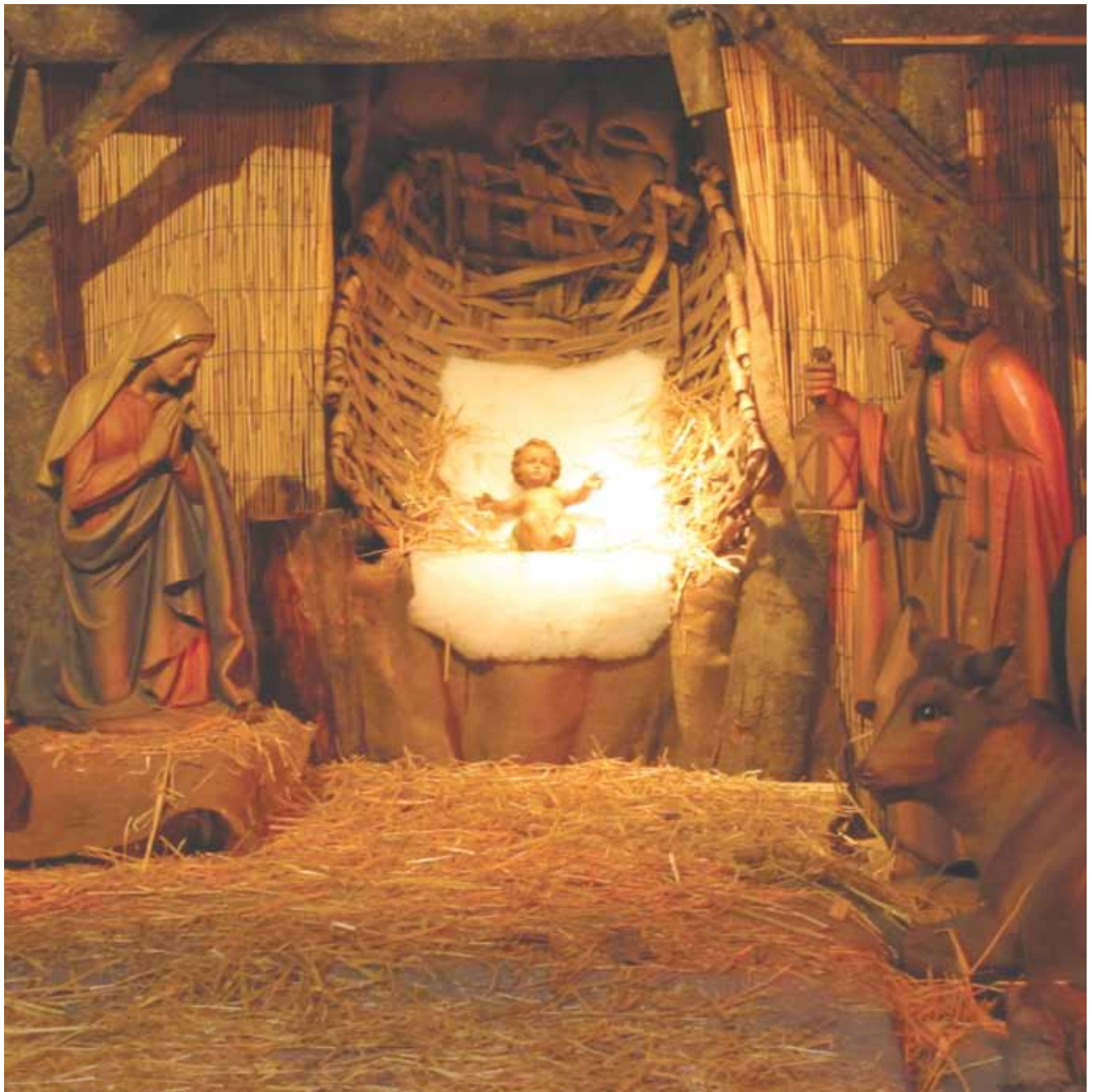


# Messenger of Divine Mercy

Publication of the Marian Helpers Association in Great Britain

Winter 4 [62] 2013



...when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. Ga 4.4-7

Dear Marian Helpers,

Christmas is coming!

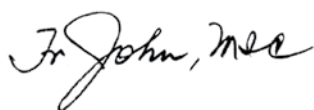
As we start our preparations for this great celebration, even if we are not children any more we still retain an inner expectation based on the many times that we have lived this feast and experienced in our hearts the peace, joy and true happiness that it brings. For many of us the source of this happiness lies in the simple experience of being together with others. As a family we gather on Christmas Day around the festive table to share our greetings, our meal, our love. We can experience how great is the other person for ourself! The presence of our parents, our children, and our friends.

During the year we may be wrapped up in our duties, very often unable to spend time with those who are close to us, or we miss those who are far away. But on this holy day of Christmas we are again united as a family and the one who unites us is Jesus, Son of God. His presence unites us, despite our differences, if only for a few hours. Jesus Christ comes to make us again children of God. And as children we have the same Father. Through Christ we can discover that we really are brothers and sisters. This is one of the gifts that God gives us. It gives us a taste of heaven - peace, unity, joy and love, of being together with God and with the other.

We hope that this Advent/Christmas issue of the *Messenger of Divine Mercy* will help us to prepare and enter this season, with articles and reflections on Advent and Christmas. You may also find some icons which may be useful for your meditation and prayer during this beautiful time.

Christmas gives us the opportunity to express gratitude and thanks! Thank you for all your prayers, your financial support, your involvement and your help in spreading the Divine Mercy message.

May Almighty God Bless You All, Merry Christmas!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Fr John, Mee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# Messenger of Divine Mercy

Quarterly magazine of the  
Association of Marian Helpers  
of the Congregation of  
Marian Fathers in  
Great Britain



The Association of Marian Helpers assists the Congregation of Marian Fathers in uniting all the faithful who want to develop spiritually, to imitate our Lady's life, to proclaim to the whole world the truth of Divine Mercy according to Mary's example and under her guidance. Members pray, do penance and acts of mercy which they offer to God in the intentions of the Church, for the souls suffering in purgatory and praying for priestly and religious vocations. By their prayers and work and, if possible, material help, they support the apostolic and missionary work of Marian Helpers and share in the fruits of the daily masses, prayers and good works of the Marian fathers and brothers.

