

Friends of Mercy

Marians of the Immaculate Conception
Association of Marian Helpers • Eden Hill • Stockbridge, MA 01263



New Divine Mercy pilgrimages

To celebrate the centennial of St. Faustina's birth, a Marian pilgrimage to Poland traces her life, and a Caribbean cruise revitalizes pilgrims with relaxing venues and Divine Mercy ministries.

by David Lusignan

A pilgrimage to Poland and Lithuania from Aug. 23 - Sept. 6 to celebrate St. Faustina's 100th birthday and a Divine Mercy Caribbean cruise from Oct. 9 - 19 are the highlights of the 2005 Marian Pilgrimages for Marian Helpers.

On Aug. 25, the actual centennial of St. Faustina's birth, pilgrims to Poland will visit the humble Polish home where St. Faustina was born and the parish church of Swinice Warckie where she was baptized. Other sites on the itinerary for Poland include St. Faustina's tomb and the convent where she lived at Lagiewniki, the Shrine of The Divine Mercy also in Lagiewniki, the convent in Plock where she received the revelation of the The Divine Mercy image, and the convent in Warsaw where she began life as a religious.

In Vilnius, Lithuania, pilgrims will venerate the original image of The Divine Mercy, which was painted under St. Faustina's direction and then publicly displayed there for the first time. They will also learn of St. Faustina's years in Vilnius.

The spiritual directors for the pilgrimage will be Fr. Seraphim Michalenko, MIC, and Fr. Walter Gurgul, MIC. Father Seraphim, current Director of the Association of Marian Helpers, served for some 20 years as vice-postulator for North America in the canonization cause of St. Faustina.

The spiritual director for the Caribbean cruise will be Marian co-worker Bishop Elliott Thomas, a native of the British Virgin Islands who served as Bishop of St. Thomas, the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Bishop currently ministers



The home of St. Faustina's birth is on the itinerary of a pilgrimage for the centennial of the saint's birth. Other pilgrimage destinations include (left, from top): St. Faustina's convent chapel, pilgrims at Lichen, and a peaceful port of call in the Caribbean.

with the Marians at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, MA. The recently ordained Fr. Mark Baron, MIC, will assist the Bishop.

Dave and Joan Maroney of Mother of Mercy Messengers (MOMM) are tentatively scheduled to give a multimedia presentation on The Divine Mercy, Mary, and St. Faustina.

Ports of call will include St. Thomas (the U.S. Virgin Islands), St. John's (Antigua), Bridgetown (Barbados), St. George's (Grenada), and Tortola (the British Virgin Islands).

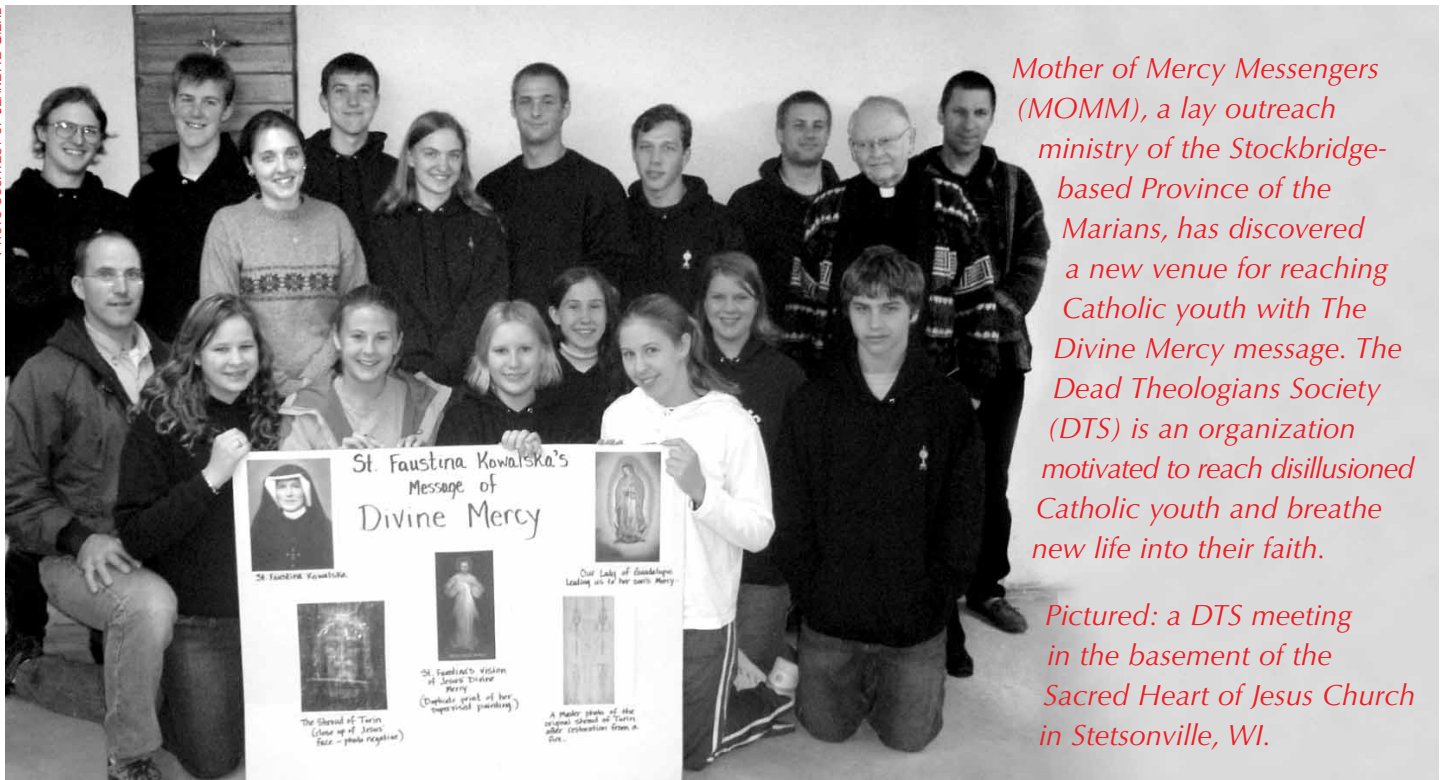
Before leaving for the Caribbean, pilgrims may opt to join the Marians at the National Shrine in Stockbridge for their annual St. Faustina Day celebration, scheduled for Sat., Oct. 8. □

