



B. Veneration of The Divine Mercy Image and Its Importance

To “venerate” a sacred image simply means to perform some act, or make some gesture of deep religious respect toward it because of the person whom it represents.

The Divine Mercy Image represents God’s merciful love revealed in Christ. It depicts His Passion shown in the Blood and Water flowing from His pierced side, as it did on Calvary, His Resurrection, and His return in glory. The Divine Mercy Image leads us to contemplate Christ’s ever-living presence among us. In one image, we have the whole Paschal Mystery made manifest as narrated in John’s Gospel 19: 32-35, 20:19-21:

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into His side, and immediately blood and water flowed out. An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may (come to) believe. ... On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

In *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, speaks of the importance of sacred images or icons of Christ focused on the Paschal Mystery and how they point us to the sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist. It is as though he had The Divine Mercy image in mind when he wrote:

The center of the icon of Christ is the Paschal Mystery: Christ is presented as the Crucified [One], the risen Lord, the One who will come again, and who here and now hiddenly reigns over all.

On several occasions, Jesus told St. Faustina of His desire for The Divine Mercy Image to be venerated on Divine Mercy Sunday:

“I desire that this image be displayed in public on the first Sunday after Easter. That Sunday is the Feast of Mercy. Through the Word Incarnate I make known the bottomless depth of My mercy” (*Diary*, 88).

“I want the image to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter, and I want it to be venerated publicly so that every soul may know about it” (*Diary*, 341).

“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” (*Diary*, 327).

In the “signature” that Jesus commanded to be placed on the image we find a summary of the response to His merciful love that He asks each one of us: “Jesus, I trust in You.” The image also reminds us of another key gospel mandate — to be merciful to others.

“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” (*Diary*, 742).



Here are some suggestions for the veneration of The Divine Mercy Image:

A parish may venerate the Divine Mercy Image during the Eucharistic Liturgy by having it displayed in the sanctuary. After the “Communion Prayer,” the priest may incense the Image and, kneeling before it, recite an appropriate prayer. Such veneration may also take place at the end of the 3 o’clock Hour of Great Mercy prayers or even at the end of a Holy Hour.

An appropriate prayer, which pleads for God’s mercy in troubled times, could be:

O Greatly Merciful God, Infinite Goodness, today all mankind calls out from the abyss of its misery to Your mercy — to Your compassion, O God; and it is with its mighty voice of misery that it cries out. Gracious God, do not reject the prayer of this earth’s exiles! O Lord, Goodness beyond our understanding, Who are acquainted with our misery through and through, and know that by our own power we cannot ascend to You, we implore You: anticipate us with Your grace and keep on increasing Your mercy in us, that we may faithfully do Your holy will all through our life and at death’s hour. Let the omnipotence of Your mercy shield us from the darts of our salvation’s enemies, that we may with confidence, as Your children, await Your final coming — that day known to You alone. And we expect to obtain everything promised us by Jesus in spite of all our wretchedness. For Jesus is our Hope: Through His merciful Heart, as through an open gate, we pass through to heaven (*Diary*, 1570).

The first entry of St. Faustina’s *Diary* is a beautiful hymn about the Image that could also be used as prayer before the Image:

O Eternal Love, You command Your Sacred Image to be painted
And reveal to us the inconceivable fount of mercy,
You bless whoever approaches Your rays,
And a soul all black will turn into snow.

O sweet Jesus, it is here You established the throne of Your mercy
To bring joy and hope to sinful man.
From Your open Heart, as from a pure fount,
Flows comfort to a repentant heart and soul.

May praise and glory for this Image
Never cease to stream from man’s soul.
May praise of God’s mercy pour from every heart,
Now, and at every hour, and forever and ever (*Diary*, 1).