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Marian Fathers Charitable Trust  
Reg. Charity 1075608

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The editors shall not return any materials unless so requested; reserve the right to abbreviate the text, or to alter the title without informing the author; do not pay for the material, treating it as an apostolic contribution to the works of the Association. All correspondence to the editors should be sent to the Association of Marian Helpers.

With the permission of the Church  
authorities.

ISSN 2053-6445

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# Year of Faith:

## He became Man

Pope Benedict XVI

Paul VI Audience Hall, Rome  
9th January 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In this Christmas season let us reflect once again on the great mystery of God who came down from heaven to enter our flesh. In Jesus God was incarnate, he became a man like us and in this way opened for us the road to his heavenly Kingdom, to full communion with him.

In these days the term the "Incarnation" of God has rung out several times in our churches, expressing the reality we celebrate at Holy Christmas: the Son of God was made man, as we say in the Creed. But what does this word, so central to the Christian faith, mean? Incarnation derives from the Latin *incarnatio*. St Ignatius of Antioch — at the end of the first century — and, especially, St Irenaeus used this term in reflecting on the Prologue to the Gospel according to St John, in particular in the sentence "the Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14). Here the word "flesh", according to the Hebrew usage, indicates man in his whole self, the whole man, but in particular in the dimension of his transience and his temporality, his poverty and his contingency. This was in order to tell us that the salvation brought by God, who became man in Jesus of Nazareth, affects man in his material reality and in whatever situation he may be. God assumed the human condition to heal it from all that separates it from him, to enable us to call him, in his Only-Begotten Son, by the name of "Abba, Father", and truly to be children of God.

St Irenaeus stated: "For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God" (cf. CCC, 460).

"The Word was made flesh" is one of those truths to which we have grown so accustomed that the greatness of the event it expresses barely makes an impression on us. Effectively, in this Christmastide in which these words often recur in the Liturgy, we at times pay more attention to the external aspects,

to the "colours" of the celebration rather than to the heart of the great Christian newness that we are celebrating: something that utterly defeats the imagination, that God alone could bring about and into which we can only enter with faith.

The Logos, who is with God, is the Logos who is God, the Creator of the world (cf. Jn 1:1) through whom all things were created (cf. 1:3) and who has accompanied men and women through history with his light (cf. 1:4-5; 1:9), became one among many and made his dwelling among us, becoming one of us (cf. 2:14).



The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council said: "The Son of God... worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin" (Gaudium et Spes, 22). Thus it is important to recover our wonder at the mystery, to let ourselves be enveloped by the grandeur of this

event: God, the true God, Creator of all, walked our roads as a man, entering human time to communicate his own life to us (cf. 1 Jn 1:1-4). And he did not do so with the splendour of a sovereign who dominates the world with his power, but with the humility of a child.

I would like to stress a second element. At holy Christmas we generally exchange a few gifts with the people closest to us. At times this may be a conventional gesture, but it usually expresses affection; it is a sign of love and esteem. In the Prayer over the Offerings at the Vigil Mass of the Solemnity of Christmas the Church prays: "may the oblation of this day's feast be pleasing to you, O Lord, we pray, that through this most holy exchange we may be found in the likeness of Christ in whom our nature is united to you. Who lives and reigns for ever".

The idea of giving is therefore at the heart of the liturgy and makes us aware of the original gift of Christmas: on that Holy Night, in taking flesh God



wanted to make a gift of himself to men and women, he gave himself for us; God made his Only Son a gift for us, he took on our humanity to give his divinity to us. This is the great gift. In our giving too it does not matter whether or not a gift is expensive; those who cannot manage to give a little of themselves always give too little. Indeed, at times we even seek to substitute money or material things for our hearts and the commitment to giving ourselves.

The mystery of the Incarnation shows that God did not do this: he did not give some thing but he gave himself in his Only-Begotten Son. We find here our model for the giving so that our relationships, especially those that are most important, may be guided by giving love freely.

I would like to offer a third thought: the event of the Incarnation, of God who became man, like us, shows us the daring realism of divine love. God's action, in fact was not limited to words. On the contrary we might say that he was not content with speaking, but entered into our history, taking upon himself the effort and burden of human life. The Son of God truly became a man. He was born of the Virgin Mary in a specific time and place, in Bethlehem during the reign of the Emperor Augustus, under the Governor Quirinius (cf. Lk 2:1-2); he grew up in a family, he had friends, he formed a group of disciples, he instructed the Apostles to continue his mission and ended the course of his earthly life on the Cross. The way God acted gives us a strong incentive to question ourselves on the reality of our faith, which must not be limited to the sphere of sentiment, of the emotions; rather, it must enter into the practicality of our existence, that is, it must touch our everyday life and give it practical guidance. God did not stop at words, but showed us how to live, sharing in our own experience, except for sin.

The Catechism of St Pius X, which some of us studied as children answers with simple brevity the question "What must we do to live according to the will of God?": "to live according to the will of God, we must believe the truths that he has revealed and obey his commandments with the help of his grace, which is obtained through the sacraments and through prayer". Faith has a fundamental aspect that does not only involve our mind and heart but also our whole life.

I suggest one last element for you to think about. St

John says that the Word, the Logos, was with God in the beginning and that everything was done through the Word and nothing that exists was done without him (cf. Jn 1:1-13). The Evangelist is clearly alluding to the Creation narrative in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis, and reinterprets it in the light of Christ. This is a fundamental criterion in the Christian interpretation of the Bible: The Old and New Testaments should always be read together and, starting with the New, the deepest meaning of the Old Testament is also revealed. That same Word, who has always existed with God, who is God himself and through whom and for whom all things were created (cf. Col 1:16-17), became man: the eternal and infinite God immersed himself in human finiteness, in his creature, to bring back man and the whole of creation to himself.



