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The Diary of Saint Faustina

“Do Not Fear I Am With You”

“Every morning during meditation, I prepare myself for the whole day’s struggle. Holy Communion assures me that I will win the victory; and so it is. I fear the day when I do not receive Holy Communion. This Bread of the Strong gives me all the strength I need to carry on my mission and the courage to do whatever the Lord asks of me. The courage and strength that are in me are not of me, but of Him who lives in me - it is the Eucharist” (Par. 91). With these words, I can visualize Saint Faustina as she describes her daily challenge. It is almost as if she is in her own little world with Jesus as her mentor. When you glance at the Divine Mercy picture which depicts Jesus with the radiant light emanating from Him, one can picture Saint Faustina kneeling in the lighted path directly in front of Jesus. The serious devotion in which Saint Faustina describes her feelings for Jesus is so deep and powerful that I can almost feel her in my midst looking directly at the picture of Jesus who is speaking to her. These meaningful words from the Diary (Par. 91) describe accurately how much she loves Jesus and upon reading the Diary, deep feelings are stirred within me to love Jesus. However, I could never approach even a speck of the magnitude of her love and devotion that Saint Faustina experiences in her Diary toward Jesus.

So unique is the way she experienced her love for Jesus that Saint Faustina experienced many hurts and much humiliation. She felt herself as Jesus’ bride and Jesus as the Groom. “Humiliation is my daily food, I understand that the bride must herself share in everything that is the groom’s; and so His cloak of mockery must cover me, too” (Par. 92). Every breath she took

was for Jesus and she asked him to help her cover up any useless speaking that she might be doing. It seems as if any time she spoke referring to “my tongue,” she must praise God concentrating on not offending God or neighbor. “I want my tongue to praise God without cease. Great are the faults committed by the tongue. The soul will not attain sanctity if it does not keep watch over its tongue” (Par. 92). This manner of speaking may have been symptomatic of the early 1900’s that she lived though it sounds ornate today. The way Saint Faustina spoke and how she recorded her deepest thoughts in her Diary were quite different than the website writings. The Divine Mercy website reports on Saint Faustina as a media figure who is capable of loving Jesus and instituting various ways to pray to Jesus’ Divine Mercy, e.g. praying the Chaplet of Mercy and a special devotion prayer at 3 p.m. on a daily basis commemorating the time that Jesus died on the cross. Instructing Saint Faustina, Jesus said to her “immerse yourself completely in My Mercy, adoring and glorifying it.” Adding, “That Mercy opens wide the soul and this is when to ask Jesus for forgiveness. In so doing it is the “hour of grace for the whole world – Mercy triumphed over justice.”(www.thedivinemercy.org)

Along with praying for Mercy, Jesus tells Saint Faustina to try her best to say the Stations of the Cross and if unable to recite the Stations, He suggests, “to at least step into the chapel for a moment to adore, in the Most Blessed Sacrament, My Heart, which is full of Mercy.” Along with this instruction Jesus adds if you cannot do either, then completely immerse yourself wherever you happen to be even if only for a few seconds or a minute.

(www.thedivinemercy.org)

The Divine Mercy website projects that Jesus really wants us to pray for His Mercy at 3 o’clock wherever we are. The website further elaborates that Abraham in Genesis 18:16-32 begged God to be merciful to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. However to Saint Faustina,

He reduces the condition for asking for mercy as Jesus becomes more compassionate toward the modern everyday hectic life. Jesus makes it easier for us to pray for His Mercy. Let us take advantage of His new parameters and ask for Mercy even if we are doing the ordinary things in life, e.g. driving our car, working at our desk or simply interrupting our daily routine. This “*brief instant*” when contemplating the Agony in the Garden is when Jesus was abandoned and alone and this is when we should say the brief prayer, “Jesus.” Another prayer would be, “Jesus, for the sake of your Sorrowful Passion, have Mercy on us and the whole world.” Pope John Paul II has repeatedly stressed about praying to God’s Mercy and it is the answer to our specific problems. His focus to all of us has been to pray to the Divine Mercy throughout his pontificate and to keep strong against the devil. (www.thedivinemercy.org)

This brief meditation brings to mind Pope John Paul II and his book, *Rich in Mercy*, where he writes, “It is in the cross when the revelation of merciful love attains its culmination.” God wants us to have Mercy toward His only Son, who was crucified and to reflect on the Passion which should unite us to love Our Lord and connect us to the Mercy shown by the “Son of the Eternal Father.”

