



Friends of Mercy

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

Marians' efforts bring Divine Mercy message to college students in Nicaragua

Divine Mercy on campus

Maria Antonieta Castillo and many of her fellow college students in Nicaragua are discovering Divine Mercy thanks to materials in Spanish published by the Marians of the Immaculate Conception.

"Months ago, I received a pamphlet explaining what Divine Mercy is," Maria says. "Now I've started praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy."

Maria, who is a junior in business administration at the Ave Maria College of the Americas (AMCA) in Nicaragua, benefited from materials sent recently to Nicaragua through the generosity of a Cuban-American benefactor of the Marians.

The result has been very positive not only for Maria, but for many other AMCA students, according to Maria Teresa Krzus, Director of Residence Life at AMCA. "On a recent retreat, several students had awesome conversion experiences when they heard the Divine Mercy message," she says. "Divine Mercy overwhelmed them."

One of the students, Jose Rodolfo Villamariona Aguilar, says of his experience, "I recognize that I am a sinner, and I require the mercy of God. Jesus endured all of His suffer-



Sister Dennise can't keep up with requests from students looking for more Divine Mercy materials.

ings because of my sins and the sins of the entire world." Jose remembers the passion and suffering of Christ by praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet at 3 p.m. each day.

Located in Las Penas Blancas of Carazo, Nicaragua, AMCA is a satellite campus and affiliate of Ave Maria College in Ypsilanti, MI. Although small in size, the college draws top students in the country and provides them with solid formation in the Catholic faith, according to Jason Lewis, a

Marian staffer who recently visited there.

The recent shipment to Nicaragua included copies of the *Diary of St. Faustina*, *The Divine Mercy Message and Devotion* booklet, as well as leaflets and prayercards — in Spanish.

Sister Dennise, a Nicaraguan native and Coordinator of Campus Ministry at the college, reports that the Divine Mercy materials were so popular among the students that she soon ran out of them. She has requested more materials from the college.

In her ministry, Sister Dennise enjoys sharing her own personal experience of Divine Mercy with the students. "The

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Prayer Intention for the 3 o'clock Chaplet

Please join in praying for the Lord's blessing on all those who give of their time and resources to spread the message of Divine Mercy.

Dear Friends of Mercy Club member:



I'm pleased to announce that beginning with this issue, the *Friends of Mercy* club newsletter will be published every month.



We hear you! You asked, "Give us more stories on leading a life of mercy every day. Show us new ways to spread the message of God's mercy. Let us share with other club members how Divine Mercy affects our lives." Now, we can!

We'll also bring you more news about the Divine Mercy ministries of the Marians — including ways that you can get involved as a Friend of Mercy. Happy reading!

Fr. Joseph, M.A.C.



Nowhere to *turn*

Facing a multitude of personal struggles, an actor/auctioneer from Australia remembered his grandmother's advice.

by Felix Carroll

He's an auctioneer and entertainer by trade, so he's a man who knows how to sell a message. After years of alienation from God, John Canavan of the Australian Divine Mercy Apostolate now gives stirring witness of a life devoted to spreading the message of Divine Mercy.

"Without faith, there's really no hope," says John, who has represented the Marians since 1993 by printing Divine Mercy materials and distributing them from Australia to Africa. "The Divine Mercy message changed my life. It's a universal message that's bringing people back to the Church."

It took many years, many reckless turns, and much tragedy to reach that point.

His separation from God started when he was 21. During a vacation, his 23-year-old sister died before his very eyes from a brain hemorrhage. "She was my closest family member," John says. "That turned me totally away from God. I became very bitter, very angry."

That anger spread into nearly all aspects of his life, including his relationship with the rest of his family.

But his grandmother, who was very

devout, never gave up on him. She came up to him one day and planted a thought that would blossom years later. "When you have nowhere to turn, trust in Jesus and ask Our Lady to help you," she told him.

He began working in entertainment — comedy, mostly. While it was financially profitable, he knew his life was spiritually bankrupt.

So he decided to try to get the past behind him. He revisited the place where his sister had died, but this time he went with his girlfriend.

