

Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

March-April, 2015

“THE JOY OF LENT”

Reflecting on Lent. Tonight we are halfway through Lent. We have gone through twenty days and three Sundays. We have twenty days and three Sundays ahead. So it is a good moment to stop and look. What have we been doing with this Lent? Going back and listening to Benedict again:

During these days, therefore, we will add to the usual measure of our service something by way of private prayer and abstinence from food or drink, so that each of us will have something above the assigned measure to offer God of his own will with the joy of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 1:6). In other words, let each one deny himself some food, drink, sleep, needless talking and idle jesting, and look forward to holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing. [1]



As I listen to those words, I ask myself, To what extent during these past twenty days have I been living in the joy of the Holy Spirit, looking eagerly forward to Easter? To what extent have I been keeping up to my Lenten practices in prayer and self denial?

Marked by joy. This man Benedict fascinates me—his emphasis on joy. How many people have you run into in your life who when you speak of Lent, the first thing that comes to mind is joy? Where is this man coming from? He has set his mark. This is what Lent is all about—entering into the fullness and joy of Easter. Everything else that you do is in the light of that. If I do more praying and fasting, it is just to look forward to, and to be aware of, the joy of the resurrection. The pow-

er of that excitement! That what I am called to as a man who has been baptized into the risen Christ is to live in the light of the resurrection. Right now. The powerful grace of Easter calls us to enter more fully into the wonder of that joy.

If I reflect on what Lent has meant to me in these first twenty days, and it has not been marked by joy, why not? Why am I not filled with joy at the prospect of Easter? What can I do about it? What am I going to do about it? Maybe I do not want to be happy after all. Maybe I have given up all hope that I really could be happy. Maybe I want to step forward, as Paul says, “Forgetting what has been up to now” [2]. Set the mark which is the full joy of Easter. Then look at what I need to do—what I want to do—during the next twenty days of Lent so that Easter joy can just explode in my being.

Am I coming so much out of the past? “I have never been a very joyous person. This is ridiculous. I cannot be a joyous person.” Is that where we are coming from? Do we want to come from there? Or can we step out?

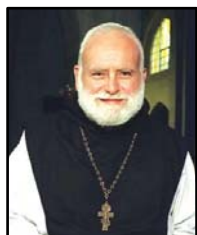
A sign of hope and joy. As the grace of Easter shines upon us more fully in these last twenty days, what can we do to let it in our own lives so that it can shine through us into the community? Then it can shine forth from the community to a world that so much needs the joyful hope of resurrection. I think that is what a contemplative community is all about—to be a sign and a source of hope and joy. To be, in some way, instruments which God can use to fulfill Christ’s prayer, “Father that they may share my joy and that their joy may be complete” [3].

The next Oblate meeting will be April 19, 2015 at 3:30 PM in the Gallagher Room on the first floor of Stowe Hall. Oblate Novices will meet at 2:30.

The joy of Jesus. We love Christ. Everyone of us loves Christ so much that we gave our life to him. In an even more radical way than a man gives himself to his wife. We have given ourselves to Christ. We want what Christ wants. He wants us to be filled with the joy of God. That joy that was his as the son of God in communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Somehow or other, there is this profound paradox (mystery). Christ suffered as no man has ever suffered. He wept over Jerusalem. He hungered. He thirst. He labored. He was tired, disappointed, and betrayed. It was all there. Yet from the depths of his divine being, this person was just filled with the divine joy. He is the divine joy. That is the kind of joy I think he is talking about here. Even as we have the heartaches, headaches, concerns, pains, and tears, there is a deep joy down in the depths.

A source of joy for others. I think that is what Benedict is talking about here when he is talking about prayer, fasting, and abstaining during Lent. In some way we are denying ourselves so we can get a little more in touch—live more out of—the profound joy that shines forth from the risen Christ. The joy that shines into the life of each of us who has been baptized into Christ. It is the joy that shines forth from us into the world if we are transparent. The asceticism and the prayer is to help us to become more transparent so that we ourselves may experience the joy more fully and profoundly. Then we will be a hope and source of that joy for our brothers and sisters.