The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: *the first creation finds its meaning and its summit in the new creation in Christ, the splendour of which surpasses that of the first creation* (CCC, 349). The Fathers of the Church compared Jesus to Adam, even to the point of calling him "the second Adam", or the definitive Adam, the perfect image of God. With the Incarnation of the Son of God a new creation was brought about that gave the complete answer to the question "who is man?". God's plan for the human being was fully manifest in Jesus alone. He is the definitive man according to God's will.

The Second Vatican Council reasserted this forcefully: *In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear.... Christ the new Adam... fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling.* (CCC, 359). In that Child, the Son of God contemplated at Christmas, we can recognize the true face not only of God but also of the human being; and only by opening ourselves to his grace and seeking to follow him every day do we fulfil God's plan for us, for each one of us.

Dear friends, in this period let us meditate on the great and marvellous richness of the Mystery of the Incarnation, to permit the Lord to illuminate us and to change us, more and more, into an image of his Son made man for us.

[www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

# ADVENT

...and how to live it!

*Before I come as a just Judge, I first open wide the door of My mercy.  
He who refuses to pass through the door of My mercy must pass  
through the door of My justice...*

(Diary, 1146)

For many of us the time of Advent is one of the busiest in the year, looking for and buying Xmas gifts, sending Xmas cards, bringing children to Nativity shows, Xmas parties at work... It seems that the whole world is doing everything it can to help us to forget the true meaning of Advent. It is a real temptation; the radio and the TV shouts, the adverts on billboards, buses, everywhere telling us of all the amazing things we need to have.

We are invited and given the time of Advent to help us clear a space. And to enter this time it is necessary to return to the meaning of Advent.

Advent, *adventus*, is the Latin word that translates a Greek word *parousia* which means the arrival of the physical presence of someone, especially of someone of great importance; in the Christian sense it refers to two events.

The Church in Advent encourages us to be vigilant and wake up for Christ, who is coming. If you expect someone in your home you need to be present there. In the same way we need to be present in our *home* to be ready to greet Christ, and it is this time of Advent that can help us. It is easy in December to be everywhere, busy in shops, at parties, at school, at work preparing for a holiday in one way only. So, being aware *in oneself* is the starting point to be vigilant and awake to Advent.

What drives us away from our *inner home* is that we are often not very happy with what we find inside ourselves, complaining and criticism, our weaknesses and sins. The good news is that God wants to be in me, in you, exactly there where we are, weak and poor, a sinner with no great deeds of love to show at all. Jesus was not born in a beautiful palace! The three wise men expected to find him in Jerusalem in a palace but he was not there.

As Advent refers to two events, to two *comings*, so the time of Advent can be seen to be in two parts. The first part invites us to focus our heart on the *Parousia*, the coming of Christ at the end of time. As Christians we are people waiting for the return of our Master, not in fear, but in hope, in hope of our final salvation. This first part of Advent helps us to begin to see our daily problems in relation to eternal life. How? That paying our bills, struggling with health have real meaning. These problems are not the end of the world, they are not a disaster but an invitation to seek the presence of the Lord in our daily life.

To understand the mystery of God who is coming we need to face a few questions: Why did he come 2000 years ago? Why is Jesus to come again at the end of time? Because he loves us. He answers the deepest desire of our heart, our loneliness. Our God is not a passive God waiting for us to do anything for him. He comes to us. He comes to fulfil our deepest desires for love.

The older we are the more we see that nothing fully satisfies us or makes us happy. The gifts, jewellery, house, car, children or even spouse leave an unsatisfied desire for happiness and fulfilment. This desire comes from God! Only he can completely fill this empty space.

Thus Advent allows us to rediscover a time of silence and hope, to slow down and give a space to God who is waiting to speak with us. But how? Skip TV or radio, unnecessary use of computer and internet. Find time for prayer. The morning is an opportune time! Use the readings of the day or the morning prayer of the Church, the psalms, or a short text from the Bible. In this way we can prepare to meet God, particularly in the sacrament of confession, cleaning our house - our heart - to be ready for the God who is coming to meet with us. And as we begin to prepare to meet God, this is also a time that is perfect to take a look at our relationship with others, our family, our friends. What relationship in my life needs maintenance? needs reconciliation, forgiveness and healing? Advent is a great time of grace to begin again, to be ready to meet the Lord who is coming.



## First Sunday of Advent

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,  
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ  
with righteous deeds at his coming,  
so that, gathered at his right hand,  
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.

*Mass Collect, 1st Sunday of Advent*

## Second Sunday of Advent

O people of Sion, behold,  
the Lord will come to save the nations,  
and the Lord will make the glory of his voice heard  
in the joy of your heart.

*Mass Entrance Antiphon, 2nd Sunday of Advent*



## Fourth Sunday of Advent

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,  
your grace into our hearts,  
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son  
was made known by the message of an Angel,  
may by his Passion and Cross  
be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.

*Mass Collect, 4th Sunday of Advent*

## Third Sunday of Advent *gaudete!*

REJOICE in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.  
Indeed, the Lord is near.

*Mass Entrance Antiphon, 3rd Sunday of Advent*



# GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO!



## *The Christmas Crib*

*In my family we always had the tradition of setting out the crib in the last week of Advent, all ready and waiting, except for the figure of the Baby Jesus which remained hidden until we got home from Midnight Mass. Then with all the solemnity of little children the youngest amongst us brought the Baby Jesus and placed him in the crib, completing the scene.*

*We are all grown up, the youngest amongst us has his first child, and yet we still keep the same solemnity we expressed ever since we were young. We are waiting for Jesus, yes, every day, but today especially. Awaking the memory of that night God entered definitively into our history and appeared on earth as a little, helpless baby to begin that great journey that would find its culmination on the Cross and its fulfilment in the Resurrection.*

*It made present the awesome majesty of the Incarnation. It was a little thing to do every year, but something I will never forget and need every year.*

Ed



# CHRISTMAS

Christmas brings to mind bright lights, warm interiors, decorations, festive parties and the wonderful family dinner, full of turkey and roast potatoes, delicious smells and succulent tastes. The sweet scent of the Christmas tree, the array of presents wrapped and shimmering in the flicker of candlelight. Music and carols and sparkling conversation and loving family members and friends collected together to share their joy in each other.

