waited for a formation manual on the mission of Sr. Faustina Kowalska for a long time. Up to now, formative content has either been delivered in the form of conferences or scattered throughout various publications. Now, all those following in the footsteps of the Apostle of Divine Mercy are being given this book to help them enter into the depths of her spirituality and prophetic mission.

The first part of this publication is devoted to Sr. Faustina's spirituality and mission, which centres on the most beautiful mystery of our faith – the mercy of God. Its knowledge and contemplation lead not only to a relationship of friendship with God but also give rise to and develop within us an attitude of trust in Him and sacrificial love of neighbour, as well as a desire to share this gift with all those we meet along the paths of our lives. The individual topics are in the form of conferences that discuss the spiritual heritage of the Apostle of Divine Mercy, i.e., what constitutes the very core of her spirituality and prophetic mission, as well as its continuation in the movement of the Apostles of Divine Mercy.

The second part focuses in the devotion to the Divine Mercy in the forms that Jesus gave to Sr. Faustina. It contains not only an interpretation of the devotion's correct understanding, practice, and preaching but also many practical tips, answers to frequently asked questions, and related information.

The elaboration of each topic and particular form of devotion is didactic in nature. This is because the practice of this devotion,

it's correct propagation in our daily life, the church (including one's family and parish) and the world depends on a good understanding and assimilation of this knowledge.

We would therefore like to wish all those who will make use of this handbook a personal, tender, and friendly relationship with Christ and that its reading and study will lead to a growing fascination with the mystery of God's mercy and to the discovery of the beauty and richness of Christian mercy and a fruitful apostolate. We wish this, especially for all members of the Association of Apostles of the Divine Mercy "Faustinum", for whom this book constitutes a manual for the first formation in the series St. Faustina's Mission and Spirituality. We trust that reading it will help us to become more and more a living reflection, image, and icon of the Merciful Jesus and to participate more and more fully in His life and mission of revealing to the modern world the mystery of the merciful love of the Heavenly Father, for only in it is there salvation, earthly and eternal happiness, and peace for the world.

Our heartfelt thanks to Sr. M. Elżbieta Siepak, ISMM, for her contribution to this handbook. We would like to thank her for her valuable guidance, for sharing her knowledge and experience, and above all for her fascination with the mystery of the Divine Mercy and with the person and mission of our Patron, Saint Faustina.

Sisters of the Faustinum

## A message to the Apostles of Divine Mercy

“There is nothing that man needs more than Divine Mercy,” said Pope John Paul II. We understand these words more and more in the context of the moral and spiritual condition of contemporary man and the world, which seems to be completely immersed in the *mysterium iniquitatis*.

God, who knows everything and is mercy itself, prepared in advance the remedy and means of salvation for mankind because He desires the salvation of every human being. He has also acted in this way in our time, by communicating the message of Mercy to a simple nun, Sr. Faustina Kowalska, in the silence of the monasteries of the congregation, and then sending her on a prophetic mission to the whole world. To this work, which God initiated in the life of Sr. Faustina and through her in the Church, He invites everyone; in a special way, He invites the Congregation in which the Apostle of Divine Mercy lived (and which is the depository of her spiritual legacy), and the members and volunteers of the Faustinum Association who are His closest collaborators in the apostolic mission of making God’s merciful love present in the world through the witness of life, deeds, words, and prayer.

We are sent by God to the modern world, like Jonah to Nineveh, to proclaim to it the message of God’s merciful love for man, to cry out for mercy “for us and the whole world.” Through the cry of a reluctant prophet who preached only five words, a great city, which was a three days’ journey away, repented and was saved. It wasn’t Jonah who converted them, because he didn’t even go through the whole city and didn’t want to convert his enemies,

but God did. Using Jonah, God saved the people of Nineveh by showing them mercy. Are we not able to save the whole world? To save people for eternity by offering our Heavenly Father His most beloved Son “in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world?” It is not we who will do this, but God through us, if we accept His invitation to collaborate in this great work, if we live His message and bring it in every possible way to all those we meet along the paths of our lives and reach at the ends of the earth with our prayers. Then we will bring into the ark of mercy, like Noah and the ark, not only members of our household and those close to our hearts, but also all people, especially those in danger of losing their salvation.

In order to participate fruitfully in this mission, it is necessary to prepare oneself for it and to constantly improve one’s spiritual and apostolic life. It is for this purpose that this handbook has been created. May Jesus, using the content of each chapter, not only expand knowledge, but also transform hearts and ignite them with the fire of Mercy, that Mercy by which all those who are thirsty will find the light, the warmth of God’s love and a deep trust in the Lord!

Sr. M. Elżbieta Siepak ISMM  
Honorary member of “Faustinum”

Kraków-Łagiewniki, 6 March 2021  
25th Anniversary of the Faustinum Association

## List of abbreviations

- AA Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity “Apostolicam Actuositatem” (1965)
- BF “Breviarium Fidei: a Selection of Doctrinal Statements of the Church”
- ChrV Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Christus Vivit” (2019)
- DD Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter “Dies Domini” on the celebration of Sunday (1998)
- DM Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter “Dives in Misericordia” on Divine Mercy (1980)
- Diary St. Faustina Kowalska,  
“Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul”
- CCL Code of Canon Law (1983)
- MV Pope Francis, “Misericordiae Vultus” (2015)
- UUS Pope John Paul II, Encyclical „Ut unum sint” on ecumenical activity (1995)
- VC Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Vita Consecrata” (1996)