Saint Faustina had experienced severe torment, and, I believe, she was tortured by the evil spirit - the devil. Since she was a vulnerable prey, the devil persisted in trying to possess her soul. However, Saint Faustina was staunch in her world of Jesus and reminds us, “But Satan has only as much influence over the soul as God allows him, and God knows how much we can bear” (Par. 98). For instance Satan interrogates Saint Faustina, “What have you gotten out of your mortification.” says Satan, “and out of your fidelity to the rule? What use are all these efforts? You have been *rejected* by God!” (Par. 47).

Hearing the word, *rejected*, Faustina “becomes a fire which penetrates every nerve to the marrow of the bone. It pierces right through her entire being. The ordeal reaches its climax. The soul no longer looks for help anywhere. It shrinks itself and loses sight of everything, it is as though it has accepted the torture of being abandoned. This is the moment for which I have no words” (Par. 47). Saint Faustina explains that the trials sent by God made her soul a prime target for Satan who pounces on her tormented soul forcing it to shrink and despair, at everything as if abandoned. She deductively says: “This is the agony of the soul” (Par. 99). At this time because Saint Faustina’s appearance was so alarming, the Directress of Novices sent her to confession. Saint Faustina met with her Confessor as he was an important part of her religious life like most orders of religious sisters. However at this specific time, the Confessor was basically no help since he did not understand what Saint Faustina was experiencing. Her Confessor told her that he saw the “great grace of God in her soul” but these words of consolation uttered by him did not soothe her torment (Par. 102). At the same time, her frail physical health began to appear visibly and she could no longer hide her suffering which she had been desperately doing for many years. After collapsing in her cell, another Sister found her and called the Directress who commanded Saint Faustina in the name of obedience to get up and add, “I see that God is calling you to a higher degree of holiness; the Lord wants to draw you very close to Himself since He has allowed these things to happen to you so soon. Be faithful to God, Sister, because this is a sign that He wants you to have a high place in Heaven” (Par. 102).

Not understanding any of these words, Saint Faustina nevertheless felt her soul made free as if she were like a young girl experiencing a child-like feeling. Jesus said to Saint Faustina “Fear not, my daughter; I am with you” (Par. 103). Instantly, Saint Faustina’s torments vanished and she was filled with joy. I feel that a serene calmness swept through Saint Faustina as the

direct communication occurred between Jesus and her. He assured her that as He spoke, and at that very moment, Saint Faustina was being healed spiritually. Although she was healed, past tortures were still with her for two more days leaving her with a deathly pale complexion and bloodshot eyes. She felt like she had experienced a trip to the other world and now she was cleansed and ready for Jesus and as always—totally obedient. Her Directress told her that she must receive Holy Communion even though she felt unworthy and so Saint Faustina did receive. Once again her Directress gave her encouragement and said that her trials passed quickly, “because you were obedient, Sister; and it was through the power of obedience that you struggled through this so bravely.” Saint Faustina added, “It is true that it was the Lord Himself who brought me out of this torment, but my fidelity to obedience did please Him” (Par. 105). Saint Faustina continues that her experiences are frightening but Jesus will never test our souls beyond what we are able to withstand and then again, all of us do not experience sufferings as Saint Faustina experienced.