But for some of us the idea of Christmas is something we desire to forget, the ideal too high, and the reality too painful.

Maybe we experience that living Christmas only at the sensory level leaves us flat or even a little depressed (or even a lot!). Our expectations were not fulfilled. Our husband didn't value the food; the wife had no time she was always cross and busy in the kitchen. The children totally ungrateful, the presents demanded abandoned almost immediately, fighting, criticism, parents in law... We expected so much of ourselves and of the others... but what happened. Maybe next year will be better.

We can end up being cynical. But, our huge expectations are good - did anyone tell you this before? The expectation for immense joy, for rejoicing and gladness and communion and love has been in all the liturgies of the season of Advent! God does not cheat us, but maybe we have cheated ourselves a little bit.

We looked to our family or our friends to provide the joy and the happy times, but they could not give it to us. They looked to us, and we couldn't give it to them. So where does this joy spring from?

If someone asked you 'Why do you celebrate Christmas?' The answer is easy - 'we are celebrating the birthday of Jesus' but who is this Jesus? Why is his birth important to me? Is he famous? Is he influential? If so, where in my life is he?

The Word of God tells us the answer:

*Yes, God loved the world so much  
that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost  
but may have eternal life (Jn3:15).*

If we find ourselves a little lost or bankrupt emotionally or spiritually before the prospect of Christmas, it is not too late to enter. Christmas-tide is at least 12 days long!

In Jesus Christ God became man because he saw our bankrupt limited state. We want to love and we bite back with a disappointed word. He came and entered our reality completely so that anyone who would welcome him, who would give even the tiniest assent of belief in him may enter his reality of communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit. United with Jesus Christ, freed from the slavery to commit over and over again the same sins and hurt against the other, freed to live, to love the other.

Jesus said to St Faustina:

*Be not afraid of your Saviour, O sinful soul. I make the first move to come to you, for I know that by yourself you are unable to lift yourself to Me. Child, do not run away from your Father; be willing to talk openly with your God of mercy who wants to speak words of pardon and lavish his graces on you. How dear your soul is to Me! I have inscribed your name upon My hand; you are engraved as a deep wound in My Heart* (Diary, 1485).

In Jesus Christ God is coming to us, because we are not able to go to him. God loves us so much more than we can even begin to comprehend! This is great, good news!

Once we taste this, maybe this year for the first time, we find ourselves spurred on, to be able to bring this joy, the discovery of Jesus Christ in the reality of our life to others. Christmas is a most beautiful time, providing many opportunities to find Jesus and to bring him to others, to our family, as we celebrate with friends or work colleagues and in our encounters with the sick and the lonely.

The mystery of Christmas breaks into our lives, the light of Jesus Christ enters the darkest season of the year enlightening us in the Incarnation so that we may see our life in a new dimension. The dimension of love, of hope for eternal life with the One who has always loved us and will never stop.





# In Pictures...

## The Nativity of Our Lord

Icon of the Nativity

Russian, 16th Century

The Hermitage, St Petersburg

Here is another image, an icon, of the Nativity. It is in stark contrast to the images that we are used to at Christmas time. Its non-naturalistic style jolts our vision in an attempt to help us to see this feast anew as every element that disturbs our sight can 'speak' to us.

Breaking into the picture at the top we can see a small semi-sphere with stars in it representing heaven, the place where God dwells. From this sphere comes three rays, the action of the Holy Trinity is at work in this drama. They direct us to look down at the tiny infant.

The icon clearly depicts the biblical narrative - Jesus was born outside Bethlehem in a cave which was used as a stable. So we see the essence of the moment: Jesus wrapped in swaddling bands, laid in the manger, warmed by the breath of the animals. In this moment of birth we are faced with the reality that Jesus entered as man from his first moment - rejected with no room for him at the inn, in a barren rocky landscape. The cave, the dense black reminding us forcefully, this is where God has come, to those who 'live in darkness and in the shadow of death.' He enters the darkness of our lives, the things we do not understand, the reality of rejection and suffering and the knowledge of death that we constantly try to escape. This is where God comes to find us.

The swaddling bands prefigure the grave clothes, the manger looks like a stone sarcophagus. Even the ox and the ass do not stand by meaningless but refer us to the prophecy of Isaiah: *The ox knows its owner and the ass its master's crib* (Is 1:3). It is dumb creation that first greets its master. Here is God - Man. Here he is, small and vulnerable and subject to death, for us!

The angels above look on astonished at the action of God, here reduced to the absolute minimum, one angel looks up to heaven praising God, the other greets the shepherds with the most extraordinary news and announces what they must go to see! (Lk 2:9-20)

Three others, on horseback are astonished by the

appearance of the star. The three wise men, the Magi representing all the non-Jewish peoples, drawn to the light. They too, like us, have been looking for the intervention of God, have longed for it.

Vividly highlighted by a red carpet, in the most central position we see Mary, *Theotokos*, in Greek meaning God-bearer, Mother-of-God, Mary's most prominent title and the feast we celebrate on 1st January. Mary lies resting. Yes, Jesus truly is Man, really is born and here is his mother. Even in repose herself, her body is aligned with that of her son in the manger, in the same way that her life was always open to the will of God and the work of her son.

With all the drama surrounding the infant Jesus we are surprised that Mary is not gazing in adoration on her son as we are used to. Where does she look?

She is gazing on Joseph. Joseph seated, wrapped up and cut off from the central drama of the birth of the Christ, alone in the bottom left-hand corner of the icon. He is confronted by a strange old man dressed in skins who stands between him and the two midwives bathing the new-born child. (The midwives emphasising again that Jesus was a real baby, really was born, and therefore needed washing after his birth like all of us!)