- VS Pope John Paul II, Encyclical “Veritatis Splendor”  
on certain fundamental questions regarding the  
Church’s moral teaching (1993)
- ISMM Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy
- ZMT “Źródła Myśli Teologicznej” (Sources of Theological  
Thought) (ed.) A. Bandura, A. Baron, T. Górski, H. Pietras  
i E. Staniek, Kraków (1996)





FIRST PART

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# ST. FAUSTINA'S MISSION





CHAPTER 1

ST. FAUSTINA  
AND HER SPIRITUAL LEGACY



Jesus addressed Sister Faustina using a variety of phrases, each in some way showing the depth of the relationship that existed between them – who she was to Him and her identity. Here are some of the expressions we find in her spiritual records: “Secretary of Mine” (Diary 1275) and “Apostle of My mercy” (Diary 1142); right down to the affectionate words: “My daughter” (Diary 1641), “My Bride” (Diary 158), “Beloved Pearl of My Heart” (Diary 1061), “You are a sweet berry in a small, select group” (Diary 393). This intensity and intimacy of the relationship took shape throughout Sr. Faustina’s life. She grew into each of these terms over the years and the experiences she lived through.

Today, she is ranked by theologians as one of the greatest mystics in the history of the Church and among the most famous saints. Saint John Paul II called her “a gift of God to our time, a gift from the land of Poland to the whole Church.” A gift that is extraordinarily rich because it shows not only a model and style of Christian life, but also the message of Mercy, in which millions of people can engage in the Apostolic Divine Mercy Movement, bringing it to the whole world. In the introduction to the Chinese edition of her Diary, Hong Kong Archbishop John Tong Hon wrote: “It is God’s greatest gift given to the world ... the spiritual treasure of the whole Church.” A treasure which, as Pope Benedict XVI noted, shows in full light the newness of the Christian message in an age which has known the cruelty of the official ideologies of fascism and communism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pope Benedict XVI, “John Paul II: My Beloved Predecessor” (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2007), p. 47.

## Beloved pearl

It all started as simply as Jesus' hidden life in Nazareth. Sr. Faustina was born on 25 August 1905 in Głogowiec, Poland. Two days later, at her baptism in the parish church in Świnice Warckie, she was given the name Helena, which her father, Stanisław Kowalski, and mother, Marianna, had chosen for her. She was their third of ten children. As a child, she stood out among her siblings for her piety and service. She had a special experience of God's love at the early age of seven during Vespers and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Following this experience, she longed for a more perfect life. She admitted, "I had felt the grace of a vocation to the religious life ever since the age of seven" (Diary 7). She received her First Holy Communion two years later in 1914. Up until she was sixteen, her days, weeks, and years passed between Głogowiec, where she lived and helped her parents in various activities, and Świnice Warckie, where she attended school for only three years<sup>2</sup> and where her parish church was located, where she so loved to pray.

When she was sixteen, she went to work in Aleksandrów Łódzki, where she worked for Mr. and Mrs Bryszewski. She asked her parents for permission to join the convent but did not receive it. As a result, she went to serve in Łódź, where she first stayed with her uncle Rapacki and served with the Franciscan Tertiaries, and then with the owner of a grocery shop, Marcjanna Sadowska Wieczorek. When she was eighteen years old, she once again

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<sup>2</sup> Helena Kowalska started attending the school in Świnice in 1917 as soon as it opened. However, by 1919 or 1920, she had to leave it, like most pupils her age, to make room for younger children. Faustina: The Mystic and Her Message", (Stockbridge: Marian Press, 2014), p. 39.

asked her parents for permission to enter a convent, but this time too they refused (Diary 8). She then began to avoid God internally. She heard God's call but tried to drown it out with entertainments. It was a great torment for her. However, God's grace prevailed in her soul (Diary 8).

A groundbreaking event happened at a dance in the Wenecja Park in Łódź (now the Juliusz Słowacki Park). While dancing, the then nineteen-year-old Helena saw for the first time the suffering Jesus, who told her: "How long am I to put up with you, and how long are you going to keep Me waiting?." (Diary 9) On that day, she understood what God was asking of her. She stopped "leading Him on". After praying in the Cathedral of Łódź, she decided to follow the voice of God's call and enter the convent. As inspired, she went to Warsaw for this purpose. In July 1924, she arrived at the convent gate of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy on Żytnia Street in Warsaw. This was not the first convent door she knocked on, for, as she confessed in her spiritual diary, she had previously been refused everywhere else (Diary 13). This is hardly surprising. "Inconspicuous, a little old, with quite a frail complexion, a servant girl, a cook by profession, neither possessed a dowry, nor even a modest dowry chest."<sup>3</sup> In a word, "nothing special" – as one sister characterised her when she saw



**Helena Kowalska**  
Photograph, 1923

<sup>3</sup> "Wspomnienia o św. Siostrze Faustynie Kowalskiej ze Zgromadzenia Matki Bożej Miłosierdzia (Memoirs of Saint Sister Faustina Kowalska of the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy)" (Kraków: Misericordia Publications, 2013), p. 90.

# MISSION OF MERCY

God, who knows everything and is mercy itself, prepared in advance the remedy and means of salvation for mankind because He desires the salvation of every human being. He has also acted in this way in our time, by communicating the message of Mercy to a simple nun, Sr. Faustina Kowalska, in the silence of the monasteries of the congregation, and then sending her on a prophetic mission to the whole world. To this work, which God initiated in the life of Sr. Faustina and through her in the Church, He invites everyone; in a special way, He invites the Congregation in which the Apostle of Divine Mercy lived (and which is the depository of her spiritual legacy), and the members and volunteers of the Faustinum Association who are His closest collaborators in the apostolic mission of making God's merciful love present in the world through the witness of life, deeds, words, and prayer.

From the message to the Apostles of Divine Mercy

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