For a full itinerary of either pilgrimage, please call 1-800-462-7426. Or e-mail pilgrimages@marian.org



**Prayer Intention
for the 3 o'clock
Chaplet**

Please join in praying that the Merciful Savior will bless and multiply the efforts of groups reaching out to bring the message of Divine Mercy to youth in the new year and beyond.



Mother of Mercy Messengers (MOMM), a lay outreach ministry of the Stockbridge-based Province of the Marians, has discovered a new venue for reaching Catholic youth with The Divine Mercy message. The Dead Theologians Society (DTS) is an organization motivated to reach disillusioned Catholic youth and breathe new life into their faith.

Pictured: a DTS meeting in the basement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Stetsonville, WI.

MERCY FOR CATHOLIC YOUTH by Tracy Burch

Mortuum Mundo — Vivum In Christo! (“Dead to the World — Alive in Christ!”) This is the motto of the Dead Theologians Society (DTS), a unique, young-adult-oriented group. Unlike its forbidding name, this group’s motivation is to give faith new life and touch the hearts of young people, many of whom have become disillusioned with the permissive, secular society in which they live.

The rules of the society are simple: pray, study Scripture and the lives of the saints, intercede for the souls in purgatory, and adore our Lord in the exposed Blessed Sacrament. Weekly meetings are based on the teachings of the saints, Scripture study, and a smattering of Catholic apologetics. The Pope is the hero of DTS members, the saints are their guides, and knowledge of the faith equals the power of Jesus Christ!

In Sacred Scripture, we are told: “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for this hope of yours” (1 Pet 3:15). DTS members pledge to remain faithful to the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, the Magisterium, and receive tools to help them be prepared to explain their hopes.

Headquartered in Wisconsin, and with 140 chapters across the country, DTS has drawn praise from clergy, parents, and youth alike. The Most Rev. Raymond Burke, Archbishop of St. Louis, MO,

praised the group in a letter posted on its website for carrying out “very effectively the new evangelization among the youth and their families whom it serves.”

At DTS meetings, much of the evening is spent in candle-lit, incense-filled surroundings, usually in a church basement. The atmosphere is intended to evoke a feeling of what meetings of the early Christians in the catacombs might have been like. A recording of Gregorian chants

is also played in the background to help youth make the connection musically with their centuries-old Catholic heritage.

In a candle-lit room in Stetsonville, WI, Jeanette and Pat Gierl lead a DTS chapter of 10 - 25 young Catholic adults every Friday night in Eucharistic Adoration, prayer, and study of the faith. Teens travel to this meeting to pray and then read the teachings of the saints. “They adore our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and receive His forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation,” Jeanette says. “They hear true accounts of heroic, agonizing martyrdoms and awe-inspiring miracles, and they are instructed in the Church’s rich devotional life.”

