

Saint Faustina and the Divine Mercy

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In the second anniversary of his election to the Holy See on 14.03.2015 Pope Francis announced that the Liturgical Year 2015/2016 will be the Year of Mercy¹. In the Year of Mercy the Bishop of Rome will arrive in Poland which will celebrate the 1050th anniversary of baptism and will take part in the World Youth Day in Cracow, where in Łagiewniki is established by St. John Paul the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy and where one of the most famous modern saints lived and was buried, a sister from the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy – St. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938)². Apostle of Divine Mercy, Prophet of Our Times, Great Mystic, a Model of Spiritual Life – these are the epithets usually appended to the name of Sister Faustina Kowalska, St. Faustina (Faustyna).

1. Saint Faustina

Sister Faustina was born on 25 August 1905 in Głogowiec (Poland) to Marianna and Stanisław Kowalski the third of ten children. Two days later she was baptized with the name Helena in the parish church of Świnice Warckie³. At the age of nine, she made her first Holy Communion. She attended elementary school for only three years and then she went to work as a housekeeper in various well-to-do families in

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¹ FRANCIS, Bull of indiction of the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy *Misericordiae Vultus*, Vatican 2015.

² E. K. CZACZKOWSKA, *Siostra Faustyna. Biografia świętej*, Kraków 2012.

³ A. WITKO, *Święta Faustyna i Boże Miłosierdzie*, Kraków 2014, 37.

Aleksandrów and Łódź. From the age of seven, she felt the calling for religious vocation, but her parents would not give her permission to enter the convent. However, impelled by the vision of the Suffering Christ, in July 1924 she left for Warsaw to find a place. She worked for another year as a housekeeper to save some money for a modest monastic trousseau. On 1 August 1925 she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Warsaw in Żytnia St.

She lived in the Congregation for thirteen years, staying in many houses, the longest time (she spent) in Kraków, Płock and Vilnius; working as a cook, shop assistant in a baker's shop, gardener, and portress. She suffered from tuberculosis of the lungs and alimentary system and that is why for over 8 months stayed at the hospital in Kraków – Prądnik. Greater sufferings from those which were caused by tuberculosis, she offered as a voluntary sacrifice for sinners and as the Apostle of Divine Mercy. She experienced also many extraordinary graces such as: apparitions, ecstasies, the gift of bilocation, hidden stigmata, reading into human souls.

Sister Faustina's principal task was to pass on to the Church and world the Message of Mercy, a recapitulation of the Biblical truth of God's Merciful Love for every human being, and a calling to each of us to entrust our lives to Him and to actively love our neighbour.

Jesus not only revealed the depth of His Mercy to St. Faustina, but also gave her new forms of worship: the picture inscribed «Jesus, I trust in You», the Feast of Divine Mercy, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and the Prayer in the Hour of His Death on the Cross, the Hour of Mercy. To each of these forms of worship, as well as to the preaching of the message of Mercy, He attached great promises, on condition that we care and we trust in God that is to fulfil His will and show mercy to our neighbours.

Sister Faustina died in Krakow on October 5, 1938, at the age of only thirty-three. Out of her charisma and mystical experience grew the Apostolic Movement of the Divine Mercy which continues the mission, proclaiming the message of Mercy to the world through the testimony of life, deed, words and prayer. In the year of 1980 John Paul II published the encyclical *Dives in misericordia*⁴. It is to deepen the theological reflection on God, who is full of mercy. The encyclical was a fruit of pastoral experiences which was gathered by Karol Wojtyła in Poland, and particularly in Cracow⁵. Where there is a grave of St. Faustina. In 1991 John Paul II went on a pilgrimage to Płock, the town where the Christ appeared to Young sister Faustina in a form she showed in the picture. In September of 1993 he visited Wilno, where Faustina later worked and where the first picture came into being. John Paul II beatified Faustina

⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, Vatican 1980, 14.

⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Memory and Identity: Personal Reflections*, Kraków 2005, 13.

on April 18, 1993⁶ and then canonized Her on April 30, 2000⁷ in the centre of the Jubilee Year and approved the feast of the Divine Mercy. Two years later personally consecrated the basilica of the Divine Mercy in Łagiewniki.

2. History of pictures

The picture of the Merciful Jesus is not an ordinary Picture. His co-author is the Christ himself who ordered his picture to be painted. The first revelation concerning the picture of the Divine Mercy, and also service took place on the first Sunday of Lent 22.02.1931. St. Faustina stayed at that time in Płock, where she worked by turns in the kitchen, bakery and the bakery shop. In the evening when she was in her cell, Lord Jesus came into the picture. «In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand [was] raised in the gesture of blessing, the other was touching the garment at the chest. From beneath the garment, slightly drawn aside at the chest, there were emanating two large rays, one red, the other pale. In silence I kept my gaze fixed on the Lord; my soul was struck with awe, but also with great joy. After a while, Jesus said to me, Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You. I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and [then] throughout the world»⁸.

Some days later sister Faustina told everything to her confessor, however he did not understand the unusual confession of the penitent and related demand of the Saviour to spiritual level, ordering Faustina to paint the picture with good deeds. However the will of Jesus was quite different. Soon after the confession He asked again his «secretary», renewed the demand to make the painting of the Divine Mercy: «My image already is in your soul. I desire that there be a Feast of Mercy. I want this image, which you will paint with a brush, to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter; that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy»⁹.

Superior of the house where Saint Faustina revealed the will of Jesus expressed in the revelation, related to the confession of the sister Faustina very sceptically. She required the sign which would confirm that command relating to painting the picture really comes from the Jesus. Saint Faustina asked the Saviour for a sign and then she heard the words that this sign will be manifested by the graces which God will grant

⁶ E. TRETER, *Bóg objawiony w Miłosierdziu. Beatyfikacja s. Faustyny Kowalskiej*, Warszawa 1993.

⁷ S. URBAŃSKI, *Kanonizacja s. Faustyny Kowalskiej. Mistyczny świat ducha*, Warszawa 2000.

⁸ ST. FAUSTINA, *Diary*, Kraków 2010, 47 [further: *Diary*].

⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

through this picture¹⁰. At the end of November 1932 Jesus appeared to Faustina and asked her to stare into His merciful Heart. Obedient to his will she stared in the Heart of Jesus and saw two rays going out of it, «which are in this image»¹¹. In the Lent of 1933 Jesus emphasized the meaning of service to the Divine Mercy, and in particular an importance of painting the picture for the salvation of souls¹².

In May 1933 sister Faustina was transferred from Cracow to Wilno. She met Father Michał Sopoćko there, who from that time was to be her regular spiritual confessor¹³. When the sister saw Father. Michał she knew at once that he is the person whom earlier she saw in the spiritual vision, and now a voice which she recognized as the voice of Lord, spoke to her: «This is the visible help for you on earth. He will help you carry out My will on earth»¹⁴. Father Sopoćko in accordance with the vision of Sister Faustina, became her spiritual confessor. Helping in a recognition of the reality of internal inspirations, He joined in realization of summons addressed to her. That is he who ordered her to paint the picture of the famous artist in Wilno – Eugeniusz Kazimirowski. Since that time Sister Faustina was going to the painter in the company of the superior sister and gave him relevant instructions. Faustina was not satisfied with the final effect. When she saw the picture, in the chapel she burst out crying and said: «Who will paint You as beautiful as You are?»¹⁵. In response to her experience, Lord Jesus said the following words: «Not in the beauty of the colour, nor of the brush lies the greatness of this image, but in My grace»¹⁶.