Joseph is tempted: 'A miracle? Surely you aren't so foolish to believe that Mary conceived this child without a human father. But if not you, then who?' Is God a liar? We too are tempted in our lives, does God really love me, has he really acted in this suffering for my good.

Joseph is looking down, he has not yet seen the star, the angels, or heard the testimony of the shepherds or of the Magi. Mary gazes on Joseph as she gazes on us, with love, her heart interceding for us that we will be strong and keep faith. That we will believe even when we do not see. So that one day we will see the glorious revelation of God's self-emptying love in our lives and one day, experience its fulfilment in that Eternal Day when we will behold God face to face.



# Trust and the Sacraments

Sister M Nazaria Dłubak ZMBM

Orędzie Miłosierdzia 42, 2001

The source that powers human trust is a consciously experienced sacramental life. There is a mutual dependency between the sacraments and trust since the fruitfulness of the sacraments depends on the degree of trust, while trust draws the strength to grow from the sacraments.

What does the word 'sacrament' mean? Ever since Christianity's earliest days, the description of a sacrament has predominantly referred to a sign. It was defined as *a sign of something holy; an exterior sign of an interior grace* (St Augustine); a special sign which *makes happen that which it represents*. In the light of the contemporary teaching of the Church, *the sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us... The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions* (CCC,1131).

The choice of signs that Jesus made for the sacraments was not coincidental. There is a resemblance, which is why understanding the natural use of the elements of a sign makes it easier to understand the supernatural essence each sacrament contains. For instance, the sign of washing with water is universally understood to be a cleansing from dirt; in baptism, it means the washing away of sin. The effects that material food and drink have in giving life to the flesh, the sacrament of the Eucharist has in relation to the life of the spirit. Therefore, in the holy sacraments, God gives his love to man in a form adapted to human nature, so that we might use what is visible to understand what is invisible.

The aim of the sacraments is the sanctification of humanity, the building of the Mystical Body of Christ and the giving of glory to God. As signs, they are also intended to instruct.

Sacraments not only presuppose faith, but with the help of words and objects, they help it to grow, strengthen it and express it. They are unique

since they are the place where one meets the living presence of Jesus Christ, present with the fruit of salvation concealed by the holy signs. The effectiveness of the sacrament is not dependent on the justness of the person who is delivering it but on the power of God. This truth is expressed in the Catholic teaching about the effectiveness of the sacraments, *ex opere operato*, literally meaning 'by the very fact of the action's being performed' thus the act springs from the virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all.

The effectiveness of the sacraments however, depend on the disposition of the one who is receiving them. It is impossible for the reception of the sacraments to be fruitful without a minimal degree of openness, based on faith, leading to trust. The degree of openness on the part of the recipient determines how much grace he receives.



Sacraments increase the life of God within the human soul, lead to an increase in Christian virtues and, as a result, lead to a growth of trust. The fruitfulness of the sacraments therefore is intimately related to the degree of a person's trust; the sacraments strengthen trust and help it to grow.

The sacraments are a visible sign of the merciful love of God for man who has been granted the grace of participating in his divine nature. Sister Faustina gradually discovered the fullness of God's intentions present in the holy sacraments as she saw that they were an expression of God's mercy. Jesus encouraged her to consider how she could use these treasures of grace within the Church for the salvation and sanctification of her soul:

*Consider the life of God which is found in the Church for the salvation and the sanctification of your soul. Consider, the use that you make... of these efforts of My love* (Diary, 1758).

Sister Faustina not only considered the value and the meaning of individual sacraments, but she



The Return of the Prodigal Son  
private collection

*From this fount of mercy, souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great, there is no limit to my generosity.*

(Diary, 1602)

also thought about the degree of her personal co-operation and inner disposition to receive the sacramental graces. Recognising that baptism forms the foundation of supernatural life, Sister Faustina prayed,

*Thank you, O God, for Holy Baptism which engrafted me into your family, a gift great beyond all thought or expression which transforms my soul* (Diary, 1286).

Transformation of the soul was what she called the change that occurs during the sacrament of baptism thanks to which a person becomes a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), participating in God's nature (cf, 2 P1:4), the temple of the Holy Spirit and the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity (cf. J 14:23).



igal Son, Marc Chagall  
ollection

The divine life that we receive through baptism and which we lose, is restored through the sacrament of reconciliation (confession) in which Jesus not only forgives us our sins but also heals the wounds that they have inflicted and generously bestows new graces on us. Access to the spiritual treasures of holy confession is gained through trust, and it is trust which determines the volume of graces we receive.

*Every time you go to confession, immerse yourself entirely in my mercy, with great trust, so that I may pour the bounty of my grace upon your soul* (Diary, 1602).

Trust is the essential disposition that a person needs, without which he cannot fully benefit from the fruit of this sacrament.

*From this fount of mercy, says Jesus, souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great, there is no limit to my generosity* (Diary, 1602).

In the sacrament of penance, we have a personal meeting with God who forgives us more than we expect and bestows graces on us incomparably more generously than we anticipate. Therefore, anyone who has genuinely experienced a meeting with the Merciful Father in the sacrament of penance, responds to his love with an attitude of trust.

The sacrament of penance renews man's spiritual

friendship with God, and makes it possible to meet with him most fully in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, says Sister Faustina, Jesus opened wide his mercy to us (cf Diary, 1747). Whoever does not encounter Jesus in this most perfect sacrament will never trust him fully because we can't trust someone whom we do not know and who is a stranger to us.

The more frequent our meetings with Jesus in Holy Communion, the stronger our bond with him, and the stronger our bond, the greater our trust. Jesus is not a stranger but the one who occupies and befriends our soul.



Last Supper, Morgan Library New York, MS M44, fol. 60v

*O Jesus concealed in the Host, prayed Sister Faustina, faithful Friend, how happy my soul is to have such a Friend* (Diary, 877).

In the sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus gives everything because he gives us himself and so a deep appreciation of this truth strengthens human trust and allows it to grow.