At one of their Friday meetings in early October, these DTS members learned about St. Faustina and The Divine Mercy message and devotion through a prerecorded presentation by Dave and Joan Maroney of Mother of Mercy Messengers (MOMM).

Dave and Joan have created a unique vehicle for continuing St. Faustina’s Divine Mercy mission. They travel the country delivering a dramatic multimedia presentation on Divine Mercy and Mary to parishes and schools of all sizes, bringing the heart of St. Faustina’s *Diary* to life. Their presentation, *Tell All Souls about My Mercy*, is also available on CD. This audio recording

BRING THE MESSAGE HOME

Now you can bring home the powerful message of The Divine Mercy and Mary. *Tell All Souls About My Mercy* is the same moving presentation that Dave and Joan Maroney of Mother of Mercy Messengers have brought to churches across the U.S. 57 min.

DVD \$24.95MMOMMDVD
 Video \$20.00MMOMMV
 CD \$15.00MMOMMCD
 Cassette \$10.00MMOMMT

All prices in U.S. funds, plus p&h.

1-800-462-7426

Continued on back page

Our Lord came as a child because, by being human like us, He could begin to take on Himself the whole experience of our human condition, except for sin. This embodiment of God as a vulnerable human being is precisely the meaning of the Incarnation.

Saint Faustina is one of the saints to whom our Lord revealed His total vulnerability.

We can begin to understand, through her experiences with the Christ Child, God's purpose in making Himself so small — and human.



“Jesus, You are so little, and yet I know that You are my Creator and my Lord.” And Jesus answered me: “I am, and I keep company with you as a child to teach you humility and simplicity.”

Diary, 184

We often find it difficult to realize Christ's vast ability to communicate His tremendous interest in our salvation. He made Himself so small that we often miss what it is He is trying to communicate. We can't totally comprehend His humility, or why He would allow Himself to be so vulnerable. It's contrary to our understanding of power and influence. We need the insights of others to help us grasp this unique mystery of the Incarnation that was required for our salvation.



I heard a voice in my soul: “Meditate on the mystery of the Incarnation.” And suddenly the Infant of Jesus appeared before me, radiant with beauty. He told me how much God is pleased with simplicity in a soul. “Although My greatness is beyond understanding, I commune only with those who are little. I demand of you a childlike spirit.”

Diary, 332

Our Lord invites us, too, to become simple and humble children before

Reflections on the Diary of St. Faustina:

Humble and small like the Christ Child

A thematic series

by Br. Leonard Konopka, MIC

Him even as He allows Himself, as the Babe of Bethlehem, to become continually vulnerable to us. This is especially evident at Mass when He comes to us in the Holy Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine. During this Eucharistic year, he silently awaits our visits before the tabernacle.

All of our life's exigencies — whether in joys or sorrows, successes or failures, or seeming lack of control and shifting mood swings — are grist for the mill of His reaching out to us. But it's only in simple and childlike trust that we can yield ourselves to His purposes for our lives, accepting His plan and not our own. He made Himself an example for what is to be our attitude and response toward all the events that He permits.



The Blessed Mother was telling me to accept all that God asked of me like a little child, without questioning; otherwise it would not be pleasing to God. At that moment, the Infant Jesus vanished, and the Mother of God was again lifeless, and her picture was the same as it had been before. But my soul was filled with great joy and gladness, and I said to the Lord, “Do with me as You please; I am ready for everything, but You, O Lord, must not abandon me even for a moment.”

Diary, 529

Our Lord had to yield and surrender in response to His Father, and we see the depths of His love in that surrender. It was childlike, not child-

ish. Nothing about it was sentimental or rigidly conforming. He invites us to follow His example and that of St. Faustina by surrendering to His love. We can then be ready for everything that comes from our loving Redeemer, who — by His very nature — cannot think or act in any way other than by loving.

Christmas conveys to us the value of having an open heart and mind for what He may be trying to teach us by His coming in the flesh. This value is what He tried to teach St. Faustina.

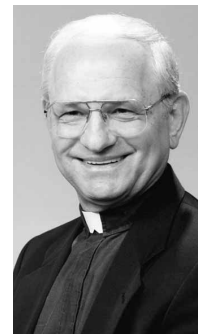


“I want to teach you spiritual childhood. I want you to be very little, because when you are little, I carry you close to My heart, just as you are holding Me close to your heart right now.”