May we enter the second half of Lent with renewed hope, forgetting what is behind, setting the mark, and pressing forward to the fullness of life in the risen Jesus. And may the Divine Assistance remain with us always. Amen.



A talk given on the Rule of Saint Benedict
by Abbot M. Basil Pennington, OCSO
Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Monastery
Thursday, March 7, 2002

DEVOTION TO THE DIVINE MERCY (MERCY SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 2015)

The message of The Divine Mercy is simple. It is that God loves us — all of us. And, he wants us to recognize that His mercy is greater than our sins, so that we will call upon Him with trust, receive His mercy, and let it flow through us to others. Thus, all will come to share His joy.

The Divine Mercy message is one we can call to mind simply by remembering ABC:

A: Ask for His Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world.

B: Be merciful. God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. He wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us.

C: Completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive.



This message and devotion to Jesus as The Divine Mercy is based on the writings of Saint Faustina Kowalska, an uneducated Polish nun who, in obedience to her spiritual director, wrote a diary of about 600 pages recording the revelations she received about God's mercy. Even before her death in 1938, the devotion to The Divine Mercy had begun to spread.

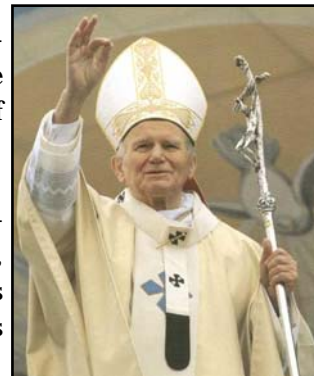
Feast of Mercy

Among all of the elements of devotion to The Divine Mercy requested by our Lord through St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, the Feast of Mercy holds first place. The Lord's will with regard to its establishment was already made known in His first revelation to the saint, as recorded in her Diary. In all, there were 14 revelations concerning the desired feast.

Our Lord's explicit desire is that this feast be celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. This Sunday is designated in "The Liturgy of the Hours and the Celebration of the Eucharist" as the "Octave Day of Easter." It was officially called the Second Sunday of Easter after the liturgical reform of Vatican II. Now, by the Decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the name of this liturgical day has been changed to: "Second Sunday of Easter, or Divine Mercy Sunday."

'Now On Throughout the Church'

Pope John Paul II made the surprise announcement of this change in his homily at the canonization of St. Faustina on April 30, 2000. There, he declared: "It is important then that we accept the whole message that comes to us from the word of God on this Second Sunday of Easter, which from now on throughout the Church, will be called 'Divine Mercy Sunday.' "



By the words "the whole message," Pope John Paul II was referring to the connection between the "Easter Mystery of the Redemption" — in other words, the suffering, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, followed by the sending of the Holy Spirit — and this Feast of Divine Mercy, the Octave Day of Easter, which fulfills the grace of atonement as lived through by Christ Jesus and offered to all who come to Him with trust.

This connection is evident from the scripture readings appointed for this Sunday. As John Paul said, citing the Responsorial Psalm of the Liturgy, "The Church sings ... as if receiving from Christ's lips these words of the Psalm." "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His steadfast love (= mercy) endures forever" (Ps 118:1). And then, Pope John Paul II developed the connection further: "[This comes] from the lips of the risen Christ, who bears the great message of Divine Mercy and entrusts its ministry to the Apostles in the Upper Room: **'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you. ... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'**" (Jn 20:21-23).

Be Merciful as Your Father is Merciful

We are not only to receive the mercy of God, but to use it by being merciful to others through our actions, our words, and our prayers; in other words, we are to practice the Corporal and Spiritual Works (Acts) of Mercy.

Corporal Works	Spiritual Works
Feed the hungry	Teach the ignorant
Give drink to the thirsty	Pray for the living & dead
Clothe the naked	Correct sinners
Shelter the homeless	Counsel those in doubt
Comfort the prisoners	Console the sorrowful
Visit the sick	Bear wrongs patiently
Bury the dead	Forgive wrongs willingly

Jesus' Call to Mercy

"I demand from you deeds of mercy, which are to arise out of love for Me. You are to show mercy to your neighbors always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse or absolve yourself from it.

