

Sr. M. Alicja Zelmańska

THE MERCIFUL IN EVERYDAY LIFE



Reflections with Saint Faustina

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CONTENTS

Introduction | 9

THE SOURCE OF MERCY IS INSIDE US | 13

The Secret of Saint Faustina | 15

Introduction | 15

1. The profound unity with God in everyday life of Saint Faustina | 16
2. How can we benefit from the spiritual path of Sister Faustina in our everyday life? | 28

The final prayer | 39

God is present in man | 41

Introduction | 41

1. God present in man through Creation | 42
2. God is present in man through His grace | 47
3. How did Sister Faustina experience God in her soul in her everyday life? | 51

The final prayer | 55

Rediscovering the value of silence

in order to be capable of mercy | 57

Introduction | 57

1. What is the purpose of silence? | 58

2. What to do in order to reach recollection
and silence of the heart? | 72

The final prayer | 79

HELP ME, O LORD, THAT I MAY BE MERCIFUL | 81

The prayer “Help me, O Lord” | 83

Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful | 85

Introduction | 85

1. Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful,
so that I may never suspect or judge from appearances | 86
2. Help me, O Lord, that I may look for what is beautiful
in my neighbours’ souls and come to their rescue | 93

From the life of Saint Faustina | 106

The final prayer | 107

Help me, O Lord, that my ears may be merciful | 109

Introduction | 109

1. To have merciful ears | 109
2. The merciful ears of Jesus | 112
3. The merciful ears of Our Lady | 117
4. Merciful ears – the art of listening | 118

From the life of Saint Faustina | 125

The final prayer | 128

Help me, O Lord, that my tongue may be merciful | 129

Introduction | 129

1. What to do in order to have a merciful tongue? | 130
2. Silence bearing fruits of mercy | 142

From the life of Saint Faustina | 144

The final prayer | 146

Help me, O Lord, that my hands and feet

may be merciful | 147

Introduction | 147

1. Help me, O Lord, that my hands may be merciful | 148

2. Help me, O Lord, that my feet may be merciful | 154

3. Loving in deeds – our merciful hands and feet | 158

From the life Saint Faustina | 169

The final prayer | 170

Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful | 171

Introduction | 171

1. What does it mean to have a merciful heart? | 171

2. I desire that your heart be formed after the model
of My merciful Heart | 182

The final prayer | 197

Deed, word, prayer – the fullness of mercy | 199

Introduction | 199

1. The methods of exercising mercy are the methods
to preach the Gospel | 200

2. Proclaiming mercy by means of our words and our life –
participation in the prophetic function of Christ | 203

3. Exercising mercy – participation in the kingly function
of Christ | 208

4. Pleading for mercy – participation in the priestly
function of Christ | 215

The final prayer | 228

The method of showing mercy | 231

Introduction | 231

1. The method of giving may repulse and hurt others | 231
2. Exercising mercy following the example of Jesus | 233

The final prayer | 246

We shall be judged from mercy | 247

Introduction | 247

1. Even the strongest faith is of no avail without works | 247
3. Whatever you do to your fellow brother you do for Me | 248
4. Experiencing God's mercy on the day of judgment | 252

The final prayer | 254

We can do good always and everywhere | 255**The final word | 259**

INTRODUCTION

We are beginning our meetings with Saint Faustina entitled “The Merciful in Everyday Life.” We intent to hear Pope Francis’ wish expressed in the bull “*Misericordiae Vultus*” that Christians may reflect on the works of mercy and rediscover them¹. We want to see how Saint Faustina understood the works of mercy and how she performed them in everyday life. We will refer to her prayer asking for the grace of being merciful towards others that she wrote down in her *Diary* under the number 163. With her, we will ask our merciful God to help us that our eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet and heart may be merciful (cf. *Diary* 163), that is, that mercy may be expressed in all our being, permeating our thoughts, words and actions. We desire to learn from Saint Faustina how to be merciful not only from time to time, in great events or charitable works, but always and everywhere, that is, in everyday life. Our aim is to encourage, deepen and strengthen the spirit of mercy towards those whom we encounter in our daily life.

Before we start our reflections on the particular invocations of the prayer “Help me, O Lord”, we will first focus our attention on the truth of our faith about God’s presence in man through Creation and, above all, through His grace. This truth – about the Holy Trinity dwelling in our souls – held an important place in the spiritual life of Saint Faustina and

1 Cf. Pope Francis, Bull *Misericordiae Vultus*, 15.

in the formation of her spirit of mercy. Moreover, we will try to realise that in order to be capable of mercy; we need to find the time to listen to the Word of God. This means that we need to rediscover the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us and thus to contemplate God's mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle². We will also delve into the secret of Sister Faustina, that is, into the mysteries of her profound unity with God in everyday life in order to discover in our own lives this life-giving bond with Him who dwells in our soul.