At the beginning the image stayed in the monastery of the Bernardine Sisters. In the next vision in spring of 1935, on Good Friday, Faustina saw Lord Jesus with his shoulders stretched and agonizing in great pain. From His Heart going out the rays, the same, which were seen in the picture. The Saviour said firmly: «I desire that the image be publicly honoured»¹⁷.

At that time Father. Sopoćko agreed to public exhibition of the picture. It happened on occasion of ending the ceremony of Jubilee Year of the 1900-year Redemption of the world (26-28.04.1935). The picture was hung in the window of the gallery of the Gate of Dawn (Ostra Brama). It took place on the second Sunday after Easter.

Faustina experienced unusual delight from the fact that the will of the Saviour

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 463.

¹¹ W. J. KOWALSKI, *Dzieje obrazu z podpisem «Jezu, ufam Tobie»*, Płock 2006.

¹² *Diary*, 699.

¹³ H. CIERESZKO, *Ksiądz Michał Sopoćko Apostoł Miłosierdzia Bożego*, Kraków 2004, 27.

¹⁴ *Diary*, 53.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 313.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 414.

was fulfilled. She obtained also the external confirmation of authenticity of that what was happening inside her¹⁸. What is more important, she was a witness of unprecedented abundance of signs during that event, which she wrote down in her spiritual notes. «On Friday, when I was at Ostra Brama to attend the ceremony during which the image was displayed, I heard a sermon given by my confessor [Father Sopoćko]. This sermon about divine Mercy was the first of the things that Jesus had asked for so very long ago. When he began to speak about the great mercy of the Lord, the image came alive and the rays pieced the hearts of the people gathered there, but not all to the same degree. Some received more, some less. Great joy filled my soul to see the grace of God»¹⁹.

The same day in the evening she saw this picture was walking over the town, and the tow was covered by net and grids. When Jesus walked across, He cut all grids, and at last drew a large sign of the holy cross and disappeared²⁰.

After finishing the Ceremony the picture was hung in the corridor of the monastery of the Bernardine sisters. Jesus demanded Sister Faustina that the picture be placed in the church of Saint Michael where the rector was Father Michał Sopoćko. This priest asked the church authority to get a permission for regular exposure of the image. With the moment of receiving the picture he placed it close to the main altar and consecrated it on the first Sunday after the Easter of 1937.

After the outbreak of the second world war the Picture was venerated by the members of the church. After the second world war the Polish town of Wilno as a result of Yalta Conference was included into the Soviet Union. The communist authority decided on transferring the equipment of the St. Michael church to the Holy Spirit church. A friend of Father M. Sopoćko, Father Jan Graszewicz, in 1949 transferred the image to Nowa Ruda, situated close to Grodno in Soviet Belarus Republic. The picture was there up until 1986, when again it came back to the church of the Holy Spirit in Wilno.

Since 1936, the last years of her life, Faustina stayed near Cracow, in the monastery of *Congregatio Sororum Beatae Mariae Misericordiae* in Łagiewniki²¹. With this place the image of Jesus of Mercy is connected, painted already after the death of the Saint. The picture painted by Adolf Hyła²² came into being based upon the analysis of the text of Father Płock revelation from *Diary* of St. Faustina with cooperation of

¹⁸ W. MISZEWSKI, *Mistyczne doświadczenie Boga w pismach Sługi Bożej siostry Faustyny Kowalskiej*, Lublin 1991.

¹⁹ *Diary*, 417.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 416.

²¹ *Łagiewniki Sanctaire de la Miséricorde Divine*, Kraków 2006.

²² P. SZWEDA, *Adolf Hyła malarz w służbie Bożego Miłosierdzia*, Kraków 2009.

her confessor from Cracow – mentioned earlier Jesuit Father Józef Andrasz²³ – and sisters from the congregation where Sister Faustina stayed. The main idea motivated the painter was making the image of Christ as a doctor of God who in his mercy helps and brings rescue for suffering humanity²⁴. The painter presents Jesus more dynamic, walking along the floor with his hand lifted, and clearly separated rays.

The will of the Lord Jesus was that the icon of the Divine Mercy be venerated all over the world. Already in the mentioned vision in Płock He said: «I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and [then] throughout the world»²⁵. Necessity of cult of this Picture was well understood by the Saint. Already at the very beginning of the *Diary* she expressed her wish: «May praise and glory for this Image. Never cease to stream from man's soul»²⁶.

Today we are the witnesses of the fulfilment of this desire. «Jesus of Mercy» is known in all continents. It is made available not only in presented versions but in the next views as well. There are already hundreds of them. The most recognizable are the pictures of the Divine Mercy being in the capital of cult of the Divine Mercy in Cracow-Łagiewniki and the Sanctuary of the Divine Mercy in Wilno.

3. Meaning of the picture

The image of the Christ in the Picture is situated centrally. The whole figure of Lord Jesus is visible. The face of Jesus is directed straight to the person looking at the image. It is full of peace and warmth. It exudes impeccable goodness, shines the brightness and is contrasted with dark and uniform background. The painter presented Jesus with the left foot slightly in front, the right one a little bit bent in the knee. Jesus on his feet and hands has tracks of tortures – healed wounds of crucifying. Christ is dressed in long, white gown, one-piece with spacious sleeves and reaching the bare feet.

From invisible Heart in the picture come two huge rays. On the right from the viewer spurts – according to s. Faustina – pale stream, and on the left red one. They are transparent, thanks to it they do not cover the figure of the Jesus of Mercy. At the

²³ S. CIEŚLAK, ks., *Rola o. Józefa Andrasza SJ w życiu i misji św. Siostry Faustyny*, in *Promieniowanie orędzia miłosierdzia. 10 lat po kanonizacji Siostry Faustyny. Referaty z sympozjum w Sanktuarium Bożego Miłosierdzia, Kraków-Łagiewniki, 30 kwietnia 2013*, Kraków 2010, 55-85.

²⁴ L. BALTER, *Chrystus Pan objawieniem Miłosierdzia Bożego*, in ID., *Powołanie człowieka. Wobec tajemnicy Bożego Miłosierdzia*, Poznań 1991, 27-37.

²⁵ *Diary*, 47.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

source saturation of the rays with colours is more intensive. They illuminate slightly the hands of Jesus and space of room. These rays are situated in the foreground. They do not fall down on the earth but make impression as if the rays go beyond the picture. They are directed to the person looking straight at Jesus and in it they find the end of one's own action. They are separate.

Christ has the right hand lifted. It is open with freely lying fingers. The left hand slightly opens the robe of the Resurrected. Its bent fingers in soft gesture point out to where from through opening of outer robe go out the above mentioned rays. The picture is signed with the words: «Jesus, I trust in You».

