

Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

April, 2021

MEETING CHANGES AND CANCELLATIONS

Face to face meeting of the Oblates are cancelled through this summer and will begin again in September if given permission by Abbot Placid. In the meantime we will continue to meet on-line.

Future meetings:

Oblates and Novice Oblates will meet **on-line April 18** at 3:00 PM. The book selected for discussion is *St. Benedict's Toolbox* (10th Anniversary edition). "Chapter 1: The Rule of St. Benedict" is the chapter for discussion. If you would like to participate please email George at gkcobb0321@pm.me.

Inquirers and Novice Oblates who have not completed their basic formation will meet on-line April 14 at 7:00 PM. The topic for discussion is "Silence" and the material will be emailed.

WHAT IS DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY?

In a series of revelations to St. Maria Faustina Kowalska in the 1930s, our Lord called for a special feast day to be celebrated on the Sunday after Easter. Today, we know that feast as Divine Mercy Sunday, named by Pope St. John Paul II at the canonization of St. Faustina on April 30, 2000.

The Lord expressed His will with regard to this feast in His very first revelation to St. Faustina. The most comprehensive revelation can be found in her Diary entry 699:

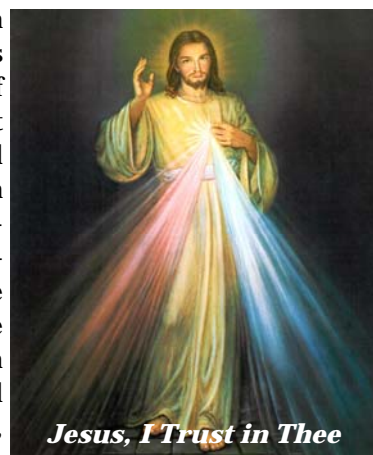
My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and a shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open.

I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day are opened all the divine floodgates through which graces flow. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as

scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity. Everything that exists has come from the very depths of My most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My mercy.

In all, St. Faustina recorded 14 revelations from Jesus concerning His desire for this feast. Nevertheless, Divine Mercy Sunday is NOT a feast based solely on St. Faustina's revelations. Indeed, it is not primarily about St. Faustina — nor is it altogether a new feast. The Second Sunday of Easter was already a solemnity as the Octave Day of Easter. . . .

Liturgically the Easter Octave has always been centered on the theme of Divine Mercy and forgiveness. Divine Mercy Sunday, therefore, point us to the merciful love of God that lies behind the whole Paschal Mystery — the whole mystery of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ — made present for us in the Eucharist. In this



way, it also sums up the whole Easter Octave. As Pope John Paul II pointed out in his *Regina Caeli* address on Divine Mercy Sunday, 1995: "the whole octave of Easter is like a single day," and the Octave Sunday is meant to be the day of "thanksgiving for the goodness God has shown to man in the whole Easter mystery."

Given the liturgical appropriateness of the title "Divine Mercy Sunday" for the Octave Day of Easter, therefore, the Holy See did not give this title to the Second Sunday of Easter merely as an "option," for those dioceses who happen to like that sort of thing! Rather, the decree issued on May 5, 2000, by the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and The Discipline of the Sacraments clearly states: "the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II has graciously determined that in the Roman Missal, after the title Second Sunday of Easter, there shall henceforth be added the appellation 'or [that is] Divine Mercy Sunday'..."

Divine Mercy Sunday, therefore, is not an optional title for this solemnity; rather, Divine Mercy is the integral name for this Feast Day. In a similar way, the Octave Day of the Nativity of Our Lord was named by the Church "The Feast of the Mother of God."

(All material in the newsletter concerning the Divine Mercy is from the Marian Association.)



READING OF THE ANCIENTS

SECONDARY OBJECT OF LECTIO DIVINA

In the 73rd and last chapter, *The Rule St. Benedict* says: "But for anyone hastening on to the perfection of monastic life, there are the teachings of the early church writers, the observance of which will lead her or him to the very heights of perfection. What page, what passage of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is not the truest of guides for human life? What book of holy writers does not resoundingly summons us along the true way to reach the Creator? Then, besides the *Conferences* of the early church writers, their *Institutes* and their *Lives*, there is also the rule of Basil. For observant and obedient monastics, all these are nothing less than tools for the cultivation of virtues, for right living and obedient monastics?"