"The same number of days into the trip, as with my sister, my girlfriend's brother had a massive brain hemorrhage back in Australia and later died from it at the age of 30," he says. "That was two deaths in three years. So that really brought me to my knees."

Soon after, John was introduced to a priest. "I was doing some entertainment at the time," he recalls, "and he came through the crowd afterwards and said, 'I see on the outside there's a smile, but on the inside you're hurting. God doesn't want to know you only when you're happy, but when you're sad as well.'"

The priest's words didn't make a dent until John was brought to his knees again. This time, he lost his job, split up with his girlfriend, and burned nearly all the bridges in his life. He had no place to turn.

"But the words my grandmother said were implanted in my heart: 'When you have no where to turn, trust in Jesus and ask Our Lady to help you,'" John says. "For one moment, I looked at my grandmother's life, all the tragedies she endured in her lifetime, and thought, 'Maybe there is something to having faith,' because when she saw me go through all the trouble in my life, she never condemned me, she just prayed.

"So I went into a church for the first time in many years, and I just sat there for 45 minutes and cried and asked God to help me," John says. "I think that was the first time that I really opened up my heart."

Eventually he was given St. Faustina's *Diary*. "I opened it up, and it summed up my whole life," John says. "Jesus says to her, 'The greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to My mercy' (723). Then, I knew the rays of mercy. They were able to touch me, and gradually over the next few months, I spent more and more time in the church, and I started to learn more and more about my faith."

John, who has a wife and five children, now works to spread the message of Divine Mercy. As Director of Divine Mercy Publications in Camberwell, Australia, John helps spread Divine Mercy through books, tapes, prayer-cards, and other publications.

He has made his grandmother proud.

"My grandmother took me by the hand one day and said, 'I prayed the Rosary for 25 years that someone in our family would take over the faith when I die,' and then she laughed and said, 'But I never thought Our Lady would choose you,'" says John, chuckling.

"It's amazing to think there was a time in my life when I thought I should just drive straight into a river. But I never did, thank God," John continues. "I didn't believe in God, but God believed in me. Through spreading the message of Divine Mercy, more and more people are learning every day that God believes in them." □

“No action undertaken on your own initiative, even though you put much effort into it, pleases Me.”

Our Lord to Sister Faustina
Diary, 659 and 354

There is no merit or grace in doing things or even thinking in ways that Our Lord is not asking of us. It's probably a complete waste of time and effort on our part. When frustrated with our results, we may want to consider if our actions are dependent on His will or ours.



Now I understand that if the Lord demands something of a soul, He gives it the means to carry it out and through grace He makes it capable of doing this. [A soul can] undertake things beyond its expectation ... if God's power and strength, which make the soul courageous and valiant, is manifest within it.

Diary, 1090

God does not lead us to where His grace does not follow. He may grant us permission (free will), which we all have, but He will not give us His power to achieve the greater good or to maintain peace within our soul. Without His grace, what little we do accomplish, does not endure over time.



“Obedience has great power.”

Mother Superior to Sr. Faustina
Diary, 1187

How different from the worldly standards of “doing our own thing,” which at first is appealing and tempting but eventually drains us of energy. God cannot give us the grace to accomplish effective results that are not in accord with His will.



This peace gives me such strength and power that all difficulties, adversities, sufferings, and death itself are as nothing.

Diary, 359

This statement implies its opposite:

Reflections on the Diary of St. Faustina:

Real POWER

A thematic series

by Br. Leonard Konopka, MIC

that we are filled with lack of peace, drained of energy and confused, when we are not in His will.

We gain trust in Jesus, when we see the results and do His will in His way.



“A pure soul has inconceivable power before God.”

Divine Revelation to Sister Faustina
Diary, 534

Purity in this sense is not only related to “moral issues.” What also must be understood is that a “pure soul” is trying to discern and fulfill what Our Lord's will is at any given moment. When a soul is focused on what our Lord is requiring and submits to whatever He sends, it can be viewed as being a pure soul.



Patience in adversity gives power to the soul.