Connection of the picture of the Divine Mercy with the feast of the Divine Mercy is obvious. The Lord Jesus told St. Faustina: «I want this image, which you will paint with a brush, to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter; that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy»²⁷.

Obedience towards God made that the picture of Wilno was Hung in the chapel of Łagiewniki, was consecrated on the first Sunday after Easter (to be the Feast of Mercy, approved for the whole Church in the Jubilee Year 2000)²⁸. Jesus not only asked the picture of the Divine Mercy to be solemnly consecrated on that day, but desired it would be publicly adored: «I desire that this image be displayed in public on the first Sunday after Easter»²⁹.

Writing in the feast of Mercy the picture relates to the Gospel which is designated by the Church to be read on this Day. It refers to coming of the Lord Jesus to the apostles in spite of closing doors. «In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, Peace be with you, and, after saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord, and he said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you. After saying this he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained» (J 20,19-23). Having in mind this touching meeting of Jesus with the Apostles, during which the sacrament of reconciliation was established, Pope John Paul II said that the wave of Mercy poured on the whole humanity³⁰.

If the Eucharist Liturgy of the Sunday of Resurrection shows the victory of God over the death, so the Sunday after Easter, is an occasion to contemplate the Power of God in relation to forgiveness. It inclines to joyful worship of God in the grace of

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁸ J. MITUŚ, *Posłuszeństwo w życiu s. Faustyny*, in W. KUBACKI – E. SIEPAK, *Kazania o Miłosierdziu Bożym*, Kraków 1992, 129-131.

²⁹ *Diary*, 88.

³⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Homilia podczas Mszy św. w II Niedzielę Wielkanocną*, 22.04.2001.

forgiveness of sins, giving the full right to unify with Jesus. We can read about it in the *Diary*: «Tell souls where they are to look for solace; that is, in the Tribunal of Mercy [the Sacrament of Reconciliation]. There the greatest miracles take place [and] are incessantly repeated. To avail oneself of this miracle, it is not necessary to go on a great pilgrimage or to carry out some external ceremony; it suffices to come with faith to the feet of My representative and to reveal to him one's misery, and the miracle of Divine Mercy will be fully demonstrated. Were a soul like a decaying corpse so that from a human standpoint, there would be no [hope of] restoration and everything would already be lost, it is not so with God. The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full»³¹.

Except for the forgiveness of sins the Jesus promised additional privileges³². In a certain moment Sister Faustina heard these words: «My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the Fount of My Mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day all the divine floodgates through which graces flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity»³³.

The picture of the Divine Mercy, presenting Christ at the moment of establishing the sacrament of reconciliation, evokes this event took place in the Last Supper. It reminds us about the Mercy of God shown to the penitents and about the need itself of trusting the heart in each sacramental confession. It invites us for an annual feast of Mercy and use of the graces expected on that Day.

The figure of adored Jesus

The picture presents the Jesus after the resurrection. The adored Jesus integrates inside all experiences and mysteries of the Human Son. We discover in Him also the truth of Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Sanctification, as well the truth of His presence on earth in action among us. Jesus is not only that we know from the activity in Galilee, nor that we see on the cross, or even that who after His resurrection came to the Lord's Supper, in spite of closed doors. Once on the first Sunday after Easter 28 April 1935, the Saint had supernatural vision: «Low Sunday; that is, the Feast of

³¹ *Diary*, 1448.

³² T. PRZESŁAWSKI, *Łaska Boża w «Dzienniczku» Świętej Faustyny*, Ząbki 2010, 48-54.

³³ *Diary*, 699.

The Divine Mercy, the conclusion of the Jubilee of Redemption. When we went to take part in the celebrations, my heart leapt with joy that the two solemnities were so closely united. I asked God for mercy for the souls of sinners. Toward the end of the service, when the priest took the Blessed Sacrament to bless the people, I saw the Lord Jesus as He is represented in the image. The Lord gave His blessing, and the rays extended over the whole world.

Suddenly, I saw an impenetrable brightness in the form of a crystal dwelling place, woven together from waves of unapproachable brilliance to both creatures and spirits. Three doors led to this resplendence. At that moment, Jesus, as He is represented in the image, entered this resplendence through the second door to the Unity within. It is a triple United, which is incomprehensible – which is infinity. I heard a voice, this Feast emerged from the very depths of My mercy, and it is confirmed in the vast depths of My tender mercies. Every soul believing and trusting in My mercy will obtain it. I was overjoyed at the immense goodness and greatness of my God»³⁴.

In one of the visions Jesus presented himself to Faustina: «I am King of Mercy»³⁵. Blessed Michał Sopoćko, having in mind the Christ from this picture, addressed Him in this way³⁶.

The picture of the Divine Mercy gives a chance to meet with the King of Mercy³⁷. The Lord having the royal dignity, Has no however the monarch attributes like the earth rulers. He is not sitting on a throne. He has no reigns of power and crown nor the other similar symbols of power, nor wealth of this world. He is the King in a scripture sense, who came to serve and give his life to ransom for many (conf. Mark 10,45)³⁸. In the picture Jesus has the right hand lifted to bless, and the left hand points to the heart (invisible in the picture), from which gush out streams of blood and water. The Lord presenting Himself in this way full of majesty, giver of everlasting life, is ready to serve towards all who by having confidence want to live under His mercy reign and spread goodness all over the world³⁹.

Christ through the rays going out from the heart, softly attracts us to himself. He desires wholeheartedly to give us all fruits of redemption and invites us to obtain from the source of mercy. He is not indifferent to our matters. Urged by own need of

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 420.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁶ H. CIERESZK, *Życie i działalność księdza Michała Sopoćki*, Kraków 2006, 255.

³⁷ M. SOPOĆKO, *Jezus Król Miłosierdzia. Artykuły z lat 1936-1975*, Warszawa 2005.

³⁸ A. TRONINA, *Biblijne przesłanie obrazu Miłosierdzia Bożego*, in *Verbum Vitae, Półrocznik Biblijno-Teologiczny*, Styczeń-Czerwiec 2003, 255-266.

³⁹ P. KREIS, *Cnota ufności w pismach Sługi Bożej siostry Faustyny*, in C. L. DRAŻEK, *Posłannictwo siostry Faustyny. Sympozjum o Miłosierdziu Bożym, Kraków-Łagiewniki 18-20 V 1988*, Kraków 1991, 31-46.

expressing the mercy, He is not far away from us but allows us to find ourselves on the road of life⁴⁰.

Rays

St. Sister Faustina on request of her confessor asked the Lord Jesus what the rays on the picture meant. Answering this question, Christ said: «The two rays denote Blood and Water»⁴¹.

As a result of reading the picture as presenting Christ at the moment of establishing the sacrament of reconciliation and penance in the sign of blood and water we can see the symbol of healing, cleaning and reviving character of the sacrament which the Church without reasons includes in the sacrament of healing⁴².

Water and blood are two basic components of the human body. A lack of one of them means death. Water not only quenches one's thirst but services to wash, and gift of blood saves a number of human lives.