The holy sacraments were, for Sister Faustina, a place of intimate meeting with God who is Mercy. Her life became saturated with God since she completely trusted Jesus active in the sacraments and who, without human trust, cannot fully sanctify souls.

St Faustina Kowalska (1905 - 1938)

# Advent and Christmas with St Faustina

From the Diary of St Faustina - Divine Mercy in my Soul



**Advent** is approaching. I want to prepare my heart for the coming of the Lord Jesus by silence and recollection of spirit, uniting myself with the Most Holy Mother and faithfully imitating Her virtue of silence, by which She found pleasure in the eyes of God Himself. I trust that, by Her side, I will persevere in this resolution. (Diary, 1398)

The Mother of God has taught me how to prepare for the Feast of Christmas. I saw Her today, without the Infant Jesus. She said to me:

*My daughter, strive after silence and humility, so that Jesus, who dwells in your heart continuously, may be able to rest. Adore Him in your heart; do not go out from your inmost being. My daughter, I shall obtain for you the grace of an interior life which will be such that, without ever leaving that interior life, you will be able to carry out all your external duties with even greater care. Dwell with Him continuously in your own heart. He will be your strength. Communicate with creatures only in so far as is necessary and is required by your duties. You*

*are a dwelling place pleasing to the living God; in you He dwells continuously with love and delight. And the living presence of God, which you experience in a more vivid and distinct way, will confirm you, my daughter, in the things I have told you. Try to act in this way until Christmas Day, and then He Himself will make known to you in what way you will be communing and uniting yourself with Him.* (Diary, 785)

I will spend this Advent in accordance with the directions of the Mother of God: in meekness and humility. (Diary, 792)

Two days before Christmas, these words were read in the refectory: "Tomorrow is the Birth of Jesus Christ according to the flesh." At these words, my soul was pierced by the light and love of God, and I gained deeper knowledge of the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. How great is the mercy of God contained in the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God! (Diary, 1433)

## Christmas Eve

Today I was closely united with the Mother of God. I relived her interior sentiments. ... My spirit was totally steeped in God. During the Midnight Mass, I saw the Child Jesus in the Host, and my spirit was immersed in Him. Although He was a tiny Child, His majesty penetrated my soul. I was permeated to the depths of my being by this mystery, this great abasement on the part of God, this inconceivable emptying of Himself. These sentiments remained vividly alive in my soul all through the festive season. Oh, we shall never comprehend this great self-abasement on the part of God; ... (Diary, 182)

## Christmas Day

Midnight Mass. During Holy Mass, I again saw the little Infant Jesus, extremely beautiful, joyfully stretching out His little arms to me. After Holy Communion, I heard the words: **I am always in your heart; not only when you receive Me in Holy Communion, but always.** I spent these holy days in great joy. (Diary, 575)





# The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Bl John Paul II

Solemnity  
8th December

## “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!”

(Lk 1: 28)

We address the Virgin Mary several times a day with these words of the Archangel Gabriel. Let us repeat them with fervent joy today, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception...

2. How great is the mystery of the Immaculate Conception that the Liturgy presents to us today! A mystery that never ceases to invite the contemplation of believers and inspires the reflection of theologians.

“Full of grace”, “κεχαριτωμενη”: in the original Greek of Luke’s Gospel, the Angel greets Mary with this title. It is the name that God, through his messenger, chose to use to describe the Virgin. This is how he had always seen and thought of her, *ab aeterno* (from all eternity).

3. In the hymn of the Letter to the Ephesians the Apostle praises God the Father “who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Eph 1: 3). What a special blessing God addressed to Mary from the beginning of time! Mary was truly blessed among women (cf. Lk 1: 42)!

The Father chose her in Christ before the creation of the world, so that she might be holy and immaculate before him in love, preordaining her as the first fruits of filial adoption through the work of Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 1: 4-5).

4. The predestination of Mary, like that of each one of us, is linked to the predestination of the Son. Christ is that “seed” that was “to bruise the head” of the ancient serpent, according to the Book of Genesis (cf. Gn 3: 15); he is the Lamb “without blemish” (cf. Ex 12: 5; 1 Pt 1: 19), immolated to redeem humanity from sin.

With a view to the saving death of the Son, Mary, his Mother, was preserved free from original sin and from every other sin. The victory of the new Adam also includes that of the new Eve, Mother of the

redeemed. The Immaculate Virgin is thus a sign of hope for all the living who have triumphed over Satan by the blood of the Lamb (cf. Rv 12: 11).

5. Today let us contemplate the humble young girl of Nazareth, holy and blameless before God in love (cf. Eph 1: 4), in that “love” whose original source is God himself, one and triune.

How sublime an act of the Most Holy Trinity is the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of the Redeemer! Pius IX, in the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, recalls that the Almighty “by one and the same decree had established the origin of Mary and the Incarnation of divine Wisdom”

The Virgin’s “yes” to the announcement of the Angel fits into the reality of our earthly condition, with humble respect for the divine will to save humanity not from history but in history. Indeed, ever preserved free from all taint of original sin, the “new Eve” benefited uniquely from the work of Christ as the most perfect Mediator and Redeemer. The first to be redeemed by her Son, she shares to the full in his holiness; she is already what the entire Church desires and hopes to be. She is the eschatological icon of the Church.

6. Consequently the Immaculate Virgin, who marks “the very beginning of the Church, Bride of Christ, without spot or wrinkle, shining with beauty” (Preface), always precedes the People of God in the pilgrimage of faith, bound for the Kingdom of Heaven

In Mary’s Immaculate Conception the Church sees projected and anticipated in her most noble member, the saving grace of Easter.

In the event of the Incarnation the Church encounters Christ and Mary indissolubly united: “he who is the Church’s Lord and Head and she who, uttering the first fiat of the New Covenant, prefigures the Church’s condition as spouse and mother”



7. To you, Virgin Immaculate, predestined by God above every other creature to be the advocate of grace and model of holiness for his people, today in a special way I renew the entrustment of the whole Church.