When and how do we learn about suffering and our struggle to be obedient to God’s word and our Catholic faith? For me, when I was an elementary student in Saint Donato’s Parish grade school, I learned about Saint Francis Xavier Cabrini as our teaching order was the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. These Sisters are the same order that found and teach at Cabrini College. Like Sister Faustina and most of the good Sisters, Saint Francis Cabrini was a Sister who also was in poor health and was reluctantly admitted into a religious order in her native country. However when reading about Mother Cabrini’s life, it was noted that she had been a missionary from Italy to the United States. She had traveled to various well-populated cities of Chicago, New York and Philadelphia. Saint Francis Cabrini labored among the Italian immigrants nursing their varied illnesses, serving as a translator and aiding their

struggle to adjust to a foreign country and their new homeland. With all of the immigrant problems, Saint Francis Cabrini administered to their many needs by establishing over sixty-seven institutions and houses of her religious order. Included in this number was an orphanage for young girls and I attended the grade school where these *convent girls* lived and attended elementary school as this occurred in Mother Cabrini's convent in the Overbrook section of Philadelphia. I have many fond memories of the girls spending time together both in and away from class. Similarly, both Saint Faustina and Saint Francis Cabrini cared for young girls at their convent buildings sacrificing their lives to help these young children. Ultimately, these Sisters imparted their strong faith in Jesus to the children, enriching their lives.

Saint Faustina even though she had a limited education was an overachiever in her love of God because of the influence of Divine Grace. Likewise, I feel blessed with my Catholic background that has helped me understand the deeper meaning and knowledge of God in my soul. Saint Faustina wrote when she saw the Lord interiorly, He said to her, "Fear not, My daughter; I am with you" (Par. 103). She further added that all darkness left her soul as her soul filled completely with light. As she could see her soul filled with Jesus' love, traces of past tortures remained in her memory but now that she is conscious of Jesus within her, she will no longer experience the suffering. The Lord Himself helped her through the torment and Saint Faustina tells us no matter what sufferings He may send us, our souls should remain faithful to God. When a soul endures these tribulations, it surfaces as being extremely humble and pure knowing how to react to any situation with grace and faithfulness to God. The soul has been introduced to purification by God Himself and this evolves into a "close communion with Himself. The soul, in a state of loving repose, communes spiritually with the Lord. It speaks to God without the need of expressing itself through the senses. God fills it with His light" (Par.

115). This enlightened state recognizes a spiritual side when the soul was imperfect and exalted looking forward to the higher and perfect union with God which is referred to as an intellectual union. In this union the soul is safe from illusions and its spirituality is more secure and purer. This purer spiritual state of the soul dims outside influences and more closely aligns itself with God blocking outside distractions and rejoices. At this time Saint Faustina declares her honor and glory to Jesus and thanks Him for His Mercy.

How did Saint Faustina handle her close experiences with Jesus and with her religious Sisters living all around her? “Thus I have already been judged from all sides. There is no longer anything in me that has escaped the sisters’ judgment. But it seems now to have worn itself out, and they have begun to leave me in peace” (Par. 128). Previously Saint Faustina wrote in her Diary that she was watched like a thief whether she was in the chapel or in her cell. Even her poor bed was checked. One day, one of the Sisters in charge had angrily humiliated Saint Faustina, berating her by calling her “a queer, hysterical visionary, get out of this room; go on with you, Sister” (Par. 128). Oh, how could Saint Faustina endure this? Instead she fell forward on the chapel floor and looked at Jesus on the cross unable to utter a word. Never did she confide one word of what had occurred. Now Saint Faustina had to be extra careful as this is when Satan would prey on her to break her spirit looking to destroy her unconditional love for Jesus. At this time of desolation and discouragement Jesus said to her, “Do not fear, I am with you” (Par. 129). At that moment an inner light enveloped Saint Faustina and she was filled with extra strength to lift her from her cell and instantly impart additional courage to withstand the suffering heaped on her. Even though she endured these suffering encounters, Saint Faustina went about her chores experiencing Jesus pursuing her with his gifts of strength. Saint Faustina did not mention all these encounters with Jesus because she had written about them in a previous

section of her Diary. And so Saint Faustina longed to listen to her Confessor to guide her that Jesus was in the depths of her soul and everything she experienced was for Jesus. She asked Jesus to give her a sign so that courage would overwhelm her soul totally. And so the Confessor says something he never intended to say and truly we believe that these words uttered by the Confessor are from Jesus, “Oh, let the soul believe that such words are the words of the Lord Himself! Though indeed we ought to believe that every word spoken in the confessional is God’s, what I have referred to above is something that comes directly from God and the soul perceives that the priest is not master of himself, that he is saying things that he would rather not say. This is how God rewards faith” (Par. 132). We, therefore, can assume that the Confessor is advising the soul as God’s administrator and not necessarily what he would say personally.