ORDO

APRIL

- 1 Holy Thursday
- 2 Passion of the Lord
- 4 **Resurrection of the Lord**
- 11 **Second Sunday of Easter (Mercy Sunday) (Wk II)**
- 18 **Third Sunday of Easter (Wk III)**
- 21 Anselm, Bishop, Memorial
- 25 **Fourth Sunday of Easter (Wk IV)**
- 28 *Louis de Montfort, Priest, Opt. Memorial*
- 29 Catherine of Siena, Virgin, Memorial

NECROLOGY

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

- 13 Br. Xavier Segerer (1903)
- 16 Br. Richard Kleiner (1940)

Here quite obviously St. Benedict recommends three classes of reading: the Bible, the Catholic Writers, the Ancients monastic. He does not say that the works of the Ancients are to be read during the time assigned for lectio, but it is evident that concretely either they are read then or they are not read at all, since no other time was available during the day, either on workdays or Sundays or feasts. Hence the works of the Ancients were the object of *lectio divina* according to St. Benedict.

For their part, the Benedictine abbots, assembled in congress in 1967, defined the following about holy reading: "Its primordial object is Holy Scripture. Nevertheless, it also embraces the study of the Ancients, of tradition, of the examples and teaching of the saints, of the living thought of the Church throughout the centuries." The words "nevertheless." ... "also" are important. It appears that they do admit the legitimacy of such reading as *lectio divina*, but with certain indulgence. Yes, they may also serve; but the proper object of *lectio divina*, the only one that justifies the name, is Holy Scripture.

As has been observed, the Benedictine abbots very notably enlarged the scope of "divine reading," compared to the list of readings offered by the *Rule of St. Benedict*. In fact, it might almost be said that they admit as the object of *lectio*, albeit secondary, all the immense literary production born in the bosom of the Church throughout the

ages: the Ancients, the spiritual writers, the hagiographers, the theologians ... It must be granted that the abbots of the 1967 congress were extremely open, receptive and liberal.

Here we are not going to treat of that immense literature, but only of the Ancients. This does not mean that we intend to contradict the Benedictine abbots in any way with regard to the secondary object of *lectio divina*. As F. Vandenbroucke has noted, the *Rule of St. Benedict* leaves a very wide field to the spiritual instruction wherever they discover "holy Catholic Writers" and monastic writings. Nothing obliges them to limit themselves, by reason of these expressions of the *Rule*, to the literature prior to the time of St. Benedict. That is the common opinion.

PREFERENCE FOR THE ANCIENTS

It appears normal that St. Benedict should have referred solely to the Catholic and Ancients monastic, since in his time few Christian works beside the Patristic writings were in circulation. But it is important to note that, alongside the inspired books, "The Liturgy of the Hours", today offers for the most part readings from the Ancients. Why this preference for the writers and pastors of souls who flourished in the early centuries of the Church? Inertia or routine? Certainly not!

In the *Constitution on Divine Revelation* we find a significant text: "The spouse of the incarnate Word, that is, the Church, being taught by the Holy Spirit, strives day by day to reach a more profound understanding of the sacred Scriptures, in order to nourish her children unceasingly with the divine words. For this reason she duly fosters also the study of the Ancients, both eastern and western, and of the sacred liturgies."

Because she seeks to understand the Word of God more profoundly, the Church studies the writings of the Ancients. They — and the various liturgies, which are essentially the work of the Ancients — are therefore in intimate relationship with the Word of God. That is quite evidently the mind of the Council. It's *Decree on Ecumenism*, while treating of the liturgical and spiritual tradition of the Oriental Churches, insists on its recommendation to frequent the reading of the Ancients: "Let Catholics have recourse more frequently to spiritual riches of the Eastern Fathers which lift up the whole human person to the contemplation of divine mysteries."

From *Reading God* by Garcia M. Colombas, pp. 105-108 (Used with Permission)

GENERAL EXERCISES OF MERCY BY ST. MARIA FAUSTINA KOWALSKA

O Most Holy Trinity! As many times as I breathe, as many times as my heart beats, as many times as my blood pulsates through my body, so many thousand times do I want to glorify Your mercy. I want to be completely transformed into Your mercy and to be Your living reflection, O Lord. May the greatest of all divine attributes, that of Your unfathomable mercy, pass through my heart and soul to my neighbour.