May you guide your children on their pilgrimage of faith, making them ever more obedient and faithful to the Word of God.

May you accompany every Christian on the path of conversion and holiness, in the fight against sin and in the search for true beauty that is always an impression and a reflection of divine Beauty.

May you obtain peace and salvation for all the peoples. May the eternal Father, who desired you to be the immaculate Mother of the Redeemer, also renew in our time through you, the miracles of his merciful love. Amen!

*Homily at Holy Mass on the  
150th Anniversary of the  
Dogma of the Immaculate  
Conception of the Blessed  
Virgin Mary  
8th December 2004*

for full text visit : [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)



La Inmaculada Concepcion de el Escorial, Bartolome Esteban Murillo. Catalogue No. 972. © Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

How truly sweet you are, O Mary!

Whoever filled with bitterness ran to you and left without the sweetest consolation?

Who in affliction came to you and was not immediately strengthened?

Who, tormented with severe temptations, did not experience sweetness in your arms?

Oppressed, groaning, tempted, dispirited you console, strengthen, support, raise.

You are generous to all, to all very sweet.

If only I could express this sweetness the way I comprehend it!

The entire Christian world experiences, tastes and draws from this sweetness, although it cannot express it.

So the generous, the devout, the sweet Virgin! Show us Jesus,  
the blessed fruit of thy womb, gracious to us today and merciful in the hour of our death.

Amen

*(Bl Stanislaus Papczynski, Inspectio Cordis)*



From the writings of Bl Stanislaus Papczynski (1631 - 1701)

# Mystical Temple of God

## Chapter 8

## The Lamp of the Mystical Temple



"This bidding" (says the Wise Man) "is a lamp, and this teaching is a light" (Pr 6:23). It will never cease burning in the Mystical Temple before the very altar of the heart. Why so? For "the command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye" (Ps 19:9) "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path" (Ps 119:105). For just as we know by which way to go when a torch is borne before us, and do not slip off the beaten tracks, in like manner when the precepts of God are fixed in the heart and shine in the soul we see best how to order our present life, and, by conforming it to these we shall by no means turn aside from the path to the eternity of happiness.

In the beginning indeed the human race followed the guidance of nature and the light of reason in their life by their actions; but when nature was corrupted by vices, and reason was darkened by the habits of sin, God established the law for us, as the way of acting according to his justice, so that we may search for it always. When finally this law collapsed, the legislator himself assisted us, that is Christ, the incarnate Son of God, who "came not to abolish the law, but to fulfil" [the law] (Mt 5:17), and strengthened it with his deeds and words in such a way that he is deservedly considered the Light, "which enlightens everyone, [who] was coming into the world" (Jn 1:9).

For a Christian it is proper to keep the commandments in his memory, to consider them with his intellect, and fulfil them in his actions. And this is exactly what the just king David sang: "The mouth of the just shall mediate wisdom; and his tongue speak what is right. The law of his God is in his heart; it shall not be supplanted" (LV Ps 37: 30-31).

Here the old man Eleazar, a true Israelite, provides an example; he chose rather to die than to eat forbidden meat, even in pretence, as it would cause a scandal. An example is also provided by that well-known Maccabean heroine with her seven sons, whom she sent on ahead to heaven through terrible tortures, lest they violate native laws and customs. The lukewarm Christian should be ashamed that almost everyday he infringes some of his laws, at least in thought or speech, if not in action.

But you, who desire eagerly for better things and long to be perfect as your heavenly Father, simply "keep the commandments": "If you wish to enter into life" (it is the voice of Truth) "keep the commandments" (Mt 19:17); if you do not wish to deprive yourself of the light of reason and the Divine vision, "keep the commandments"; if you do not wish to glide down to hell by straying through trackless wastes, "keep the commandments". "The bidding [commandment] is a lamp, and the teaching [law] is a light" (Pr 6:23); as long as it shines forth hanging in our Mystical Temple, we see the brightness and go straight to heaven.

The Commandment is that column, of fire by night and of cloud by day, by which we are led to the land of eternal promise, certain that guided by this light we shall arrive there. "This commandment, which I enjoin on you today" (said God) "is not above you nor far off from you. But the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." (LV Dt 30:11, 14). To what end? That Christ may dwell in you. Listen to him: "Whoever" (John explains) "loves me will keep my word," meaning commands, "and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (Jn 14:23).

Oh most blessed guardians of the commandments of God; whom God not only raises to heaven but also comes down to them, and, as if on a lofty throne, as if in a celestial [empyrean] abode, the one who dwells in inaccessible light remains and reigns in them! Oh happy Temple, in which this lamp of the commandments of God is never extinguished! Oh lover of Christ! In what a holy and wise way you will have acted, if that lamp or torch of God's commandments never falls in you!

To live forever foster within you the eternal fire of the lamp of Divine Law. As this lamp burns and shines forth in your hands it will lead you to the light of the beatific vision. It is not a vain wish that after your death the hymn of triumph be sung for you:

*May eternal light shine on him, because he was kind.  
He lived being a light, may he be a light in dying.*

# Graces received through the intercession of Blessed Stanislaus Papczynski

## I was able to see out of both eyes!

I had experienced a severe problem with my right eye virtually overnight after being in good health.

After several medical specialists had examined my eye and conducted tests, I was given no explanation of how it came about and when I might expect it to go away. I had to be patient about the problem, but it was hard since I provide not only moral but monetary support for my family.

One evening while trying to calm down, I reached for my post. The Summer issue of the magazine had arrived. I began to read the articles. The one on St Faustina was fascinating. I put the magazine down, so as not to strain the one eye I was relying on and went to bed. The next evening, I picked up the magazine again. Only this time I was mesmerised by the 'Graces received' page. With tears flowing down from my eyes I begged Blessed Stanislaus Papczynski to intercede for me. I felt calm and went to bed.

The following morning I awoke and was able to see out of both eyes! The right was still somewhat weak, but I was able to see out of it. I fell to my knees and thanked Blessed Stanislaus. I believe that he interceded for me.