One such priest was Father Wilkiniski who was the Sister’s Confessor at Plock in Poland and whom Saint Faustina went to confession occasionally. This particular priest was severe and opposed to Saint Faustina’s experiences with the Lord. However, on this one occasion he cautioned her to do whatever Jesus asks of you and not oppose him. “Be at peace, what God has started, He will finish. But I say this to you: faithfulness to God and humility and once again humility. Bear well in mind what I have told you today” (Par. 132). At last Saint Faustina felt this priest understood her but another disappointment occurred as he never heard her confession again.

And so the Lord constantly tested Saint Faustina’s faith with yet another severe reprimand from a Mother Superior and in spite of these setbacks, Saint Faustina totally abandoned herself to God delivering her soul freely from when she was a very young girl and so certain of her vocation. Saint Faustina sought to join a convent as early as 15 years of age and became a postulant on August 1, 1925 entering the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of

Mercy in Warsaw. She completed her two-year novitiate on April 30, 1928 in Kracow. It was in Kracow on May 1, 1933, she took her perpetual vows while working in the convent in various capacities as a cook, baker, gardener and doorkeeper. After taking her perpetual vows and living in the convent at Kracow, Saint Faustina's health began to deteriorate. She contracted consumption several times and had violent attacks of asthma which probably were diagnosed as tuberculosis though not recorded as such by her doctors. Following these illnesses, she stayed several months at a time in a sanatorium in 1936 and 1937. The Lord took Saint Faustina to Himself on October 5, 1938, after she had spent the last five months of her life in the hospital though she was brought to the convent for her remaining days. Saint Faustina was only 35 years of age but for those few years she left us a treasury of her love for Jesus.

Reflecting on her illness and when Saint Faustina was told by her doctors that her condition was grave, she wrote in her Diary, "When I entered my room, I steeped myself in prayer of thanksgiving for everything the Lord had been sending me throughout my whole life, surrendering myself totally to His most holy will. A deep joy and peace flooded my soul. I felt a peace so great that, if death had come at that moment, I would not have said to it, wait for I still have some matters to attend to. No, I would have welcomed it with joy, because I am ready for the meeting with the Lord, not only today, but ever since the moment when I placed my complete trust in the Divine Mercy, resigning myself totally to His most holy will, full of mercy and compassion, I know what I am of myself..." (Par. 1679)

Saint Faustina came from a remote town in Poland, but she has had a powerful impact on spreading Jesus' Divine Mercy throughout the world having the assistance of the late Pope John Paul II and presently the Marians of the Immaculate Conception. Saint Faustina's Diary of 700 pages is a most memorable reading and quite remarkable that she wrote this detailed account of

her experiences with Jesus with only a modest education. Reading about Saint Faustina has certainly enhanced my Catholic faith and Jesus' Divine Mercy.

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Divine Mercy and Pope John Paul II

“Come to Me, All Who Are Weary and Heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.
Take My Yoke Upon You, and Learn from Me, for I Am Gentle and Humble in Heart”

“The message of Divine Mercy has always been near and dear to me,” said Pope John Paul II, “which I took with me to the See of Peter and which in a sense forms the image of this Pontificate.” John Paul was so enamored by the notion that he promoted the urgent message of Divine Mercy believing that it was the remedy for all the world’s problems. “Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the fount of My Mercy,” is Our Lord’s request to Saint Faustina.