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

Help me, that my ears may be merciful, so that I may give heed to my neighbours' needs and not be indifferent to their pains and moanings.

Help me, O Lord, that my tongue may be merciful, so that I should never speak negatively of my neighbour, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all.

Help me, O Lord, that my hands may be merciful and filled with good deeds, so that I may do only good to my neighbours and take upon myself the more difficult and toilsome tasks.

Help me, that my feet may be merciful, so that I may hurry to assist my neighbour, overcoming my own fatigue and weariness. My true rest is in the service of my neighbour.

Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful so that I myself may feel all the sufferings of my neighbour. I will refuse my heart to no one. I will be sincere even with those who, I know, will abuse my kindness. And I will lock myself up in the most merciful Heart of Jesus. I will bear my own suffering in silence. May Your mercy, O Lord, rest upon me.

You yourself command me to exercise the three degrees of mercy. The first: the act of mercy, of whatever kind. The second: the word of mercy — if I cannot carry out a work of mercy, I will assist by my words. The third: prayer — if I cannot show mercy by deeds or words, I can always do so by prayer. My prayer reaches out even there where I cannot reach out physically.

O my Jesus, transform me into Yourself, for you can do all things. (163)

(All material in the newsletter concerning the Divine Mercy is from the Marian Association.)

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY: IF YOUR SICK OR HOMEBOUND

YOU'RE NOT OUT OF THE REACH OF GOD'S MERCY.

Can you receive the graces promised on Mercy Sunday if you can't go to church due to a serious reason, such as being homebound, seriously ill, or disabled?

Try to arrange for a Eucharistic Minister to bring you Communion. Parishes should arrange for Eucharistic Ministers to visit the homebound and bring them the Eucharist and, if possible, literature on Divine Mercy Sunday, Chaplet prayer cards, and rosaries.

If a visit is not possible, however, you can still participate in the celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday by making a Spiritual Communion with great trust. God will give you all the graces that He sees that you need because of your great trust.

Our Lord said to St. Faustina: The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive. Souls that trust boundlessly are a great comfort to Me, because I pour all the treasures of My graces into them. I rejoice that they ask for much, because it is My desire to give much, very much (Diary, 1578).

The Church also made special, compassionate provisions for obtaining a plenary indulgence^[1] on Divine Mercy Sunday by those who cannot go to Mass on that day, including those who are seriously ill or involved in unpostponable work.

You also can see the celebration of Holy Mass on Divine Mercy Sunday on EWTN (check your TV listing). The Act of Spiritual Communion will be recited at that time.

Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things and I desire You in my soul. Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though You were already there, I embrace You and unite myself to You; permit not that I should ever be separated from You. Amen.

[1]The extraordinary graces promised to the faithful by our Lord Himself through St. Faustina should not

be confused with the plenary indulgence granted by Pope John Paul II for the devout observance of the Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday). The Decree of the Holy See offers:

Q. What extraordinary graces are available on Divine Mercy Sunday?

A. Our Lord revealed to St. Faustina His desire to literally flood us with His graces on that day. He told her: On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. The soul that will go to Confession [beforehand] and receive Holy Communion [on that day] shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment (Diary 699).

The theologian who examined St. Faustina's writings for the Holy See, Rev. Ignacy Rozycki, explained that this is the promise of a complete renewal of baptismal grace, and in that sense like a "second Baptism" (in much the same way that St. Catherine of Siena called sacramental Confession, undertaken out of true love of God, an "ongoing Baptism") (The Dialogue, no. 75).



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"A plenary indulgence, granted under the usual condition (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer for the intentions of Supreme Pontiff) to the faithful who, on the Second Sunday of Easter or Divine Mercy Sunday, in any church or chapel, in a spirit that is completely detached from the affection for a sin, even a venial sin, take part in the prayers and devotions held in honour of Divine Mercy, or who, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed or reserved in the tabernacle, recite the Our Father and the Creed, adding a devout prayer to the merciful Lord Jesus (e.g. Merciful Jesus, I trust in You!)..."