Discovering the living God dwelling in the depths of her soul and uniting with Him through love³ constituted an essential element of Saint Faustina's way to develop the spirit of mercy. She was aware that it was God's mercy that was to reach her brothers and sisters through her – through her eyes, ears, hands, feet and heart⁴, and to be present and act on earth wherever she was, wherever she worked and lived. The source of such (Christian) mercy is Jesus – the Mercy Incarnate – who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives in our souls, justified by grace. That is why she earnestly strived to unite with God dwelling in her soul as closely as possible. This practice of uniting with the merciful Jesus dwelling in her soul became her permanent spiritual exercise till her death.

The author of *Diary* perfectly understood that our human mercy is a participation in the mercy of God, and therefore

2 Cf. *ibid.*,13.

3 Understood as an act of will – cf. *Diary* 576.

4 "...may the greatest of all divine attributes, that of Your unfathomable mercy pass through my heart and soul to my neighbor" (*Diary* 163).

it is necessary for it to be closely related and even united with Divine Mercy in everyday life. The presence of Jesus, Mercy Incarnate, in her soul made her heart burn with mercy towards her neighbors. By uniting with Him, adoring and contemplating Him in the depths of her heart, the Apostle of Divine Mercy wished to be His living reflection and to be completely transformed into His mercy (cf. *Diary* 163; 785; 1242)⁵. Her prayer “Help me, O Lord” is an expression of this burning thirst in her soul. Let us reflect on every invocation of this prayer, asking Jesus, together with Saint Faustina, to make also our eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet and heart merciful, so that His mercy may permeate all our life, our thoughts, words and actions.

At the end of our meetings with Saint Faustina we will refer to the words of Jesus from the *Diary* pointing out that the fullness of mercy consists in deeds, words and prayer (cf. *Diary* 742), and we will try to realize how important for our salvation it is to shape in ourselves the attitude and the spirit of mercy.

- 5 “I want to be completely transformed into Your mercy and to be Your living reflection, O Lord” (*Diary* 163). “Adore Him in your heart; do not go out from your inmost being... Dwell with Him continuously in your own heart. He will be your strength” (*Diary* 785). “My Jesus, penetrate me through and through so that I might be able to reflect You in my whole life. Divinize me so that my deeds may have supernatural value. Grant that I may have love, compassion and mercy for every soul without exception. O my Jesus, each of Your saints reflects one of Your virtues; I desire to reflect Your compassionate heart, full of mercy; I want to glorify it. Let Your mercy, O Jesus, be impressed upon my heart and soul like a seal, and this will be my badge in this and the future life. Glorifying Your mercy is the exclusive task of my life” (*Diary* 1242).

May Saint Faustina always assist and teach us how to trust and be merciful and, in this way, may she lead us to Heaven. Indeed, she promised that she would not forget about us:

Poor earth, I will not forget you. Although I feel that I will be immediately drowned in God as in an ocean of happiness that will not be an obstacle to my returning to earth to encourage souls and incite them to trust in God's mercy. Indeed, this immersion in God will give me the possibility of boundless action (*Diary* 1582)⁶.

In eternal happiness, I will not forget that on earth, I will obtain God's mercy for all (*Diary* 1653).

Kraków, 5th October, 2015
The Feast of Saint Faustina

6 "O My Jesus, although I will go to You, and You will fill me with Yourself, and that will make my happiness complete, I will nevertheless not forget about humanity. I desire to draw aside the veils of heaven, so that the earth would have no doubts about the Divine Mercy. My repose is in proclaiming Your mercy. The soul gives the greatest glory to its Creator when it turns with trust to the Divine Mercy" (*Diary* 930).

**THE SOURCE OF MERCY
IS INSIDE US**

THE SECRET OF SAINT FAUSTINA

I have never sought God in some far-off place, but within myself. It is in the depths of my own being that I commune with my God (*Diary* 1302).

Introduction

Saint Faustina, I want to learn from you how to be merciful in everyday life. You show me with your life how important it is to be merciful “always and everywhere,” that is, in daily life. Jesus Himself spoke to you about this:

I demand from you deeds of Mercy, which are to arise out of love for Me. You are to show mercy to your neighbor always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse or absolve yourself from it (*Diary* 742).

We cannot be merciful in this way by relying on ourselves. You were aware that in order to be merciful “always and everywhere,” following the example of Jesus, you had to be closely united with Him who is the Source of Mercy. You knew that you had to be united with Him not only during prayer, but also in all the events of your everyday life. How did you achieve this? What is the secret of your intimate relationship with God in the ordinary events of your daily life – among your everyday works and duties? What is the secret of this spiritual way along which Jesus Himself led you?