(www.thedivinemercy.org)

Saint Faustina’s revelations of Jesus as the Divine Mercy and her writings regarding them were banned by the Vatican for 25 years until Pope John Paul lifted it allowing them to be read again. The reason Saint Faustina’s Diary was banned is there were many confusing and erroneous translations which could not be verified because of the existing political conditions of World War II. Therefore, Saint Faustina’s message of Divine Mercy was banned. However during the period of the ban, the Marians continued to teach the devotion of Divine Mercy basing it on “Sacred Scripture, the Liturgy, teachings of the Church, and Our Lady’s revelations at Fatima.” (www.thedivinemercy.org)

Twenty years after the ban and because of the intervention of Archbishop of Krakow, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla in 1978, an investigation of Saint Faustina was conducted and reversed the ban. Coincidentally, Cardinal Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II. Thus, in 1979, the Marians were permitted to spread the Divine Mercy message and the response from all over the world was overwhelming. Certainly one of the main reasons for the spread of successful

devotions to Divine Mercy was through the support of the Holy Father who published in 1981, the encyclical, *Rich in Mercy*. In his encyclical, the Holy Father emphasized that “Christ messianic program, the program of mercy” must become “the program of His people, the program of the Church.” The Holy Father further explained that the Church has the “right and the duty” to spread God’s mercy to all people. (www.thedivinemercy.org)

Pope John Paul was a devotee of the saint having grown up in the same town and having prayed at the neighboring sanctuary of the Divine Mercy, a place dedicated to the saint and her cause for many years before his pontifical election. Once Pope, John Paul expedited her cause for sainthood when he beatified her in 1993 and canonized her in 2000. Reading her diary, John Paul believed Jesus’ appearances to Saint Faustina were authentic and he found them especially meaningful to him personally. His main purpose was to spread devotion to Jesus’ Divine Mercy throughout the world and his significant focus was to insure that the Divine Mercy message will be instilled in the Catholic world for many years even after the Holy Father’s passing. To promote the veneration of Jesus’ Divine Mercy and to remind us that we are made according to Jesus’ image, the Pope extracted detailed information from Saint Faustina’s message that she was to have an image painted according to how the Lord appeared to her. It seems possible that Jesus initially conceived the plan of Divine Mercy to be carried out through Sister Faustina and Pope John Paul II. I believe that this Divine Mercy message is a combined version of the Liturgy and Sacred Scripture which was initiated centuries earlier and referenced during the ban with the Marians promoting Divine Mercy today. Thus, Jesus carefully selected Saint Faustina to be his apostle of Divine Mercy as her quiet demeanor and love for God made her a prime candidate to inspire both the 20th and 21st centuries. The Divine Mercy website states that, “In his very nature Love and Mercy Itself, is given to us by our Judeo-Christian faith and God’s self-

revelation". The website goes on to assert that the veil that had kept God hidden has been lifted by God Himself and in lifting this veil, God also chose to reveal his plan of salvation. Through His goodness and love, God introduced his plan for mankind's solution through Old Testament patriarchs like Moses and most importantly allowing his Son Our Lord Jesus Christ to be born of the Virgin Mary. By living on earth as an ordinary person God the Father allowed us to know Jesus and love Him as he spread the gospel. The *Good News of Jesus Christ* is depicted as the epitome of Love and Mercy with no boundary in sight. There is no sin no matter how severe that we cannot ask Jesus to forgive us with His Mercy. Jesus allows us to be free to choose Him and the divine life utilizing His divine Love and Mercy to empower us to do good. Love and Mercy, especially written in the Gospels, transforms us to trust in Him, receive Holy Communion and turn away from sin. (www.thedivinemercy.org)

An example of God's Mercy as illustrated by one of the Gospels in the Bible is Isaiah who wrote that Zion, herald of glad tidings, told the people of Jerusalem to cry out that this is your God who comes with power and rules strongly, "Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care" (Isaiah 40: 9-11). Surely, Jesus loves us and will protect us with his Mercy as he gathers us in his arms like little lambs.

The Gospel writer, Mark, wrote "Behold, I am sending a messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." And so John the Baptist appeared in the desert teaching the people and baptizing. All inhabitants of the Judean countryside and Jerusalem flocked to be baptized by John the Baptist asking for forgiveness of their sins. John lived in the desert eating locusts and wild honey and taught the crowds about Jesus and said, "One mightier than I is coming after me.

