

'Jesus, I trust in you': Stories of Divine Mercy

Every year, on the first Sunday after Easter, we celebrate God's mercy, which is greater than any sin we may ever commit. This feast day, known as Divine Mercy Sunday, was established 17 years ago by Pope St. John Paul II and is observed by Catholics all over the world.

The inspiration for Divine Mercy Sunday can be found in the diaries of St. Faustina Kowalska, a Polish nun who experienced apparitions of Jesus and recorded his messages. "My daughter," Jesus told her, "say that I am love and mercy personified."

During the canonization of St. Faustina on April 30, 2000, Pope John Paul II proclaimed that henceforth the first Sunday after Easter "will be called 'Divine Mercy Sunday.'" He also named St. Faustina the "apostle of Divine Mercy" and urged everyone to make her "beautiful exclamation your own, 'Jesus, I trust in you!'"

Five years later, on the vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday in 2005, Pope John Paul II died. He was beatified on Divine Mercy Sunday in 2011 by Pope Benedict XVI. On Divine Mercy Sunday in 2014, Pope Francis canonized Pope John Paul II.

On this Divine Mercy Sunday, we share stories of how people have experienced Divine Mercy. It is our hope that you will recognize in these stories your own call to trust Jesus, to accept his mercy, and to become an instrument of his mercy by extending love and forgiveness to others.

The grace of final perseverance

Father Donald Calloway, MIC, was a seminarian at home on vacation when he was called to the bedside of a neighbor who was dying. "The woman was in agony," he said. "I remembered

Jesus saying in the diary of St. Faustina that if you pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy at the bedside of someone who is dying, that person will be given the grace of final perseverance.”

The family members were not familiar with the chaplet, so Father Calloway, of Steubenville, Ohio, pulled a rosary out of his pocket and began to pray. “During that prayer we all saw the countenance of this woman change, from being in tortured agony to what looked like she was seeing something beautiful. Then right there in front of us, when chaplet was done, she took her last breath. Her face was at peace. Everyone in that room knew that something profound and supernatural had happened.”

How to Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet

Using a rosary, make the Sign of the Cross with the crucifix.

On the first bead, repeat three times:

“O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the heart of Jesus as a fountain of mercy for us, I trust in you!”

On the next three beads, pray the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Apostle’s Creed.

On the fifth bead, pray:

“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 first set of 10 beads pray,

“For the sake of his sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.”

Repeat for the remaining decades, praying the “Eternal Father” prayer on the Our Father bead, and the “For the sake of his sorrowful Passion” prayer on each of the Hail Mary beads.

Conclude by praying three times:

“Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.”

Mercy and forgiveness

Seventeen-year-old Dominik Pettey was returning from a party with friends on Nov. 1, 2014, when their car ran out of gas on the Beltway around Washington, D.C. The boys were waiting for help when an oncoming vehicle veered onto the shoulder of the road and crashed into them. Dominik, who was sitting in the backseat, died instantly.

“Our family has always had a deep devotion to Divine Mercy,” his parents, Magdalena and Patrick Pettey of Potomac, Maryland, recalled. “When our children were little, we traveled to Poland several times where we prayed at the tomb of St. Faustina. There was never any doubt in our minds that it was the merciful Jesus who was carrying us through the devastating death of Dominik. And we came to believe that through Dominik’s death, others would experience Divine Mercy.”

Dominik’s funeral was held at Washington’s Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the largest Catholic church in North America. The Pettey family asked that the Divine Mercy image be placed in front of the ambo, and that the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet be prayed before Dominik’s funeral Mass began. On one side of Dominik’s memorial card was the Divine Mercy image and on the other side was how to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

“After the Mass a family member read a statement which expressed our deep sorrow, but also our belief that God would not have taken Dominik unless he had a mission for him,” the Petteys said. “We asked each person in the standing-room-only Basilica to practice active mercy and kindness toward one another, to share with the world that we have an all-merciful God, and to believe that no sin is too great that it cannot be forgiven.”

In the months that followed, small miracles began to unfold.

Several people had dreams about Dominik. Some said they felt Dominik's presence. Others said Dominik and the message of mercy had renewed their faith and changed their lives. It changed the lives of Magdalena and Patrick Pettey, as well.

"Because of our devotion to Divine Mercy, we knew that we wanted to forgive the woman who killed our son," Patrick Pettey explained. "We called her the day before Dominik's funeral to see how she was doing. In the months that followed, we continued to pray for her. We met with her in person 11 months after the accident. She told us that she was suffering, too, and how much our forgiveness has helped her."

"When you don't forgive, you hold onto anger, and it only hurts you more," Magdalena Pettey said. "Our faith in Divine Mercy helped us to forgive – even though we still feel the loss and the sadness of losing our son. But God gives us the grace we need, and when we are open, more graces come to us."

