

Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

April, 2020

MEETING CHANGES AND CANCELLATIONS

The Oblate meeting for April 19, 2020 is cancelled. The next Novice Oblate meeting is scheduled for April 5 at 2:30 PM. If North Carolina issues a “stay-in-place” order then the meeting will be rescheduled when that order is lifted. Newsletters should go out normally and there will be more material posted to the website.

Future meetings:

May 17— Still scheduled but should be considered tentative based on circumstances and the advice from civil authorities.

June 14— Renewal of Oblations and new Oblations are cancelled until Fall. Currently this meeting remains scheduled.

Novice Oblate Meetings— Since this is a smaller group (less than 10), these meetings will be scheduled by the participants being mindful of the advice of civil authorities.

LECTIO DIVINA:

REQUISITES AND DISPOSITIONS

A Favorable Atmosphere

The Congress of Benedictine Abbots held in 1976 considered that *lectio divina* “demands a suitable formation” and “the creation of a favorable atmosphere.” Concerning the “suitable formation” we shall speak later. Here we shall try to determine what ought to be the “favorable atmosphere.” Unfortunately, the abbots gathered in congress failed to do so.

I think that a propitious climate for *lectio divina* should contain the following elements: it should be integrated with peace — exterior and interior, but especially the lat-

ter — relaxation, fraternal charity — for without charity true peace cannot exist — silence, free time. . . About the silence so necessary for listening, Dietrich Bonhoeffer observes, “We are silent before listening, because our thoughts are already directed to the message, as a child is silent when he or she enters the parents’s room. We are silent after hearing the Word of God, because it reechoes, lives and seeks to dwell in us.”

Peace, charity, silence, free time: these make up the atmosphere that supposedly reigns in monasteries. It is the monastic leisure (*otium*) on which medieval authors laid so much stress; the *vacare Deo*, being available to dedicate oneself to God. All of this, of course, does not mean disinterestedness or any break in the relations with each and every one of the brethren. The Bride, through one of her members, seeks and encounters the Bridegroom....

Purity of Heart

It is clear that favorable atmosphere, preparation, and suitable intellectual formation do not suffice. Cassian, the great monastic master, never ceases to repeat that human science, the study of Bible commentaries, serve little or no purpose for attaining that “spiritual understanding” of Scripture which nourishes the “interior person,” that is, life of union with God. Certainly, as he says, the Bible must be read assiduously; certainly we (the readers) must strive to memorize it, so that we may review in silence the passages we have learned, especially during the night, since often “we grasp its most hidden meanings” in sleep. But what is demanded before all things and above all things is “purity of heart.”

“So if your concern is to reach the light of spiritual knowledge and to do so not through the sin of empty boastfulness but rather by a purifying grace, then be enflamed first of all by the longing for this blessedness,” concerning which is said, “Happy are the clean of heart

for they shall see God.” Only after eradicating vices and acquiring humility will it be possible “to enter into the very heart and core of heavenly utterances, to contemplate with heart’s purest gaze the deep and hidden mysteries.” And Cassian adds: “This is not something to be possessed by humanistic lore and worldly erudition. It will be gained only by purity of heart and through the illumination of the Holy Spirit” In this way, to the degree, that we advance in interior purification and in humble and assiduous reading, our spirit is renewed, and “it will appear to us that Sacred Scripture begins to change for us.”

“As our mind is increasingly renewed by this study, Scripture begins to take on a new face. A mysteriously deeper sense of it comes to us and somehow the beauty of it stands out more and more as we get farther into it. Scripture shapes itself to human capacity. It will be earthly for the people of the flesh, divine for those of the spirit, so that those who once thought of it as somehow wrapped up in thick clouds find themselves unable either to grasp its subtlety or to endure its brilliance.”

The biographers of the saints have often observed this correspondence between progress in interior purification and a fuller understanding of the Word of God contained in the sacred books. Thus, to cite but one example, in the life of St. Dositheus we read that, “thanks to his purity, he began to understand certain passages of Scripture.” According to Paul Evdokimov, the “incarnation” of Scripture presupposes a reaction on the part of the receptive medium, a compensation, a “perichoresis,” after the example of the two natures in Christ.

Garcia M. Colombas, *Reading From God*, pp.66-71.

DEVOTION TO THE DIVINE MERCY (MERCY SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2020)

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: 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.