I am giving you three ways of exercising mercy toward your neighbor: the first — by deed, the second — by word, the third — by prayer. In these three degrees is contained the fullness of mercy, and it is an unquestionable proof of love for Me. By this means a soul glorifies and pays reverence to My mercy." (Diary, 742)

"Many souls ... are often worried because they do not have the material means with which to carry out an act of mercy. Yet spiritual mercy, which requires neither permissions nor storehouses, is much more meritorious and is within the grasp of every soul.

If a soul does not exercise mercy somehow or other, it will not obtain My mercy on the day of judgment. Oh, if only souls knew how to gather eternal treasure for themselves, they would not be judged, for they would forestall My judgment with their mercy." (Diary 1317)

The Image of The Divine Mercy



In 1931, our Lord appeared to St. Faustina in a vision. She saw Jesus clothed in a white garment with His right hand raised in blessing. His left hand was touching His garment in the area of the Heart, from where two large rays came forth, one red and the other pale. She gazed intently at the Lord in silence, her soul filled with awe, but also with great joy. Jesus said to her:

Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You. I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish. I also promise victory over [its] enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death. I Myself will defend it as My own glory (Diary, 47, 48). I am offering people a vessel with which they are to keep coming for graces to the fountain of mercy. That vessel is this image with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You (327). I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and [then] throughout the world (47).

At the request of her spiritual director, St. Faustina asked the Lord about the meaning of the rays in the image. She heard these words in reply:

The two rays denote Blood and Water. The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls. These two rays issued forth from the depths of My tender mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross. Happy is the one who will dwell in their shelter, for the just hand of God shall not lay hold of him (299). By means of this image I shall grant many graces to souls. It is to be a reminder of the demands of My mercy, because even the strongest faith is of no avail without works (742).

These words indicate that the Image represents the graces of Divine Mercy poured out upon the world, especially through Baptism and the Eucharist.

Many different versions of this image have been painted, but our Lord made it clear that the painting itself is not what is important. When St. Faustina first saw the original image that was being painted under her direction, she wept in disappointment and complained to Jesus: "Who will paint You as beautiful as You are?" (313).

In answer, she heard these words: "Not in the beauty of the color, nor of the brush lies the greatness of this image, but in My grace" (313). So, no matter which version of the image we prefer, we can be assured that it is a vehicle of God's grace if it is revered with trust in His mercy.

The Divine Mercy Novena of Chaplets

A novena is typically nine days of prayer in preparation of a celebration of a feast day. The Chaplet can be said anytime, but the Lord specifically asked that it be recited as a novena the nine days before the Feast of Mercy. He promised, "**By this Novena (of Chaplets), I will grant every possible grace to souls.**" (796)

Intentions

For each of the nine days, our Lord gave Saint Faustina a different intention:

"I desire that during these nine days you bring souls to the fountain of My mercy, that they may draw therefrom strength and refreshment and whatever grace they have need of in the hardships of life, and especially at the hour of death."

First Day (Good Friday): "Today bring to Me all mankind, especially all sinners, and immerse them in the ocean of My mercy. In this way you will console Me in the bitter grief into which the loss of souls plunges Me."

Second Day: "Today bring to Me the Souls of Priests and Religious, and immerse them in My unfathomable mercy. It was they who gave me strength to endure My bitter Passion. Through them as through channels My mercy flows out upon mankind."

Third Day: "Today bring to Me all Devout and Faithful Souls, and immerse them in the ocean of My mercy. These souls brought me consolation on the Way of the Cross. They were a drop of consolation in the midst of an ocean of bitterness."

Fourth Day: "Today bring to Me those who do not believe in God and those who do not know Me, I was thinking also of them during My bitter Passion, and their future zeal comforted My Heart. Immerse them in the ocean of My mercy."