Diary, 607

When we yield to the grace of being patient, we can expect other gifts that Our Lord has for us. Contrary to our mere human understanding, patience actually benefits us and brings down abundant resources for yielding ourselves more completely. Our impatience implies we have not completely surrendered our lives, nor do we really trust Him in our specific circumstances. Consequently, our Lord has to wait and allows us to endure other jolts until we abandon ourselves to His every will.



“In the Host is your power.”

Our Lord to Sister Faustina
Diary, 616

Just as food and bread supply us with energy for living, so, too, the Bread of Life in the Host (to the degree we are interiorly disposed to His grace) becomes the source of our spiritual life. If Our Lord made a pointed remark such as this, it would seem that it is a gentle reminder of where He knows the real source of our strength is.



In difficult moments, I will fix my gaze upon the silent Heart of Jesus, stretched upon the Cross, and from the exploding flames of His merciful Heart, will flow down upon me power and strength to keep fighting.

Diary, 906

This becomes somewhat obvious when we relate it to the Mass and the Body and Blood that we have the opportunity to receive daily. On another occasion St. Faustina writes: “I fear life on days when I do not receive Holy Communion. From the tabernacle I draw strength, power, courage, and light,” (*Diary*, 1037).

Furthermore, Our Lord tells her, “There is more merit to one hour of meditation on My sorrowful Passion than there is to a whole year of flagellation that draws blood” (*Diary*, 369).

Our Lord again reminds us of the true source of grace, energy, and the ability to be patient under any kind of trial. Through the merits of the Paschal mystery, we gain access to Him who is the sole source of our empowerment. □

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



first day I began reading the *Diary of St. Faustina*, I had to stop and go to the chapel," she says. "I had an intense desire to pray. I went before the Blessed Sacrament and prayed the Chaplet of Divine Mercy with all my heart. It touched me so deeply that I began to cry." □

We request your prayers and financial support for the Marians' evangelization efforts among Hispanics. If you would like to make a financial contribution, please write or call and mention the code SO. Call toll free 1-800-462-7426 or write:

*Marian Helpers Center
Eden Hill
Stockbridge, MA 01263*

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 bimonthly 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

Fr. Kazimierz Chwalek, MIC (right), was traveling as the special guest of Mother of Mercy Messengers. He is seen here with a local seminarian at St. Martin de Porres in Warren, MI, blessing parishioners with first-class relics of St. Faustina.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAVE AND JOAN MARONEY

Want to inspire the parish?

Time to call MOMM

When parishes and schools want to invigorate their faith life, they send for MOMM (Mother of Mercy Messengers). A husband-and-wife team, Joan and Dave Maroney deliver a dramatic multi-media presentation on Marian devotion and the message of Divine Mercy. Here is an account from Joan about their recent program in Warren, MI.

When Fr. Roman Pasieczny, the pastor of St. Martin de Porres Church, said he had invited seven additional priests to hear confessions after our program. What if hardly anyone came? What if only a few would go to confession?

Victoria Solomon and Barbara Foksa had called us at MOMM (Mother of Mercy Messengers) to arrange a program for their parish on the feast day of their parish's patron saint. We have a special love for St. Martin. He is such a great role model for living the message of mercy!

We prayed for his intercession for a fruitful event. And indeed it was! Over 700 people came out that night to hear about and

receive mercy.

When we started exposition, I looked around. I thought maybe people were leaving, but they were heading to the confessionals. It looked like half of the completely full church got up to get in line.

All ages participated in the program. MOMM gave special credit to 12-year-old Matthew Solomon, who did an outstanding job of video-taping the program and editing it with his own commentary.



Many were deeply touched by God's mercy and shared their experiences with MOMM. One young lady called the next day to find out when a presentation was going to be given in the area again, so she could bring some friends. She said, "I went to your program, and I left a different person." One married couple felt called to make a significant donation to MOMM's efforts to produce a video of the program.

And yet another young man said, "Your presentation played a major part in my turning myself over to the Lord." □

To invite Mother of Mercy Messengers to your parish or school, call Joan and Dave Maroney at 1-830-377-4423 or visit www.mommonline.com for more information.