Readings for Divine Mercy Sunday

The liturgical readings for the Sunday after Easter have always reminded us of God's mercy and how we are called to be merciful to others.

The first reading, Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47, describes the life of the early Christians, who shared everything with one another.

Psalm 118 entreats us to give thanks to the Lord, because
"His mercy endures forever."

The second reading, 1 Peter 1:3-9, reminds us that God's mercy gave us new hope through the resurrection of Jesus and encourages us to rejoice in our salvation.

The Gospel, John 20:19-31, recounts the appearance of the Risen Lord to the apostles and the forgiveness of sins through the institution of the Sacrament of Penance.

A sign of God's love and mercy

When Sister Teresita Richardson's prayer group decided to select one person and pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet for 54 days for that person's conversion, the Sister of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities chose her brother, John, who claimed to be an atheist. A parishioner named Henry, who did not belong to the prayer group, offered to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet privately for John's conversion.

A few months later her brother was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor and underwent surgery. "Our prayers were answered when my brother asked to see a priest in the hospital," said Sister Teresita, who lives in Williamsville, New York. "But John's prognosis was not good."

The morning John died, Sister Teresita received a call from Henry inquiring about John. "I told him John had passed away that morning. Henry proceeded to tell me that earlier in the morning, while he was having breakfast, a mysterious light rested on a rose that was in a vase on his kitchen table. The light split into red and white rays. Henry could not trace its source."

Henry's wife entered the kitchen, and again this mysterious light rested on the rose and split into red and white rays. Sister Teresita believes it was a confirmation that her brother, John, had regained his faith in God.

"When the rays of Divine Mercy hit the rose it was a sign of God's love and mercy," Sister Teresita said. "We were all joyful that John had been so wonderfully received by Jesus."

"Trust him"

Anna Nuzzo of Kenosha, Wisconsin, started singing at Mass when she was in elementary school. By the time she was in high school people were asking her to sing for weddings and

funerals.

“I always got nervous when I had to do a solo – not just a little nervous – but sick to my stomach nervous,” she said. “I would often pray, ‘Lord, you have given me this gift, and so many people have complimented me, but I get so nervous. Help me get over this!’”

The answer to her prayer came when the women’s group in her parish decided to consecrate themselves to Our Lady using the book [“33 Days to Morning Glory”](#) (Marian Press, \$14.95) by Father Michael Gaitley, MIC.

“The consecration changed my life,” Nuzzo said. “I felt as if Our Lady took my hand, put it on the heart of Jesus, and said, ‘Trust him.’ Instantly, I felt a wave of peace and freedom.”

Before this she was not writing songs. After the first session with her women’s group, she sat at the piano, prayed to the Blessed Mother, and wrote a song based on the Marian consecration. She was so overwhelmed that she started crying. “I did not know where this music was coming from,” she said.

But Nuzzo soon began to understand that God was using her as his instrument. One of the songs she wrote is called “Divine Mercy.” It is based on St. Faustina’s prayer. She didn’t realize it at the time, but that song became the seed that allowed her to set the entire Divine Mercy Chaplet to music.

She eventually produced a CD with music that focuses on Divine Mercy. “It is powerful when you surrender,” she said. “It is letting go and really trusting. It’s not like I trust 100 percent of the time. I struggle every day like everybody else, but I notice when I do trust, the graces just pour into my life.”

St. Faustina Kowalska

Helena Kowalska was born Aug. 25, 1905, the third of 10 children in a poor family in Głogowiec, Poland. She had very little schooling, but she did learn to read and write. At age 14, she wanted to enter the convent, but her parents refused to give her permission. She worked for a while as a domestic servant, and six years later she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. She took the name Sister Maria Faustina of the Blessed Sacrament.

In 1933, Father Michael Sopocko, a professor of pastoral theology, became her spiritual director. She told him that Jesus had been appearing to her. After arranging for psychological testing, Father Sopocko came to believe that the apparitions were authentic.

In one apparition, Jesus appeared to her clothed in a white robe, his hand raised in blessing, with two rays of light – one red and one white – flowing from his heart. Sister Faustina told Father Sopocko that Jesus wanted this image painted along with the words, “Jesus, I trust in you.” Father Sopocko arranged for an artist to paint the image.

In 1935, Sister Faustina reported a vision that gave birth to the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, a series of prayers that are recited on rosary beads. In several other apparitions, Jesus asked for prayer and meditation every afternoon at 3 p.m. in remembrance of his death on the cross.

Two years before she died, Jesus told Sister Faustina, “My daughter, do whatever is within your power to spread devotion to my Divine Mercy. I will make up for what you lack.”