Jesus explained: «These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross [...]. The two rays denote Blood and Water. The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls»⁴³.

In understanding this picture as presenting the Christ, in His universal action, water and blood is understood as a grace in its double aspect, i.e. as justifying and ensuring participation in the life of God. The grace of God is the Holy Spirit sent on the Church and power given by Jesus, mercifully healing people. Connection of the Holy Spirit with blood and water which flowing out from the side of Christ, emphasized John the Evangelist. According to him, in the moment of the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross, from the side of Christ flowed out blood and water (conf. J 19,34). In the other place he added: «*the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth*» (conf. 1 J 5,6-8). By decision of God privileged place of giving the grace is the Church and all sacraments served by it. S. Faustina mentions in the Diary about spreading the rays all over the world and about particular their connection with the Holy Sacrament: «Toward the end of the service, when the priest took the Blessed Sacrament to bless the people, I saw the Lord Jesus

⁴⁰ J. SALIJ, *Teologia obrazu Pana Jezusa Miłosiernego*, w: *Powołanie człowieka*, in L. BALTER, *Wobec tajemnicy Bożego Miłosierdzia*, Poznań 1991, 216-224.

⁴¹ *Diary*, 299.

⁴² T. LABUDA, *Promienie łask. O malarskim odtworzeniu wizji św. Faustyny Kowalskiej*, Warszawa 2001, 47-52.

⁴³ *Diary*, 299.

as He is represented in the image. The Lord gave His blessing, and the rays extended over the whole world»⁴⁴.

The presence of the symbol of water and blood direct our thoughts not only to the sacrament of penance but as well to the offering on Golgotha, and the Eucharist. The very sign of water direct our thoughts to the holy baptism. The sacraments of the holy baptism, reconciliation and Eucharist are elements of mercy.

Nevertheless, action of Christ's grace is not restricted to sacramental signs themselves. Not forgetting about privileged situation of Christians, one should admit that a grace is a free gift of God for all people – regardless of that, in what circumstances they are. It is necessary as water. Thanks to it we live. It prepares our hearts for the coming of the Saviour. It also joins us with Him and changes us. It will be a help for us at the moment of dying and when the end of the world comes. The picture shows it and invites us to use it trustfully.

Look of the Lord Jesus

The glance of the Lord Jesus is not lifted upwards as during the talking with the Father, but it is directed downwards, upon the humanity needing the mercy. Other answers are possible as well. Reference to the holy cross as a place of new life for the human beings in pain and love is one of them.

In such understanding the sight of the Lord follows, the rays burst forth to the Church and each human being reviving in the streams of mercy⁴⁵.

Intimate is also the interpretation suggesting that the Lord is looking at us with the same understanding, with which He was looking at persons standing under the cross – his mother and beloved disciple (conf. J 19, 25 ff.).

This look may also reflect the mystery of that what was happening in the most merciful Heart of the Saviour, when his the sweetest and forgiven love met oneself at the moment of crucifying with weight of sins of the whole humanity. Maybe seeing the moment of suffering of the Human Son on the cross, we would discover in His eyes a presence of tears and joyfulness. It would be witness of experiencing by Him pain and satisfaction because of redemption of mankind.

Since the Lord of His own will connected this picture with the liturgy of word on the second Easter Sunday, so it is probable that His sight is identical to that He had during establishing the sacrament of reconciliation and penance.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 420.

⁴⁵ S. WITKOWSKI, *In den strahlen der barmherzigkeit. Betrachtungen*, Kraków 2004, 67-73.

Traces of passion

Good visible wounds of crucifying speak about great, the purest love of the Saviour. They reflect pain, suffering, offering. They are a sign that suffering and love go hand in hand.

The wounds of Christ from the picture, shining with bright of the everlasting life confirm the identity of the Crucified and Resurrected⁴⁶. They should speak not only to our imagination but to the sensitivity finding the reason of them in our sins and infidelity.

Hands

The right hand of the Lord Jesus is ready to give forgiveness and blessing; to draw in our direction the sign of the Holy cross. Maybe the same hand in the picture of Wilno only a little bit lifted at the level of arm expresses the gesture of greeting before blessing.

The left hand of Jesus opens the robe as if it would open the mystery of merciful love. Emphasizing the central meaning of invisible in the picture the wounded side and injured Heart, directs our attention to feelings of the Lord and to the deepest motivations of incarnated word. During her pray Sister Faustina heard the following words: «These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross»⁴⁷. By this gesture the Saviour shows how good he is to us. He says: «this Heart of Mine, which burns with a flame of pity for sinners»⁴⁸.

The Lord invites us to use the Divine gifts of blood and water. But richness of this sign does not end at this point. Probably, Jesus refers to the human gesture which means that somebody holds us in the heart, gifted one's heart or loves us that He has His heart «on hand».

Feet

Maybe merciful Jesus, manifesting with bare feet wanted in this way to transfer the truth about that he is poor. We cannot expect from Him riches of this world. He can offer us Himself as the treasury of all graces and as servant of the Divine Mercy.

⁴⁶ L. BALTER, «*Tamten świat*» w oczach siostry Faustyny, in ID., *Powołanie człowieka. Wobec tajemnicy Bożego Miłosierdzia*, Poznań 1991, 140-157.

⁴⁷ *Diary*, 299.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1521.

An interesting thing is the fact that His left foot is moved forward. In some cultures presenting the figure in this way indicates on its deity.

Approaching to us Jesus stops. The Lord does not stay «closed» in the heaven but in his mercy he becomes available for us. He makes so: «Not for Angels, nor Cherubim, nor Seraphim, But for the salvation of sinful mankind»⁴⁹.

The position of the legs harmonizes with other elements of the picture, showing that the painted figure is dynamic and has got redemptive initiative. The Lord follows us with deciding steps. One can be said that His steps are directed by mercy because: «Whatever Jesus did, He did well. He went along, doing good. His manner was full of goodness and mercy. His steps were guided by compassion. Toward His enemies He showed goodness, kindness, and understanding, and to those in need help and consolation»⁵⁰.

Background

The symbolism of the colour in the background of the image of the Merciful Christ is very essential as well⁵¹. It reminds the darkness of room in which the disciples were when Jesus came to them despite the closed door. And more generally it expresses the psychological states which have not trustfulness towards God, or it expresses gloomy moments of somebody's life who is under an influence of sin or experiences leading to sin. Often in the Diary the term of darkness was used by Sister Faustina to define Her internal experiences. This dark colour causes the feeling of anxiety. It indicates the zone of absence of the Saviour. It creates the contrast for shining like the sun, the figure of the Christ lighting up the darkness. This contrast allows one to appreciate more the lightness of the world. Here the association with Jesus is suggested from the Gospel of St. John who invites us to imitate Him and promises new and indestructible life from water and the Holy Spirit saying: «I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark, but will have the light of life» (J 8,12, conf. J 9,5; 12,35).

Subtitle of the picture

The image joining the words of the subtitle with Jesus arising from darkness. It is adequate to positive turn which may be happened in the world our experiences. It

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 522.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1175.