Our Lord to St. Faustina
Diary, 1481

The great and the powerful people of our world may not grasp this call to spiritual childhood that our Lord wants to extend to each of us. Blessed are those who are aware of His deep desire to be united with us, and who yield to Him at every moment. This childlike trust and generosity of heart become their gift to the Christ Child, from whom they are able to reap abundant spiritual fruit throughout the remainder of their lives. □

Brother Leonard Konopka, MIC, resides in Washington, DC, and is on the staff of the Marian Community Seminary. He provides spiritual direction, and gives retreats and talks on Divine Mercy. This article is part of a book on Divine Mercy meditations that he is completing.



Getting ready for Jesus

Members share their customs and traditions in preparing for Christmas.

Nativity set, time with family

I have the nativity set that my mom used when I was a child. We build the stable out of Lincoln Logs and set it up the same way every Advent.

We open our gifts on Christmas Eve and attend Midnight Mass because I am a registered nurse and I work on Christmas morning at a residential facility for neglected, abused, and emotionally disturbed children.

When I get home after work on Christmas Day, we go to my sister and brother-in-law's home for dinner and family time until the evening.

— LB, Cromwell, CT

Daily readings

In our family, Advent starts with the Advent wreath and Scripture readings.

Our nativity scenes, both inside the house and on the front lawn, are without the Baby Jesus during Advent. Our inside stable contains pieces of nativity sets that belonged to my grandparents, my parents, my husband's parents, and pieces from our first Christmas together.

On Christmas Eve, we attend Mass. After Mass, our two grandchildren have the honor of placing the Baby Jesus in His crib.



Elena and Michael, grandchildren of a Club member, continue a family tradition of waiting until Christmas Eve to add Baby Jesus to the nativity scene that was set up on Grandma's front porch at the beginning of Advent.

After dinner on Christmas Day, we put candles on a cake and sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus. We exchange gifts and thank God our Father for giving us His Son Jesus — our most important gift.

— DB, Carle Place, NY

Deeds of mercy for Baby Jesus

A couple of years ago, another Catholic family introduced mine to the custom of having family members place a piece of straw in the manger every time they performed a good deed or a work of mercy.

This tradition gives family members a chance to share the joy of the season with those in need. There are undoubtedly plenty of opportunities to perform works of mercy not only at home, but in the neighborhood, at school, at work, and in the local parish. This might entail volunteering to help out at the local soup kitchen, or shoveling snow from the front walkway of the elderly lady who lives down the street.

Whatever the work of mercy and wherever it is performed, we know that the straw symbolizing our charity will provide a warm manger for the Baby Jesus on Christmas morning. Then, we will have continued Christ's loving action for those in need — sharing the warmth of the manger with others.

— DC, Pittsfield, MA

Youth

Continued from page 2

made it possible for the DTS chapter in Wisconsin to listen to the presentation.

The DTS atmosphere was optimal for listening to the presentation on CD. The merciful words of Jesus and those of St. Faustina in the MOMM presentation brought the gathering's encounter with our Lord and His great apostle of Divine Mercy to a deep level. "Hearts and souls were clearly touched," Jeanette says. "Tears rolled down the cheeks of DTS members that evening."

Many of the young people prayed the Chaplet of The Divine Mercy for the first time, seeking the grace our Lord promised to those who recite it with trust in Him. Further, each of the young people was given an image of The Divine Mercy as a gift from MOMM. These 5" x 7" images have a blank space at the bottom on which one can write, "Jesus, I trust in You!" as one's own signature. "The students took this activity seriously," Jeanette says. "Each made a personal commitment to trust in Jesus, The

Divine Mercy."

Since Dave and Joan of MOMM strive to conclude their presentations with Eucharistic Adoration and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the DTS format that evening provided the perfect opportunity to achieve this goal. These young Catholics not only trusted in Jesus and prayed for His mercy, they then received His forgiveness in confession and basked in His healing presence in adoration, according to Jeanette.

MOMM's message was extremely well received by these young people. The hope is to have thousands of youth at other DTS chapters across the country share in the same experience as these Wisconsin youth. □

To learn more about Mother of Mercy Messengers or to schedule a visit, go to www.MOMMonline.com or call (866) 895-3236. To learn more about DTS, visit www.deadtheologiansociety.com

The Friends of Mercy Club is a group of friends of the Marians who want to honor God's mercy in a special way.

- They help support the Marians' works of mercy, and receive regular news about the Divine Mercy message;
- Every day the intentions of members are included in our 3 o'clock prayers at the Marian Helpers Center and in the Chaplet at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy; and
- Members pledge a monthly gift and receive the Club newsletter published by the Association of Marian Helpers, Stockbridge, MA 01263. 1-800-462-7426. e-mail: friendsofmercy@marian.org