ORDO

APRIL

- 5 Palm Sunday
- 9 Holy Thursday
- 10 Good Friday
- 12 Resurrection of the Lord
- 19 Second Sunday of Easter (Mercy Sunday) (Wk II)
- 21 Anselm, Bishop, Memorial
- 25 Mark, Evangelist, Feast
- 26 3rd Sunday of Easter (Wk III)
- 28 Louis de Montfort, Priest, Opt. Memorial
- 29 Catherine of Siena, Virgin, Memorial

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,

NECROLOGY



Please remember to pray for the following deceased monks of the Abbey.

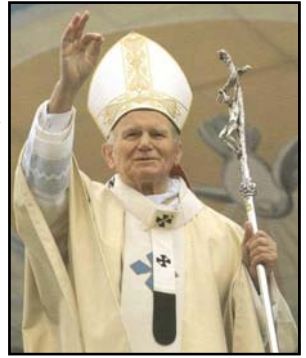
APRIL

13 Br. Xavier Segerer (1903)

16 Br. Richard Kleiner (1940)

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).



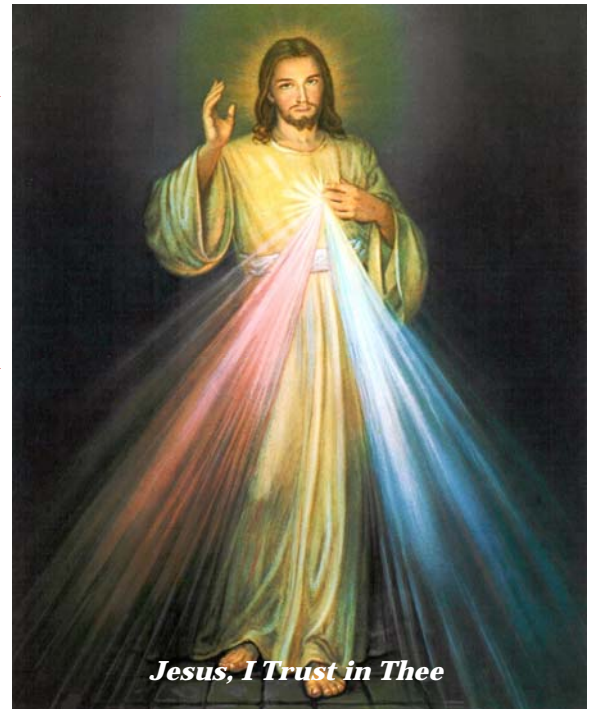
Jesus' Call to Mercy

"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.*

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)

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.



THEOTOKOS "THE JOY OF ALL SORROWS"



Theotokos "the Joy of All Sorrows"

Inspired by one of the hymns of the Eastern Orthodox Church Great Compline service, this icon depicts the Mother of God making intercession before her Son on behalf of those who need help, in particular: the cold and naked, the elderly and crippled, those who are traveling, and the sick and the hungry. Angels, the messengers of God, minister to the people. The icon became popular in the late 17th century after a Russian woman was miraculously healed by it.

The Memorare

REMEMBER, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to thee do I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Prayer to Our Lady, Help of Christians

Most Holy and Immaculate Virgin, Help of the Christians, we place ourselves under your motherly protection. Throughout the Church's history you have helped Christians in times of trial, temptation and danger. Time and time again, you have proven to be the Refuge of sinners, the Hope of the hopeless, the Consoler of the afflicted, and the Comforter of the Dying. We promise to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, your Son, to proclaim His Good News of God's love for all people, and to work for peace and justice in our world. With faith in your intercession, we pray for the Church, for our family and friends, for the poor and abandoned, and all the dying. Grant, O Mary, Help of Christians, the graces of which we stand in need.

(State your intention(s) here.)

May we serve Jesus with fidelity and love until death. Help us and our loved ones to attain the boundless joy of being forever with our Father in heaven.

Amen.

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.

Corporal Works

Feed the hungry
Give drink to the thirsty
Clothe the naked
Shelter the homeless
Comfort the prisoners
Visit the sick
Bury the dead

Spiritual Works

Teach the ignorant
Pray for the living & dead
Correct sinners
Counsel those in doubt
Console the sorrowful
Bear wrongs patiently
Forgive wrongs willingly