⁵¹ E. SIEPAK, *Obraz Miłosierdzia Bożego 1931-1991*, Kraków 1991, 34.

happens many times when we are aware of the fact that we are ourselves and we start to trust in Jesus against all circumstances which are seen by us as darkness.

The picture in question makes us think how important it is to be with Jesus in these situations in which we are. Removing or transformation of difficulties is often a process.

The whole of message of the picture belongs subtitle: «Jesus, I trust in You». Christ clearly told Sister: «After a while, Jesus said to me, Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You»⁵². When I left the confessional and was passing before the Blessed Sacrament, I received an inner understanding about the inscription. Jesus reminded me of what He had told me the first time; namely, that these three words must be clearly in evidence: «Jesus, I trust in You [*Jezu, Ufam Tobie*]. I understood that Jesus wanted the whole formula to be there, but He gave no direct orders to this effect as He did for these three words»⁵³.

The wording of this short sentence is unusually profound. First of all it is important that it is a form of confession of the faith. These words are directed straight to Jesus. This confession is connected with experiencing the trustfulness, taking in all spheres of our life. Although we trust the Trinity, so in this picture we express boundless trustfulness towards the Son of God⁵⁴. So it happens also then when we pay attention to the rays of mercy: «O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You!»⁵⁵.

The subtitle helps the person taking part in the meeting with Merciful Jesus to include in matters that do not concern the person. Maybe the work of Saint: *Oh my God*, is a result of considering of the Sister before this picture:

«When I look into the future, I am frightened,
But why plunge into the future?
Only the present moment is precious to me,
As the future may never enter my soul at all.
It is no longer in my power,
To change, correct or add to the past;
For neither sages nor prophets could do that.
And so, what the past has embraced I must entrust to God.
O present moment, you belong to me, whole and entire,
I desire to use you as best I can.
And although I am weak and small,
You grant me the grace of Your omnipotence.
And so, trusting in Your mercy,

⁵² *Diary*, 47.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 327.

⁵⁴ T. D. ŁUKASZUK, *Teologia świętego obrazu w orędziu Błogosławionej Faustyny Kowalskiej*, in *Polonia Sacra* 1 (1997) 125-141.

⁵⁵ *Diary*, 84.

I walk through life like a little child,
Offering You each day this heart
Burning with love for Your greater glory»⁵⁶.

The mentioned words: «Jesus, I trust in You» come off from concentration on oneself. They open for presence of the most Merciful and Almighty God. They help to come to Him and take in gift reviving washing in the rays of Mercy of God and take up an attitude of trustfulness in life.

To what else can the attitude of trustfulness be led towards the most Merciful Jesus wanting to bring closer his mercy to mankind? Answer for this question give the saints who love God and spontaneously react desiring to fulfil his holy will. During the eight day retreat in Wilno on 4.02.1935 Sister Faustina said the following words: «Know that it will cost you much, so write these words on a clean sheet of paper: *From today on, my own will does not exist*, and cross out the page. And on the other side write these words: *From today on, I do the will of God everywhere, always, and in everything*. Be afraid of nothing; love will give you strength and make the realization of this easy»⁵⁷.

This decision of giving oneself over to the reign and power of God was strengthened by subsequent ceremonial acts which were given by the Saint during the retreat and in other important moments in her life. She did it for example in the following words: «With the trust and simplicity of a small child, I give myself to You today, O Lord Jesus, my Master. I leave You complete freedom in directing my soul. Guide me along the paths You wish. I won't question them. I will follow You trustingly. Your merciful Heart can do all things!»⁵⁸.

Approval of trustfulness is not only sharing with God with one's matters, experiences, joyfulness, difficulties but fully trusting – giving oneself completely to God. Essential is to keep obedience to the Church – against all oppressions and misfortunes of life and arising in us negative feelings etc.⁵⁹.

In the life of Saint Faustina giving oneself over to God was always connected with the childish attitude. It was expressed by her *inter alia* at that time when she was saying lovingly: «Jesus, living Host, You are my Mother, You are my all! It is with simplicity and love, with faith and trust that I will always come to You, O Jesus! I will share everything with You, as a child with its loving mother, my joys and sorrows – in a word, everything»⁶⁰.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 372.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁵⁹ P. KREIS, *Cnota ufności...*, 36-38.

⁶⁰ *Diary*, 230.

Trust of the third person looking at the picture cannot be restricted to thoughtless reading the subtitle, intellectual understanding its contents or feelings themselves. She should on the model of saints to grow up and express herself in attitude willing to fulfil the will of God, in full of betrothed love and more and more perfect giving oneself life to the God⁶¹.

It is important that the wording is: «Jesus, I trust in You», and not «Lord Jesus, I trust in You». It restricts the distance which would be created between the person praying and Jesus. The phrase: «Jesus, I trust in You» is an invitation to build nearness with God – incentive to address to Him by name.

Words: «Jesus, I trust in You» are form of help of which we sinners need from the side of Jesus. These words suggest determined attitude to life which should be taken up by everybody towards Christ work of redemption. They may be often repeated by us as the aspiration prayers, still inspiring to trustful attitude to life.

Going out from the Heart, full of goodness, two streams of the light which light up the world⁶²: pale and red (corresponding to the colour of gushing out water and blood) are directed to place, where subtitle is placed. Surely, this presentation indicates the help which the God gives us for trusting in Him. Presentation of dependence between experiencing the trustfulness and grace connected with these rays provokes motion that our trust in the Saviour is born inside us on the ground of grace, in the rays of mercy being continued, reborn and improved. Sister Faustina realized that and therefore she thought we should pray for a grace of trustfulness both for oneself and for others. Once a day Jesus told her: «You will go to a dying sinner, and you will continue to recite the chaplet, and in this way you will obtain for him trust in My mercy, for he is already in despair»⁶³.

Father M. Sopoćko just after painting the picture, wanting to be assured where the subtitle to be placed «Jesus, I trust in You», asked Sister Faustina to ask Lord Jesus where it should be placed. After obtaining the answer he decided to place it on the frame of the picture. In this way the words: «Jesus, I trust in You» became the subtitle of the picture and found to be close to the feet of Lord, which suggest needing the necessity of humility and repentance⁶⁴. We are very weak, unstable and sinful. We entirely depend on God to whom we are indebted. With the attitude of humility the Lord gave a promise: «I never reject a contrite heart. Your misery has disappeared in the depths of My mercy. Do not argue with Me about your wretched-

⁶¹ P. KREIS, *Cnota ufności...*, 39-40.

⁶² JOHN PAUL II, *Homilia podczas Mszy św. w II Niedzielę Wielkanocną*, 22.04.2001.

⁶³ *Diary*, 1797.

⁶⁴ A. WITKO, *Święta Faustyna...*, 82-86.

ness. You will give me pleasure if you hand over to me all your troubles and grief. I shall heap upon you the treasures of My grace»⁶⁵.

Experience of own imperfection, more and more its recognition cannot led us however to desperation. One has to be able to look at one's sins in the proper light. Faustina writes that: «However, this great misery of mine does not deprive me of trust. On the contrary, the better I have come to know my own misery, the stronger has become my trust in God's mercy. I have come to understand how all this depends on the Lord. I know that no one will touch a single hair of my head without His willing it»⁶⁶.