I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1: 1-8).” John the Baptist was the precursor for Jesus’ coming. Saint Faustina and her Diary, though published after her death, prepare us for our modern day. The Divine Mercy website interprets Saint Faustina’s great mercy and love for Jesus as a trustworthy source for information concerning Saint Faustina and her writings. The Order of Marians of the Immaculate Conception maintains the website and their base of operations in the United States is located in Stockbridge, Massachusetts and is called the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy.

Inspired by the Marians and their extensive information on Divine Mercy, we are taught to turn away from sin and live the ideal Christian life as a motivating and ultimate force. This strong faith allows us to become Christ-like as we imitate the saints’ lives in our own life, “All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to perfection of charity.” All of us are called to holiness: “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (www.thedivinemercy.org).” By following the will of God in everything we do, we will be guided to devote ourselves to the glory of God and service to our neighbor. This spiritual perfection guides us as it has in the past with all the saints.

This spiritual union binds us to God. It is referred to as “mystical” because of our participation with the “holy mysteries” through the sacraments and the Holy Trinity. This intimate union with God occurred for Saint Faustina when she endured excruciating illnesses and burdening chores to follow Our Lord’s directions without questioning His commands. She endured ridicule, performed laborious work and prayed incessantly offering all her pains and sorrows to the Lord Jesus. Let us each consecrate ourselves to the Divine Mercy as Pope John Paul II consecrated the whole world on August 18, 2002. (www.thedivinemercy.org)

What appears as an ordained passing from this life, God called the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, home on the eve of the Divine Mercy feast day which is the first Sunday after Easter and happened to be April 3 this year. As if part of a special assignment, Pope John Paul's message was read at the Mass of Divine Mercy celebrated on the day after his death and read at the first Mass after his death hours earlier. Many felt that Jesus was so pleased with John Paul that he brought the Pope to paradise almost simultaneously with the feast of Divine Mercy. Perhaps God rewarded John Paul for his devotion to his Divine Mercy and his strong inclination to spread Faustina's teaching.

Reflecting on current events, the world really needs these prayers even more ardently as innumerable tragedies have occurred in which many innocent people have been taken beginning with the tragic suicide bombings both in the City of New York (9/11/2001) and then in London. Even the weather has displayed havoc with the devastating tsunami in Southeast Asia and hurricanes of Katrina, Rita and Wilma in the southern portion of the United States and Mexico, destroying lives, homes and cities for thousands upon thousands of people. Many believe that these events are taking a toll on humanity and are becoming more and more frequent. Just recently a horrible earthquake struck the heart of Pakistan and India and the news has been filled with reports on the expected avian flu that is expected to take millions of lives. Internationally, Pope John Paul tried at every opportunity to seek a peaceful solution to the war in Iraq but he was unsuccessful. The Pope suggested that we should all strive to pray and give good example to spread devotion to Jesus' Divine Mercy because Jesus saw these tragic events coming and is warning us to pray to his Divine Mercy. All should heed the Holy Father's instruction since he is God's representative on earth.

Why was Saint Marie Faustina chosen to deliver the Divine Mercy message? Our Lord chose this humble Sister in this remote section of Poland and said to her “in the Old Covenant I sent prophets wielding thunderbolts to My People. Today I am sending you with My Mercy to the people of the whole world.” (Par. 1588) He further elaborated seven times that this special message is in preparation for His final coming. Saint Faustina practiced all the vows dictated by her order of Divine Mercy – poverty, chastity and obedience.

In one of her earlier assignments, the Mother Superior disliked Faustina and assigned her heavy duty tasks which included working in the convent bakery carrying extremely heavy sacks of flour and baskets of baked goods. She also baked enormous amounts of bread and bakery items for every occasion without ever complaining or missing a deadline. Even if another sister tried to help Faustina, her superiors dismissed that help so she had to undergo the extreme labor without assistance. Finally, that Superior transferred her to another convent where she worked hard with physical labor on the convent farm. There she labored on her own planting, growing and digging the crops that the sisters ate. Never complaining, she began passing out from sunstroke never to be assisted or reassigned lighter duty. This complete disregard for her physical health rendered Faustina extremely sick with tuberculosis. When medical attention finally was given, her condition was too advanced for the doctors to help her. Accepting this horrible treatment, she said she endured all this for Our Lord who even appeared to her exhibiting all his wounds. Faustina compared what Jesus had endured and how she was grateful to accept her sickness along with the mental and physical abuse of the Mother Superiors. Saint Faustina had great love for God and it was amazing how she communicated with Him exhibiting to the Merciful Christ all her trust in Him. He told Faustina to do whatever was within her power to spread devotion to My Mercy exhibiting to all people a captivating life to emulate.