1. The profound unity with God in everyday life of Saint Faustina

What is the secret of the profound unity with God among mundane chores, duties, hardships and difficulties, among the events of day-to-day life? What is the secret of combining mysticism and ordinariness in her life? What is the secret of the spiritual way, along which she was led by Jesus Himself? This question has been intriguing me for some time. As I searched for the answer in Sister Faustina's *Diary*, I looked for what had been especially important for Jesus in the process of shaping her spirit. What did He demand from her in the practice of day-to-day life? I was amazed to find that for her entire life, He had "demanded" that she constantly join Him who is living inside her heart, that all her prayers, fasts, sacrifices, works, hardships and sufferings be combined with the prayers, fasts, sacrifices, works, and sufferings of Jesus (cf. *Diary* 1544; 531).

1.1. "Spiritual exercise" of uniting with the Merciful Jesus living in one's soul

Sister Faustina was practicing this "spiritual exercise" of uniting with the Merciful Jesus living in her soul throughout her life. We know these facts from her *Diary*, since in her accounts from the monthly retreat days we always find an entry showing that her constant resolution, and therefore also internal work, was to unite with Jesus who was present in her soul⁷.

7 Cf. *Diary* 162; 703; 743; 790; 861; 905; 1105; 1177; 1352; 1778.

Jesus Himself recommended that she practiced this virtue and demanded faithfulness in the execution thereof (cf. *Diary* 1544). When towards the end of her life (in January, 1938) she wanted to change this practice, Jesus did not let her. He said:

Do not change your particular examen which I have given you through Father Andrasz; namely, that you unite yourself with Me continually. This is what I am clearly asking of you today (*Diary* 1544).

He also said that constant union with Him through love is the goal of the life of Her soul (cf. *Diary* 576), as well as the goal of her companions (cf. *Diary* 531).

In God's eyes this must be of paramount importance for the development and strengthening of one's spiritual life, and for the development in oneself the attitude of trust and mercy, because this is the very attitude that Jesus wanted to shape in Sister Faustina.

1.1.1. Discovering a living God dwelling in the innermost part of the soul and uniting with Him

On the path of uniting with Jesus in the hardships of everyday life, this practice has a powerful meaning. It is strictly connected with the truth of our faith about the presence of God in man through the act of creation and, most of all, through His grace. This truth on the dwelling of the Holy Trinity in the soul was an important influence in the spiritual life of Sister Faustina and in the shaping of her spirit of mercy. For

Sister Faustina, finding God living inside her soul and uniting with Him through love (understood as the act of will – cf. *Diary* 576) was something of fundamental consequences. She was aware if she wanted to follow the example of Jesus, if she wanted to be merciful, to reflect His mercy and become God's living image in everyday life, she must be united with Him not only through prayer but always and everywhere. She knew this was going to be the Divine Mercy which wishes to reach out to others through her, to be present and act on earth, also in the places she herself worked and existed.

The source of such (Christian) mercy is Jesus – Mercy Incarnate – who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives in our soul founded through faith. Therefore she strived to unite with Him in her soul. There exists a deep Source in us, where God is present in our soul. The presence of Jesus, Mercy Incarnate, in the soul, uniting with Him, adoring Him, contemplating Him – in everyday life – inside her heart, initiated the desire in her to be His living reflection (cf. *Diary* 163; 785). To such communion with Jesus she was encouraged by the Mother of God herself:

Adore Him in your heart, do not go out from your inmost being. Dwell with Him continuously in your own heart (*Diary* 785).

The aim of this practice is to become a living reflection of the Divine Mercy, a living image of the merciful Jesus. This is the vocation of each Christian: to reflect the Divine Mercy throughout his life, to become the image of the merciful God. Jesus said to Sister Faustina:

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What can we do so that the Divine Mercy is manifested in our entire being, permeating our thoughts, words and activities? How to be merciful not only from time to time, during significant life events or acts of charity, but “always and everywhere” in our daily life. This book attempts at finding answers to these questions with an aim to enliven, deepen and strengthen the spirit of mercy towards all those whom we meet each day on our paths of life.

Saint Faustina understood well that human mercy partakes of the Divine Mercy, therefore it demands constant communion and profound unity with Jesus – the Source of Mercy not only during prayer but in all events of daily life. Her life reveals how important it is for the shaping of the attitude of mercy to discover in our heart the presence of God – the Source of Mercy and to commune with Him through love. By uniting with Jesus, by constantly adoring and contemplating Him in the innermost depths of her heart, Saint Faustina longed to be His living image and wished to be transformed entirely into His mercy. Her prayer *Help me, O Lord* is an expression of this strong desire burning in her.



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