Subtitle: «Jesus, I trust in You» is in the line between us and painted Jesus⁶⁷. It makes impression that it is placed as if in the space, closer to us than the very Divine figure of Jesus. It leads to the next important conclusion: experiencing the life in perfect union with God is possible only based upon the contents of these three words. Only limitless trustfulness, understood as unshaken persistent waiting for a favour of the God paves the way to Christ and enables His coming to us. Through the trustfulness we come to Him and He comes to us. St. Sister Faustina wrote about it: «Today, in the course of a long conversation, the Lord said to me, How very much I desire the salvation of souls! My dearest secretary, writes that I want to pour out My divine life into human souls and sanctify them, if only they are willing to accept My grace. The greatest sinners would achieve great sanctity, if only they would trust in My mercy. The very inner depths of My being are filled to overflowing with mercy, and it is being poured out upon all I have created. My delight is to act in a human soul and to fill it with My mercy and to justify it. My kingdom on earth is My life in the human soul. Write, My secretary, that I Myself am the spiritual guide of souls – and I guide them indirectly through the priest, and lead each one to sanctity by a road known to Me alone»⁶⁸.

The most important attitude is to have complete trust in Lord Jesus. It is the best foundation for those who want to build a house of one's own life on the rock, and not on the sand⁶⁹.

⁶⁵ *Diary*, 1485.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1406.

⁶⁷ W. J. KOWAŁSKI, *Dzieje obrazu...*, 56-64.

⁶⁸ *Diary*, 1784.

⁶⁹ W. M. OKRASA, *Patrzeć z wiarą na obraz Jezusa Miłosiernego*, Ząbki 2009, 41.

4. Promises connected with the picture

The Picture of the Merciful Christ is an unusual picture. His co-author is Christ Himself, who told to paint His picture which attracts attention of so many people all over the world. Its exceptionality is manifested in it that this the holy picture in the deepest meaning. Not like the other holy pictures. Lord Jesus wanted this image as a character of the icon, i.e. to be a special source of experience of His presence and a place of meeting with Him.

Jesus by His Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost united with each place on the earth. By the power of his omnipotent word He May however decide that any place, man, or even object shall be a privileged sign of His presence and goodness. So it became with the picture of Mercy about which the Lord said himself: «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*»⁷⁰. Thus, before the image of Jesus we are able to obtain life-giving graces. Symbolically they are presented by two rays of blood and water. It is conditioned by our trustful faith and readiness to implement in one's own life the recommendations of the Gospel, attitude of active love of God and the neighbour⁷¹.

The Lord Jesus assures also about his unusual generosity before the picture. For those who are open to Him, He promises: «By means of this Image I shall grant many graces to souls; so, let every soul have access to it»⁷². When Sister Faustina asked the Lord to give Her superior any sign, testifying on authenticity of these visions, then she heard a voice: «I will make this all clear to the Superior by means of the graces which I will grant through this image»⁷³.

In Cracow in 1937 Jesus told her these words: «Already there are many souls who have been drawn to My love by this image. My mercy acts in souls through this work. I learned that many souls had experienced God's grace»⁷⁴.

The first and also Basic lifting, what we can expect in front of this Picture, is a meeting with the merciful Saviour, taking in our person with the love of God and becoming the same as the Christ⁷⁵.

During the life of Saint many people obtained different spiritual gifts in front of this picture. For example the Sister believing in the promises of the Jesus, prayed about the sacrament of baptism for a woman of Jewish origin. Looking at the cover of

⁷⁰ *Diary*, 327.

⁷¹ W.M. OKRASA, *Patrzeć z wiarą...*, 60-61.

⁷² *Diary*, 570.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1379.

⁷⁵ W. M. OKRASA, *Patrzeć z wiarą...*, 61.

the leaflet with copy of the picture of Mercy, was talking with the Lord: «Jesus, You Yourself told me that You would grant many graces through this image. I ask You, then, for the grace of Holy Baptism for this Jewish lady. It makes no difference who will baptize her, as long as she is baptized»⁷⁶. Next in the vision she saw Her soul going into heaven. She understood that it is already second big undeserved gift, which she obtained in front of this picture.

Privileges resulting from worshiping the icon of Mercy refer to usual, everyday matters and making progress on the way of spiritual development: help in cleaning the soul from sins, personal sanctifying and enlivening the heart by love. The most important gift of God in front of the picture is salvation. Lord Jesus assured: «I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish»⁷⁷.

The generosity of God, expressed by the promises connected with a cult of the picture, is addressed to people being in the most difficult situation, that is in the hour of death, during the final struggle with enemies of our happiness. Then, apart from aggressive attack of the Devil can be increased in the dying man a feeling of danger connected with the penalty for sins and paralyzing fear before the destruction or going out into «unknown environment». Jesus swore, that venerators of this picture will win over the enemies of the soul «I also promise victory over [its] enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death. I Myself will defend it as My own glory»⁷⁸.

Merciful Jesus has already promised victory on the earth over the enemies of salvation and turning their efforts into nothingness. Wonder, saying about it, he was thinking not only of the Devil, our weaknesses but people of bad will as well. Sister Faustina noted down: «Today I saw the glory of God which flows from the image. Many souls are receiving graces, although they do not speak of it openly. Even though it has met up with all sorts of vicissitudes, God is receiving glory because of it; and the efforts of Satan and of evil men are shattered and come to nothing. In spite of Satan's anger, The Divine Mercy will triumph over the whole world and will be worshipped by all souls»⁷⁹.

Let's remind in this place once more that when the first time this picture was presented in public in Wilno, Sister Faustina had a vision of the Jesus of Mercy who was taking in all over the world with his rays. The vision took into consideration also neutralizing of bad powers which were scattering with fury in front of the power of mercy.

Having in mind time of verification and summaries on the day of the Last Judg-

⁷⁶ *Diary*, 916.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1789.

ment, the most merciful Saviour promised to defend persons, who worshiped and trusted in unintentional mercy. He said: «These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross. These rays shield souls from the wrath of My Father. Happy is the one who will dwell in their shelter, for the just hand of God shall not lay hold of him. I desire that the first Sunday after Easter be the Feast of Mercy»⁸⁰.

Let us remember the promise of the Lord Jesus connected with not only the very Picture but concerning the whole cult of mercy. It is an assurance relating to the priests living with the mystery of merciful love and teaching about it⁸¹. Well, they are to have peculiar power of influencing on the believers and supporting them on the way of making progresses to God: «Tell My priests that hardened sinners will repent on hearing their words when they speak about My unfathomable mercy, about the compassion I have for them in My Heart. To priests who proclaim and extol My mercy, I will give wondrous power; I will anoint their words and touch the hearts of those to whom they will speak»⁸².

For those, who take up propagation of worship the Mercy of God, Jesus gives promises of many graces, care in the life and in the hour of death. He said: «Souls who spread the honour of My mercy I shield through their entire lives as a tender mother her infant, and at the hour of death I will not be a Judge for them, but the merciful Saviour. At that last hour, a soul has nothing with which to defend itself except My mercy. Happy is the soul that during its lifetime immersed itself in the Fountain of Mercy, because justice will have no hold on it»⁸³.