Though people might shudder at Saint Faustina's ill treatment in the convent and her eventual grave illness which was tuberculosis, she was not the only saint who became so sick after Jesus appeared and conversed with her. Saint Bernadette of Lourdes was often sick and also mistreated by her Superiors and like Saint Faustina died at age 35. She had lived in the 19th century and was born in 1844 and passed away in 1879. The Blessed Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception, appeared to Bernadette fifteen times asking her to pray the rosary. Mary's first vision to Bernadette was on February 11, 1858 when she received her First Holy Communion. Like Saint Faustina she was in her teens when she had decided to live a religious life and Bernadette chose the sisters of Nevers at Lourdes aiding the sick and indigent. Living during these times life was more challenging without many modern conveniences and that might be a partial reason for the severe treatment that Saint Faustina and Saint Bernadette led in their respective convents. Also, there were many more applicants who sought the religious life in those times and perhaps the superiors had so many religious to administer to and possibly believed inflicting suffering and harshness on the sisters should occur on earth in order to gain Heaven. (www.catholic-forum)

In my opinion this would never occur today because there is a great need for religious vocations and the young women seeking admission are few. The women today must be treated in a humane manner so they will remain in the order. It does seem possible that Saint Faustina could have interceded to Jesus to be treated less harshly but she was so full of Jesus' Love and Mercy and coping with her sacrifices that she had her love and mercy focused on Jesus not on improving her own situation in the convent.

One need never shrink from asking Jesus for His help with whatever sorrow we may experience. Jesus walks through Faustina's heart and he will do the same for all of us. We only

have to pray to Jesus' and ask for his Divine Mercy, and he will be there to help us and in fact, that is what Jesus wants us to do. Every page of Faustina's Diary depicts God's Love and Mercy that he has for all of us. Pope John Paul II remarked at her canonization, "By this act I intend to pass this message on to the new millennium, to all people, so that they will learn to know ever better the face of God, and the true face of their brethren." The Holy Father added, "May this message spread throughout the world." Jesus desires his Divine Mercy be worshiped, stipulating that this is the last hope of salvation. (www.thedivinemercy.org)

Some of Saint Faustina's Confessors believed ardently in Jesus' Divine Mercy message and Saint Faustina praised Father Sopocko, her spiritual director. Jesus was quoted in her Diary as saying that Father Sopocko had spent most of his life at great sacrifice spreading the Divine Mercy. "Through him it pleased Me to proclaim the worship of My Mercy. And through this work of Mercy, many souls will come close to Me than otherwise would have, even if he had kept giving absolution day and night for the rest of his life, because by so doing, he would have labored only for as long as he lived; whereas, thanks to this work of mercy, he will be laboring till the end of the world." (Par. 1256).

Along with the devotion to Divine Mercy and Jesus' image, Jesus impressed upon Saint Faustina the power of the Chaplet of Mercy and how devotion should be spread to everyone with His words, "Encourage souls to say the chaplet that I have given you". This message was spread to all people during Saint Faustina's time and is presently endorsed by the Marians of the Immaculate Conception who promote the message of Divine Mercy throughout the world especially through the Divine Mercy website. This chaplet is intended to help to recall that Jesus freely chose to redeem the sins of all mankind through His horrible suffering on the cross. This

magnificent deed manifests Jesus' Love and Mercy for all of us as illustrated by his appearances on earth. (thedivinemeracy.org)