After Sister Faustina’s death on Oct. 5, 1938, devotion to Divine Mercy spread throughout Poland. In 1956, Pope Pius XII blessed an image of Divine Mercy in Rome. But three years later, the Vatican suppressed all devotions to Divine Mercy until an investigation could be made into their authenticity. The ban was officially lifted in 1978. Today, the diaries of St. Faustina have been translated into many languages, and devotion to Divine Mercy has spread worldwide.

There's my answer!

After a relative was diagnosed with leukemia, Mark Piscitello of Amherst, New York, wanted to share the Divine Mercy Chaplet with him, but it didn't seem like the opportune time. "I told the Lord that I would leave it in his hands," he recalled.

While listening to Catholic radio the next morning, he heard a priest say, "Sometimes you can't preach Jesus right away. It's all in the Lord's time. Sometimes we just have to accept people where they are at."

"There was my answer!" Mark explained. "I said, "OK, Lord, it's in your hands. I'll pray, hope and trust in you."

An image of Divine Mercy

After her husband received notice of a job transfer, Gianna Davis sold their family home in Virginia, and began looking for a house in Ohio. Her prayers were very specific. "We needed a house by July 19, and I wanted a Divine Mercy image to be associated with the house as confirmation that it was the right one," she recalls.

Gianna and her husband went to Ohio for a house-hunting trip, but none of the houses they saw met their needs. It was July 18, and Gianna decided to go to church and pray.

"I thought one of the local parishes had a 5 o'clock Mass," she recalls. "I was wrong, but the church was open, so I decided to pray before the tabernacle."

As Gianna knelt down, she looked to the right of the tabernacle, and there was a picture of Divine Mercy.

"When I returned to our hotel room, my husband showed me a website with a house that had come on the market a little after 5 p.m. while I was praying in the church. It was our

dream house. God was faithful. Now our prayer is that we will be faithful to his plans for us.”

Miraculous cure

At age 15, Maureen Digan was diagnosed with lymphedema, an incurable disease that caused painful swelling in her legs. Over the next 10 years, she endured more than 50 operations, including the amputation of one of her legs.

“My already weak faith became even weaker,” she said. “I thought I was being punished for something I had done or something I would do later in life. People told me to pray and trust God. How could I pray and trust when God kept knocking me down? I built a wall around myself.”

Her boyfriend, Bob, broke through the wall when he asked her to marry him. But Maureen’s first pregnancy ended in a miscarriage. Two years later, she gave birth to Bobby, who had a progressive neuromuscular disease. Then the lymphedema worsened, and the doctors feared that Maureen would need a second amputation. During this time, Bob saw a movie about Sister Faustina and Divine Mercy. “He tried to share it with me, but I wouldn’t listen,” Maureen said. “Bob felt as if God was calling him to take our family to Poland. I tried to resist, but it was no use.”

On March 23, 1981, Bob, Maureen and their son, Bobby, arrived in Poland. Five days later they prayed the Chaplet of Divine Mercy at the tomb of Sister Faustina. “I sensed Sister Faustina say to me in my heart, ‘Ask for my help and I will help you,’” Maureen recalled. “I said, ‘OK, Faustina, I came this far from home, now do something!’”

<p>Prayer to Divine Mercy</p>

The following prayer to the Divine Mercy was written by Maureen Digan's husband, Deacon Bob Digan.

O Lord, our God

We place all our trust in you, because you are mercy itself;

We repent of our sins and turn to you for mercy.

We trust you to provide for our every need, according to your will.

Help us to forgive others as you forgive us.

We promise to be merciful by our deeds, words and prayers.

Though we have fears because of human weakness, we rely on your infinite goodness and mercy.

We entrust to your mercy our very lives, our present situation and our uncertain future.

We entrust to you the future of our planet, our Church, our nations, our families and all our needs.

With loud cries, we implore your mercy on us and the whole world.

Look upon us created in your image and likeness.

Form us in the heart of Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit, into living images of mercy.

May all come to know the depth of your mercy and sing the praises of your mercy forever. Amen.

Suddenly, the pain and swelling in Maureen's leg disappeared. By the following day, it was clear that she had been healed. "When I returned home, I was examined by five independent doctors who had no medical explanation for the sudden healing of this incurable disease."

The evidence of Maureen's miracle cure was examined by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints at the Vatican. "Having passed this test, my case was examined by a board of medical doctors of theologians, and finally by a team of cardinals and bishops headed by then-Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI). My cure was accepted by all as a miracle through Sister Faustina's intercession."

Maureen and Bob Digan, who live in Massachusetts, tell the story of the miracle that led to the beatification of Sister Maria Faustina Kowalska in a 54-minute DVD available at www.thedivinemercy.org.

Lorene Hanley Duquin writes from New York and is the author of the upcoming book "God Listens: Stories of Answered Prayer" (OSV, \$12.95).