

# Today's Lesson: 'The Greatest Truth'

## On the Road with Mother of Mercy Messengers



By Felix Carroll

About 350 of them in all, mostly religious education students, pack the pews of St. Paul's Church in Mission, Texas. They don't know what to expect. But this is what they get: A reality check that is at once chilling and comforting.

Dave and Joan Maroney, known as Mother of Mercy Messengers (MOMM) are in town, giving their dramatic presentation on the heart of the Divine Mercy message. And they don't mince words — about hell, about Satan, about the temptations of sex and substance abuse, about Christ's call to holiness, and the power of prayer.

"Satan is real," Joan tells them, "and he not only steals souls, but he tries to get you to steal souls as well."

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The Maroneys give presentations to all ages. But they consider their work with youth to be the most crucial. At St. Paul's on this February evening, the message seemed to have gotten through. Before the presentation begins, the students are boisterous and fidgety. By the end of the hour-long presentation, they seem mesmerized by the imagery, by the words of Christ to St. Faustina, and by the message of hope and renewal. Many go to confession afterwards.

"The program was beyond great," says Ryan Ramirez, a high school student. "It was awesome."

"It puts you in the right mood of being willing to let Jesus into your life and to listen to what He has to tell you," says Danielle DeLeon, also a high school student.

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Fellow teen Angela Fuentes says, "I already knew a little of the background about Divine Mercy, but this taught me so much more about St. Faustina, and it makes me really want to read her *Diary* and read the conversations St. Faustina had with Jesus."

Cristina Luna, a college student, says the presentation helps explain the very nature of God. "One of the lies Satan feeds us — especially the youth today — is that God is an angry God," says Cristina. "Satan tries to make them feel that they are so bad that they can't turn to Him. That was a struggle for me. That was one of the biggest things I dealt with growing up. I now understand that He loves us no matter what."

"I remember the first time I really prayed the Chaplet of Divine Mercy," Cristina continues. "I was in my first year in college, and that's when I really found the Lord. I remember immersing myself for the first time in the words and the purpose of the prayer. I asked Him to explain to me, to my heart, the meaning of it. I remember just being overwhelmed with a great sorrow and excruciating emotional pain, and I felt that what I was feeling was just a bit of the pain that He feels when His children turn against Him, when they ignore Him, when they doubt Him."

"Tonight's presentation was just amazing," she says. "It answered so many questions and cleared up a lot of things for me. I felt like the Lord was saying, 'You see Me, but I also want you to see My Church that I established. I want you to see the fullness of it.' That was just being repeated in my mind and running through my heart. It was confirmation."

Outside the church, the Rev. Gregory Kuczanski, the jovial pastor of St. Paul's, is admittedly pleased with himself for inviting MOMM to his parish. He had seen MOMM's presentation several years ago. A MOMM presentation, he says, brings a fresh approach to what he preaches at the pulpit.

"When you see the kids impressed," he says, "you know that you aren't dealing with an ordinary show, but with God Himself."



Fr. Greg Kuczanski greets Dave and Joan Maroney

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After Dave and Joan pack up their trailer with all their equipment — the lighting, the sound system, and Divine Mercy materials — they climb back into their RV and start off for the next stop on their tour schedule.

"It was a good night," says Joan. "Did you see all those kids going to confession?"

It was the kind of night that edifies them, that justifies why they've spent the better part of nine years on the road, traveling more than 250,000 miles, spreading the message of Divine Mercy.

"The main thing I want to get across, especially to the youth of today," says Joan, "is that no matter what they've done in the past, Jesus is not mad at them. He wants them to turn away from sin and come into His open, loving arms. Christ says, 'The greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to My mercy' (*Diary of St. Faustina*, 723).

"There are so many bad things the youth can get involved with," says Joan. "Sex, substance abuse, witchcraft and the occult. They may feel unworthy of going to Church. They need to know that sin is bad. But there's forgiveness for no matter what sin they've committed. They also really need to hear about hell. They don't understand how serious it is and how real it is, and how they're so vulnerable to Satan. He tries to pull us away from God.

"Once their eyes are open to the evil or to the discord and lack of love, once they identify it, how do they overcome it? The power is through the sacraments," says Joan. "The greatest thing I want them to realize is about the True Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, because then, as they grow, when they have struggles, they'll know who to turn to and where to go."



During their presentations, Joan will often ask the youngsters, "Who is greater than God? What is greater than God?" She'll encourage them to answer, "Nobody. Nothing."

"If they can just grasp onto that one truth, the greatest truth, then you'll have them," she says. "It doesn't mean they won't get wayward. It doesn't mean they won't stray. But if, and when, they ever hit rock bottom, they'll know that they can turn to that truth, they can go back into the church, and the Lord will do the rest."

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## Mother of Mercy Messengers

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