It seems quite apparent that Jesus and Mary often appeared to one or more poor and innocent young people in remote areas. For example, Jesus appeared to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, a young girl who was born in Lhautecour, France in the mid 1600's. However, when Saint Margaret Mary was only nine years old and having received her First Holy Communion, almost immediately afterward she became paralyzed and became bedridden for four years. At that time she made a vow to the Blessed Virgin that she would give herself to a religious life and she was instantly restored to perfect health. Her father died when she was quite young and the family became poverty stricken and humiliated. At this time, Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque prayed to the Blessed Sacrament and Jesus appeared to her as the crucified Christ. She was so surprised that she was the only one seeing Jesus. At seventeen years of age the family's property was recovered and she thought her vow to become a religious was not binding and she could serve God at home doing penance and helping the poor. She began enjoying worldly pleasures and one night on returning from a night at the ball she had a vision of Christ as he looked during the scourging and he reproached her for her infidelity after he had shown her many proofs of His love.

During May 1671, she entered the Visitation Convent at Paray where she experienced many trials to prove she truly had a vocation. She pronounced her final vows in November 1672 and became a cloister sister which was more difficult for her since this silence was against her nature. She chose the path of most suffering and Christ often appeared and spoke to her to soothe her suffering. Most importantly, he told her of the mission to establish devotion to His Sacred Heart.

Like Saint Faustina, her community criticized her, treated her as a visionary and her superior insisted she live a common life. “But her obedience and her humility and her invariable charity towards those who persecuted her, finally prevailed, and her mission was accomplished in the crucible of suffering was recognized even by those who had shown her the most bitter opposition.” (www.newadvent.org/cathen)

Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque initiated the first Friday devotion to the Sacred Heart by receiving Holy Communion to share in the sadness Jesus experienced when abandoned by his Apostles in His Agony. Similar to Saint Faustina, “He made known to her His ardent desire to be loved by all men and His design of manifesting His Heart with all its treasures of love and mercy, of sanctification and salvation.” Also similar to the establishment of the Divine Mercy Sunday, Jesus appointed the Friday after the octave of the feast of Corpus Christi as the Sacred Heart’s feast day. Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque was called by Jesus “The Beloved Disciple of the Sacred Heart” and again like Saint Faustina, was sickly and when dying at age 43 refused any alleviation for pain but constantly pronounced the Holy Name of *Jesus!*

(www.newadvent.org/cathen)

Another instance of Mary appearing to poor children in remote areas is when the Blessed Mother appeared at Fatima in Portugal. The Most Holy Mother Mary spoke to three shepherd children six times between May 13 and October 13, 1917 instructing them that devotion to Her is necessary so that the force of good could win over the devil giving a Victory for God. Through the intercession of Our Lady, the miracle of the Sun occurred at Fatima, was photographed and witnessed by 100,000 people as prophesied by the children, Jacinta, Francesco and Lucia on October 13, 1917. “The Sun and Moon and the Stars will give portents (Lk. 21-25).” Many miracles and conversions took place and this request to pray at Fatima is still going on. One of

the messages from Fatima is that all should pray the rosary to Mary for World Peace. Each time Our Lady appeared she also asked the three children to wear the Scapular and in fact during her last appearance on October 13, 1917, the Blessed Mother silently held the scapular. Lucia was one of the children and was quoted as saying, "The Scapular and the Rosary are inseparable". Also, during one of her appearances, the Blessed Mother prophesied that Francesco and Jacinta would go to their eternal reward at a young age while Sister Lucia would live longer. Actually Sister Lucia became a Carmelite sister and recently died last year at over ninety years of age. The message from Mary delivered at Fatima was delivered to the world by Lucia throughout her life.

The young people who received appearances of Jesus and Mary were chosen because of their purity and devotion and it seems that all were asked to pray during difficult periods in world history including world wars and poverty. I believe Jesus is giving all of us the message that the poor and innocent have an easier chance to reach their heavenly reward. However, Jesus would like all to pray as advocated by Pope John Paul II who constantly reminded the faithful to pray to Jesus for world peace. The Pope also stressed our praying to Jesus' Divine Mercy, to His Sacred Heart and saying the rosary to the Blessed Virgin Mary following the devotions taught by Saint Faustina, Saint Bernadette, Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque and the children of Fatima -- Jacinta, Francesco and Lucia.

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