

Marians of the Immaculate Conception and EWTN presents

The Divine Mercy Cenacle



LESSON TWO

Saint Faustina

Saint Maria Faustina was born Helena Kowalska in a village in the heart of Poland, on August 25, 1905. She was the third of ten children. At the age of eighteen her parents discouraged her, for economic reasons, from entering the religious life and Helena turned her attention to earthly pursuits. The Lord had other plans. While at a dance she had a vision of the scourged Christ, "How long will I put up with you and how long will you keep putting me off? (9*) Searching for a religious community in Warsaw she was finally accepted at the age of twenty by the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. She accepted the name Sister Maria Faustina, to which she added "of the Most Blessed Sacrament."

In the 1930's, the Lord entrusted to Sr. Faustina the message of mercy, which she was to spread throughout the world. She was called to be the apostle and secretary of God's mercy — a model of how to be merciful to others— and to proclaim God's great mercy for the world. The Lord told her, "My daughter, I demand that you devote all your free moments to writing about My goodness and mercy. It is your office and your assignment throughout your life to continue to make known to souls the great mercy I have for them and to exhort them to trust in My bottomless mercy" (1567).

As a saint of our time it easy for people today to identify with St. Faustina. Canonized by Pope John Paul II on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 30, 2000, she became the first saint of the new millennium.

1. What were some of St. Faustina's virtues?

Every Christian is called to live a life of virtues of faith, hope (or trust), and love. The difference between an average Christian and a saint is the degree to which they lived out these virtues. With her motto "God and Souls," St. Faustina wanted only to do God's will, for she trusted Him so much. She wrote, "Your holy will is the life of my soul" (6). "From today on, my own will does not exist." On that page in the *Diary* she made a large 'X' symbolizing the removal of her own will and embraced the will of God "everywhere, always, and in everything (374).

Saint Faustina's love of God was absolute. "Thank you O Jesus for everything. It is my delight to fix my gaze upon You, O incomprehensible God! ...I feel there is not a single drop of blood in me that does not burn with love for You" (343).

She also had a great love for Jesus present in the Eucharist. "Throughout the long hours I adore You, O Living Bread amidst the great drought in my soul... I desire to drown myself in You... Nothing will stem such love, for no might has power over it" (195).

From her great love of God flowed her love of neighbor. She was willing to undertake any form of suffering, prayer, or hardship so that others might be saved. An extraordinary example of this love is her oblation for others. She made a voluntary offering of herself for the conversion of sinners, especially those who have lost hope in God's mercy. On their

behalf she accepted all the sufferings, fears, and terrors with which sinners are filled. In return, she gave them all the consolations that her soul received from her communion with God. She repeated this oblation daily with a prayer that Jesus taught her: "Oh Blood and Water which gushed from the Heart of Jesus as a Fount of Mercy for us, I trust in You" (309)!

She understood that we are to be merciful and do things out of love of God. She wrote, "Jesus came to the main entrance today, under the guise of a poor young man. This young man, emaciated, barefoot, and bareheaded, and with his clothes in tatters, was frozen because the day was cold and rainy. He asked for something hot to eat. So I went to the kitchen, but found nothing there for the poor. But, after searching around for some time, I succeeded in finding some soup, which I reheated and into which I crumbled some bread, and I gave it to the poor young man, who ate it. As I was taking the bowl from him, he gave me to know that He was the Lord of heaven and earth. When I saw Him as He was, He vanished from my sight. When I went back in and reflected on what had happened at the gate, I heard these words in my soul: 'My daughter, the blessings of the poor who bless Me as they leave this gate have reached My ears. And your compassion, within the bounds of obedience, has pleased Me, and this is why I came down from My throne — to taste the fruits of Your mercy' " (1312).

She understood the importance of kindness and a forgiving heart. Just as the Father loves us and forgives us, we are to love and forgive each other. She wrote, "We resemble God most when we forgive our neighbors" (1148).

2. What was St. Faustina's main goal in life?

In a prayer, St. Faustina expressed in great detail the goal of her life:

"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 neighbor.

"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 neighbors' souls and come to their rescue.

"Help me, that my ears may be merciful, so that I may give heed to my neighbors' 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 neighbor, 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 neighbors 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 neighbor, overcoming my own fatigue and weariness. My true rest is in the service of my neighbor.

"Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful so that I myself may feel all the sufferings of my neighbor. 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" (163).

3. Did St. Faustina suffer?

Saint Faustina was often rejected and humiliated. She was weak from advanced tuberculosis and some of the other nuns felt that she feigned her illness. On one occasion the nuns took her habit and carried it around on a stick, making fun of her because it smelled so badly. Sr. Faustina was upset, not out of embarrassment, but because the nuns were giving a bad example to the wayward girls being cared for in the convent.

Saint Faustina suffered physically. At times the pain from tuberculosis was so severe that she would lose consciousness. She wrote in her *Diary* that God Himself allowed these sufferings in order to offer reparation for the infants dying as a result of abortion. Yet, she realized that she could unite her sufferings to Jesus' sufferings on the Cross. She wrote,

"Suffering is a great grace; through suffering the soul becomes like the Savior; in suffering love becomes crystallized; the greater the suffering, the purer the love" (57).

On occasion, the Lord would intervene and offer assistance. One time during novitiate, Sr. Faustina wrote: "Mother Directress sent me to work in the wards' kitchen, I was very upset because I could not manage the pots, which were very large. The most difficult task for me was draining the potatoes, and sometimes I spilt half of them with the water. When I told this to Mother Directress, she said that with time I would get used to it and gain the necessary skill. Yet the task was not getting any easier, as I was growing weaker every day. So I would move away when it was time to drain the potatoes. The sisters noticed that I avoided this task and were very much surprised. They did not know that I could not help in spite of all my willingness to do this and not spare myself. At noon, during the examination of conscience, I complained to God about my weakness. Then I heard the following words in my soul; 'From today on you will do this easily; I shall strengthen you.'

"That evening, when the time came to drain off the water from the potatoes, I hurried to be the first to do it, trusting in the Lord's words. I took up the pot with ease and poured off the water perfectly. But when I took off the cover to let the potatoes steam off, I saw there in the pot, in the place of the potatoes, whole bunches of red roses, beautiful beyond description. I had never seen such roses before. Greatly astonished and unable to understand the meaning of this, I heard a voice within me saying, 'I change such hard work of yours into bouquets of most beautiful flowers, and their perfume rises up to My throne.' From then on I have tried to drain the potatoes myself, not only during my week when it was my turn to cook, but also in replacement of other sisters when it was their turn" (65).

4. What are the five elements of The Divine Mercy message and devotion that were given by our Lord to St. Faustina?

Through St. Faustina, the merciful Savior has entrusted the world new channels for grace. Although these channels of receiving God's mercy are new in form, they proclaim the timeless message of God's merciful love and draws back to the Sacrament of Mercy and the Eucharist. These new forms revealed by the Lord are: The Divine Mercy Image, The Divine Mercy Chaplet, the Hour of Mercy and remembrance of Christ's Passion, Novena before the Feast of Mercy, and the Feast of The Divine Mercy.

NOTES:

* References without a source listed with the number are taken from the *Dairy of Saint Maria Faustina*.



Marians of the Immaculate Conception

To learn more about The Divine Mercy message and devotion, the Marians of the Immaculate Conception, and Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy visit us online at www.thedivinemercy.org or call 1-800-462-7426.