Fifth Day: "Today bring to Me the Souls of those who have separated themselves from My Church*, and immerse them in the ocean of My mercy. During My bitter Passion they tore at My Body and Heart, that is, My Church. As they return to unity with the Church My wounds heal and in this way they alleviate My Passion."

Sixth Day: "Today bring to Me the Meek and Humble Souls and the Souls of Little Children, and immerse them in My mercy. These souls most closely resemble My Heart. They strengthened Me during My bitter agony. I saw them as earthly Angels, who will keep vigil at My altars. I pour out upon them whole torrents of grace. I favor humble souls with My confidence."

Seventh Day: "Today bring to Me the Souls who especially venerate and glorify My Mercy, and immerse them in My mercy. These souls sorrowed most over my Passion and entered most deeply into My spirit. They are living images of My Compassionate Heart. These souls will shine with a special brightness in the next life. Not one of them will go into the fire of hell. I shall particularly defend each one of them at the hour of death."

Eighth Day: "Today bring to Me the Souls who are in the prison of Purgatory, and immerse them in the abyss of My mercy. Let the torrents of My Blood cool down their scorching flames. All these souls are greatly loved by Me. They are making retribution to My justice. It is in your power to bring them relief. Draw all the indulgences from the treasury of My Church and offer them on their behalf. Oh, if you only knew the torments they suffer, you would continually offer for them the alms of the spirit and pay off their debt to My justice."

Ninth Day: "Today bring to Me the Souls who have become Lukewarm, and immerse them in the abyss of My mercy. These souls wound My Heart most painfully. My soul suffered the most dreadful loathing in the Garden of Olives because of lukewarm souls. They were the reason I cried out: 'Father, take this cup away from Me, if it be Your will.' For them, the last hope of salvation is to run to My mercy."

**Our Lord's original words here were "heretics and schismatics," since He spoke to Saint Faustina within the context of her times. As of the Second Vatican Council, Church authorities have seen fit not to use those designations in accordance with the explanation given in the Council's Decree on Ecumenism (n.3). Every pope since the Council has reaffirmed that usage.*

The Chaplet of The Divine Mercy

Encourage souls to say the Chaplet which I have given you (1541). Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death (687). When they say this Chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the Merciful Savior (1541). Priests will recommend it to sinners as their last hope of salvation. Even if there were a sinner most hardened, if he were to recite this Chaplet only once, he would receive grace from My infinite mercy (687). I desire to grant unimaginable graces to those souls who trust in My mercy (687). Through the Chaplet you will obtain everything, if what you ask for is compatible with My will. (1731)

Prayed on ordinary rosary beads, The Chaplet of The Divine Mercy is an intercessory prayer that extends the offering of the Eucharist, so it is especially appropriate to use it after having received Holy Communion at Holy Mass. It may be said at any time, but our Lord specifically told St. Faustina to recite it during the nine days before the Feast of Mercy (the first Sunday after Easter).

It is likewise appropriate to pray the Chaplet during the "Hour of Great Mercy" — three o'clock each afternoon (recalling the time of Christ's death on the cross). In His revelations to St. Faustina, Our Lord asked for a special remembrance of His Passion at that hour.

How to Recite the Chaplet

The Chaplet of Mercy is recited using ordinary rosary beads of five decades. The Chaplet is preceded by two opening prayers from the Diary of Saint Faustina and followed by a closing prayer.

1. Make the Sign of the Cross
2. Our Father
3. Hail Mary
4. The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the



third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

5. The Eternal Father

Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

6. On the Ten Small Beads of Each Decade

For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

7. Repeat for the remaining decades

8. Conclude with Holy God (Repeat three times)

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

Much of the material in this newsletter is readily available in multiple places on the web. They have been collected and put into a single handout for your convenience. All material is from Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M., the official promoters of the Devotion to the Divine Mercy. For a full understanding of Divine Mercy, Divine Mercy Message and Devotion, by Fr. Seraphim Michalenko, MIC. Is highly recommended.

**The May meeting of the
Oblates will be on the 17th at
3:30 unless otherwise
announced.**