5. Hour of Mercy and saying the Chaplet

During the visions Christ told Faustina that He wants the fragment of His dying on the cross to be considered through celebration of the way of the cross, visitation of the Holy Sacrament or short pray in this place where we are at three o'clock pm⁸⁴. He encourages so that we address straight to Him, and in begging we appeal to values and merits of His painful passion. We may do it in front of the picture of Merciful Jesus. «At three o'clock, implore My mercy, especially for sinners; and, if only for a brief moment, immerse yourself in My Passion, particularly in My abandonment at

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁸¹ A. WITKO, *Święta Faustyna...*, 310-311.

⁸² *Diary*, 1521.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1075.

⁸⁴ W. KUBACKI, *Godzina Miłosierdzia*, Kraków 1991.

the moment of agony. This is the hour of great mercy for the whole world. I will allow you to enter into My mortal sorrow. In this hour, I will refuse nothing to the soul that makes a request of me in virtue of My Passion»⁸⁵.

In the *Diary* we note the prayer called the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy. When saying it Sister Faustina heard assurance: «Oh, what great graces I will grant to souls who say this chaplet; the very depths of My tender mercy are stirred for the sake of those who say the chaplet»⁸⁶. We can say this prayer during different times of the day.

Saint Faustina was saying the Chaplet in different situations: for dying persons, or when she wanted to ask something important or after her confession. In the *Diary* there is also one of the witnesses indicating to circumstance of joining our presence in front of the picture of the Divine Mercy saying the Chaplet. Sister Faustina was saying in this way the nine day prayer for Archbishop R. Jałbrzykowski and Father M. Sopoćko. Before the date 28.12.1936 she wrote down: «Today I have started a novena to The Divine Mercy. That is, I place myself in spirit before the image and recite the chaplet which the Lord has taught me. On the second day of the novena, I saw the image, as it were, come alive, adorned with numberless votive lamps, and I saw great crowds of people coming there, and many of them were filled with happiness. O Jesus, with what great joy did my heart beat!»⁸⁷. God himself showed her the way of praying: «The next morning, when I entered the chapel, I heard these words interiorly: Every time you enter the chapel, immediately recite the prayer which I taught you yesterday. When I had said the prayer, in my soul I heard these words: This prayer will serve to appease My wrath. You will recite it for nine days, on the beads of the rosary, in the following manner: First of all, you will say one OUR FATHER and HAIL MARY and the I BELIEVE IN GOD. Then on the OUR FATHER beads you will say the following words: *Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.* On the HAIL MARY beads you will say the following words: *For the sake of His sorrowful Passion have mercy on us and on the whole world.* In conclusion, three times you will recite these words: *Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world*»⁸⁸.

Saint Faustina had before her eyes the image of the figure of resurrected Jesus from this Picture. This example helps us to imitate the Saint in this way of saying the Chaplet. The meaning of that is strengthened by the fact that already during the life of Sister Faustina the pictures were printed with image of Merciful Jesus on one side and with the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy on the other side.

⁸⁵ *Diary*, 1320.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 848.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 851.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 476.

When we have in front of us the picture of the Divine Mercy, our prayer saying the Chaplet can obtain new, more full perspective. It happens so when the expressed words of the offering will be accompanied by thoughts connected with not only the earthly sufferings of Christ, but talking with God will be reaching that what currently happens in heaven⁸⁹. There the resurrected Christ continually pleads for us and gives himself to «God the Father for propitiation of our sins and the whole world». It is worth having regard to also the fact that not trusting his goodness and not loving the Lord Jesus we hurt Him as well now – often spiritually⁹⁰.

About this type of pain the Lord Jesus mentioned to Faustina in connection with indifference he met in the Holy Communion: «Oh, how painful it is to Me that souls so seldom unite themselves to Me in Holy Communion. I wait for souls, and they are indifferent towards Me. I love them tenderly and sincerely, and they distrust Me. I want to lavish My graces on them, and they do not want to accept them. They treat Me as a dead object, whereas My Heart is full of love and mercy. In order that you may know at least some of My pain, imagine the most tender of mothers who has great love for her children, while those children spurn her love. Consider her pain. No one is in a position to console her. This is but a feeble image and likeness of My love»⁹¹.

The picture brings us closer to the mystery of the Divine Mercy, brings us to God, to whose image and likeness we are created. It invites us to reflection over our own situation and allows us to know the truth about ourselves, to find inspiration to that what am I to be, how am I to live and what to strive for.

God the father, sending to people merciful word, call us to be similar to Jesus earthly and praiseworthy the same as is painted in the picture. Working with help of the grace over obtaining the likeness to Jesus here on the earth, we can expect likeness to Him in the glory. In this context the words of subtitle take in another sense: «Jesus, I trust in You». New meaning gains also the way in which Jesus walks. Now it is appeared as well as our way leading through the cross to reign in the house of the Father. We trust in Jesus and we know that through imitating Him in His humiliating, bareness, contempt, silence, in persistent and patience taking up the cross, we become like Him in the glory of God the Father. The message of this picture is very important.

About the difference between humility and raising Saint Faustina said: «The Lord made me understand what unimaginable glory awaits the person who undergoes the

⁸⁹ M. CZEKAŃSKI, *Święta Faustyna o cierpieniu*, Kraków 2000, 23-35.

⁹⁰ I. BORKIEWICZ, *Stosunek Służebnicy Bożej siostry Faustyny do cierpienia*, in C. DRAŻEK, *Posłannictwo Siostry Faustyny. Sympozjum o Miłosierdziu Bożym, Kraków-Łagiewniki 18-20 V 1988*, Kraków 1991, 113-139.

⁹¹ *Diary*, 1447.

suffering of Jesus here on earth. That person will resemble Jesus in His glory. The Heavenly Father will recognize and glorify our soul to the extent that He sees in us a resemblance to His Son. I understood that this assimilation into Jesus is granted to us while we are here on earth. I see pure and innocent souls upon whom God has exercised His justice; the souls are the victims who sustain the world and who fill up what is lacking in the Passion of Jesus. There are not many in number. I rejoice greatly that God has allowed me to know such souls»⁹².

Convincing is the vision of the Saint presenting the different relations to the cross⁹³ of three groups of persons and consequences resulting from that for them: «Then I saw the Lord Jesus nailed to the cross. When He had hung on it for a while, I saw a multitude of souls crucified like Him. Then I saw a second multitude of souls, and a third. The second multitude was not nailed to [their] crosses, but were holding them firmly in their hands. The third were neither nailed to [their] crosses nor holding them firmly in their hands, but were dragging [their] crosses behind them and were discontent. Jesus then said to me. Do you see these souls? Those who are like Me in the pain and suffer will be like Me also in glory. And those who resemble Me less in pain and contempt will also bear less resemblance to Me in glory»⁹⁴.

In the way of becoming similar to the Mercy of Jesus may be helpful comparisons with the figure from this picture. Lifted hand of Lord may be encouragement and sign for me, in order to bless and forgive, and not imprecate and curse or to stay neutral, because the Sister noted down: «We resemble God most when we forgive our neighbours»⁹⁵.

In turn the gesture of hand indicating the Heart of Saviour may inspire to prayer for alteration and becoming similar of one's own heart to His Divine Heart. Since once day Jesus told Sister his expectation: «My daughter, I desire that your heart be formed after the model of My merciful Heart. You must be completely imbued with My mercy»⁹⁶.

In return the Sister was praying: «My Jesus, penetrate me through and through so that I might be able to reflect You in my whole life. Divinize me so that my deeds may have supernatural value. Grant that I may have love, compassion and mercy for every soul without exception. O my Jesus, each of Your saints reflect one of Your virtues; I desire to reflect Your compassionate heart, full of mercy; I want to glorify it. Let Your mercy, O Jesus, be impressed upon my heart and soul like a seal, and this

⁹² *Ibid.*, 604.

⁹³ F. PRZYBYCIEŃ, *Krzyż – szczytowym aktem miłosierdzia*, in W. OTTO-WEISSOWA, *Tajemnica Bożego Miłosierdzia. Kazania*, Kraków 2000, 325-328.

⁹⁴ *Diary*, 446.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1148.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

will be my badge in this and the future life. Glorifying Your mercy is the exclusive task of my life»⁹⁷.

The true conversion even of the hardest heart can be done during the prayer for oneself. Therefore with the faith and trust Faustina asked Jesus: «Jesus, make my heart like unto Yours, or rather transform it into Your own Heart that I may sense the needs of other hearts, especially those who are sad and suffering. May the rays of mercy rest in my heart»⁹⁸.

Apart from the primary meaning of the internal aspect of mercy which inspires to form oneself in compliance with the most merciful Heart of Saviour, it is worth paying attention to its external aspect, being expressed in next references to the figure of Jesus from the discussed picture⁹⁹. Well, I would like to emphasize outlined dynamics of Jesus' movement. It is being expressed by His active and engaged love. Also in this aspect we are to be similar to Him. We should not separate from people, but according to the will of God live in openness and readiness to take up providing the mercy with activity, word and prayer. Let's remind the recommendation of Jesus that this picture: «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»¹⁰⁰.

That is why St. Faustina asked Christ, so that she will be a tool in the hands of God in transferring His grace of mercy to the others: «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 neighbour.

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 neighbours souls and come to their rescue. Help me, that my ears may be merciful, so that I may give heed to my neighbours needs and not be indifferent to their pains and moaning»¹⁰¹.

Saint Faustina asked so that her words will not hurt other people, but to be merciful like the words of Jesus, because: «One word from a soul united to God effects more good in souls than eloquent discussions and sermons from an imperfect soul»¹⁰². Alike she desired, so as hear and actions were merciful¹⁰³.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1242.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 514.

⁹⁹ T. D. ŁUKASZUK, *Teologia świętego obrazu...*, 130-134.

¹⁰⁰ *Diary*, 472.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 1595.

¹⁰³ Z. CZUCHRA, *Odwaga w miłosierdziu*, in W. OTTO-WEISSOWA, *Tajemnica Bożego Miłosierdzia. Kazania*, Kraków 2000, 18-22.

Finally, Faustina asked: «Most sweet Jesus, set on fire my love for You and transform me into Yourself. Make my deeds divine so that they may be pleasing to You. Divinize me that my deeds may be pleasing to You. May this be accomplished by the power of the Holy Communion which I receive daily. Oh, how greatly I desire to be wholly transformed into You, O Lord!»¹⁰⁴.

Along with thought on conversion and salvation of the others, and with cooperation with the Lord and great obedience towards Him, Faustina took up voluntary offerings and heroic sufferings: «Where there is genuine virtue, there must be sacrifice as well; one's whole life must be a sacrifice. It is only by means of sacrifice that souls can become useful. It is my self-sacrifice which, in my relationship with my neighbour, can give glory to God, but God's love must flow through this sacrifice, because everything is concentrated in this love and takes its value from it»¹⁰⁵.

Work over becoming similar to the Merciful Saviour should not miss making the efforts on development the mercy imagination. Imagination of Mercy is a way of experiencing the presence of the neighbour, looking at the world and at what is going on in our life, with the Heart and eyes of Jesus. According to *Diary* essence of it insists in penetration into God's feelings and thoughts and anticipation of what would Christ do if He were with us. Looking at the other person with great sensitivity in this light leads to discover in it the neighbour, created like us in image and likeness to God. Thanks to reference of God's point of view I obtain the distance to one's own feelings. Then it is easier to understand another human being, to accept his diversity and understand His situation.

Sister Faustina whom we cannot accuse of lack of love, describes gradually conversion of one's own way of doing. Confrontation with the person who attributed to his suffering, at the beginning she evoked rapid reaction. The experience with gentle Jesus fixed during the prayer made that she changed her intention of strict reprimanding: «Today, I was visited by a certain lay person [probably Stanisława Kwietniewska] who has caused me a lot of sorrow and who has abused my goodness, telling many lies. At the first moment I saw her, the blood froze in my veins, because there stood before my eyes all that I had to suffer because of her, although with one word I could have freed myself of them all. And the thought came to me to tell her the truth, firmly and immediately. But at the same moment, the mercy of God came before my eyes, and I resolved to act toward her as Jesus would have acted in my place. I started to talk to her gently, and when she expressed the wish to talk to me alone, I then, in a very delicate manner, made known to her clearly the sad condition of her soul. I saw that she was deeply moved, though she was trying to hide this from me. At that point, a third person came in, and so our heart-to-heart talk came to an end. She asked me

¹⁰⁴ *Diary*, 1289.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 1358.

for a glass of water and for two other things which I did willingly. However, had it not been for the grace of God, I would not have been able to act in such a way towards her. When they left, I thanked God for the grace which had supported me during that time»¹⁰⁶.

Trying to be similar to the Holy Saviour, so important chapter in the life of St. Sister Faustina, was not run out here. It was important to present the very possibilities which are outlined within this field and arousing a creative anxiety in the reader. A many of people live without consciousness of one's own spiritual life. They are reconciled with their mediocrity, with one's own evil, with hear like boulder and stony face. But the Jesus from this picture does not condemn nobody, but he invites and helps in continuous and zealous conversion designated by needs of appearing in the world of the Divine Mercy.

Abstract

God in his boundless goodness, fidelity and generosity offers to each epoch additional, suitable to situation measures that help in taking the salvation. A cult of the Divine Mercy is such help. It includes the important message lighting up and enriching the faith. It is an opportunity for good understanding the mystery of the mercy and implementation it into the life. Being in compliance with the Scripture and the whole Tradition of the Church, resembles known for a long time in the Christianity truth about the merciful God, shedding new light on it. Before Christ comes back in the glory as the Judge, firstly comes as the King of Mercy. The cult of the Divine Mercy is a priceless help in striving for deepened religious life. Thanks to the picture it influences on senses, helps the human's spirit to meet with the Invisible.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1694.