Blessed Papczynski healed my eye and let me know that this was a wake up call for me to slow down. My family and I come first. My job comes last.

LP

## My son comes home

Several years ago, my son, once a healthy and happy young boy, became seriously ill. He was despondent, angry, depressed, suicidal, and he turned his back on everyone who loved him, especially God.

At 15 years of age he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. He took his medication but nothing seemed to help. For five years he suffered and our family was nearly torn apart. He continued to spiral downward until last year he hit bottom.

He took to the streets. We didn't know where he was. I was in such a state of despair. I came across an issue of the magazine and read of the help that Bl

Stanislaus Papczynski had given to many who prayed for his intercession. It was a last drop of hope. I closed my eyes, asked for his help, and then let it go. I put it in the Lord's hands.

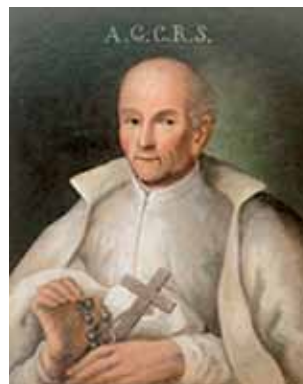
Within a week my son called me from a telephone box. He said, "Mum, I want to come home. I need a shower. And I need to find a job and get back to school."

It was one year ago that this miracle occurred. In that time my son has completed studies. He works a full-time job, and has not had any recurring symptoms of the destructive disorder that afflicted him for so many years.

I don't even know how to begin thanking Bl Stanislaus for helping us get our son back.

DMG

## PRAYER THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF BLESSED STANISLAUS PAPCZYNSKI



God, our Father,  
Who in Your unfathomable Providence gave us  
in Blessed Stanislaus a successful intercessor  
before Your throne,  
grant me (us) through his intercession the  
grace..., for which I (we) beg You;  
also grant that in accord with his example  
I (we) may faithfully fulfil Your most holy will.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

# The Lord's Most Powerful Message: MERCY

Benedict XVI, Pope Francis and God's mercy

by David Came

Marian Helper, Summer 2013

## Gift of 'true peace'

On 17th March, in his first Sunday homily as Pope, Francis emphasised that "*the Lord's most powerful message*" is "*mercy*." In his first Divine Mercy Sunday message on 7th April, the new Pope said that the Risen Christ's gift of "*true peace ... comes from the experience of God's mercy*." Pope Francis also chose in his homily for Divine Mercy Sunday to reflect on "the parable of the merciful Father," his title for the story of the prodigal son:

*I am always struck when I reread the parable of the merciful Father; it impresses me because it always gives me great hope. ... The Father, with patience, love, hope, and mercy, had never for a second stopped thinking about [the younger son who has left him and squandered his inheritance], and as soon as he sees him still far off, he runs out to meet him and embraces him with tenderness, the tenderness of God. ... God is always waiting for us, He never grows tired. Jesus shows us this merciful patience of God so that we can regain confidence, hope — always!*

These strong statements on God's mercy by Pope Francis are reminiscent of those by Pope Benedict on his first Divine Mercy Sunday as Pontiff in 2006, "*Divine Mercy is not a secondary devotion but an integral dimension of faith and prayer*." Again, Pope Benedict on Divine Mercy Sunday in 2008, "*Indeed, mercy is the central nucleus of the Gospel message*."

## The Pope's witness of mercy

Like his predecessors Benedict XVI and John Paul II, Francis's proclamation of God's mercy is backed by his strong personal witness of mercy toward those in greatest need. He personally greets the sick and disabled before he celebrates Mass or gives a speech. He got off the Popemobile in St. Peter's Square before his installation Mass on 19th March to greet and kiss a disabled man.

On Holy Thursday, 28th March, instead of washing the feet of priests in a Roman basilica, he chose to wash the feet of inmates at a youth detention centre.

The new Pope's relationship to Divine Mercy may be summed up in his papal motto: "*Miserando atque eligendo*." The Latin motto means: "Having had mercy, He [Christ] called him." The motto is inspired by St

Bede the Venerable's commentary on Matthew's Gospel. The particular passage that spoke to Pope Francis was where Jesus on seeing Matthew the tax collector, looked on him with love and said, "Follow Me" (Mt 9:9).

Interestingly, the motto has its roots in Francis's vocation to the Jesuits and in his personal experience of God's mercy in his youth. On the feast of St. Matthew in 1953, the young Jorge Mario Bergoglio experienced at the age of 17 ... the loving presence of God in his life. Following a confession, his heart was touched and [he] felt the descent of the mercy of God, that with eyes of tender love, he was being called to the religious life, after the example of St Ignatius of Loyola."

## Pope Benedict's legacy

It's fascinating that Pope Francis's personal experience of Divine Mercy in finding his vocation has a poignant parallel to Benedict's experience of God's mercy on assuming the papacy. On April 20, 2005, the day after his election, Benedict said in his first papal message:

*Dear friends ... deep gratitude for a gift of Divine Mercy is uppermost in my heart in spite of it all. And I consider it a special grace which my venerable predecessor, John Paul II, has obtained for me.*

Spurred on by this "gift of Divine Mercy," Pope Benedict XVI, achieved milestones for Divine Mercy. Among them, he continued John Paul II's tradition of giving a message on God's mercy each year on Divine Mercy Sunday. He established World Apostolic Congresses on Mercy, celebrating the opening Mass for the first World Congress in Rome in 2008 and giving the participants his Divine Mercy "mandate" after its conclusion. Further, he beatified Pope John Paul II on May 1, 2011, Divine Mercy Sunday, noting that the date was "very significant" since John Paul II had died on the vigil of the feast day and had established it as a universal feast day.

May Pope Benedict's Divine Mercy "mandate" inspire you to "go forth and be witnesses of God's mercy, a source of hope for every person and for the whole world."



# Why read a book when you know the ending?

extract from  
*Loved, Lost, FOUND*

by Felix Carroll

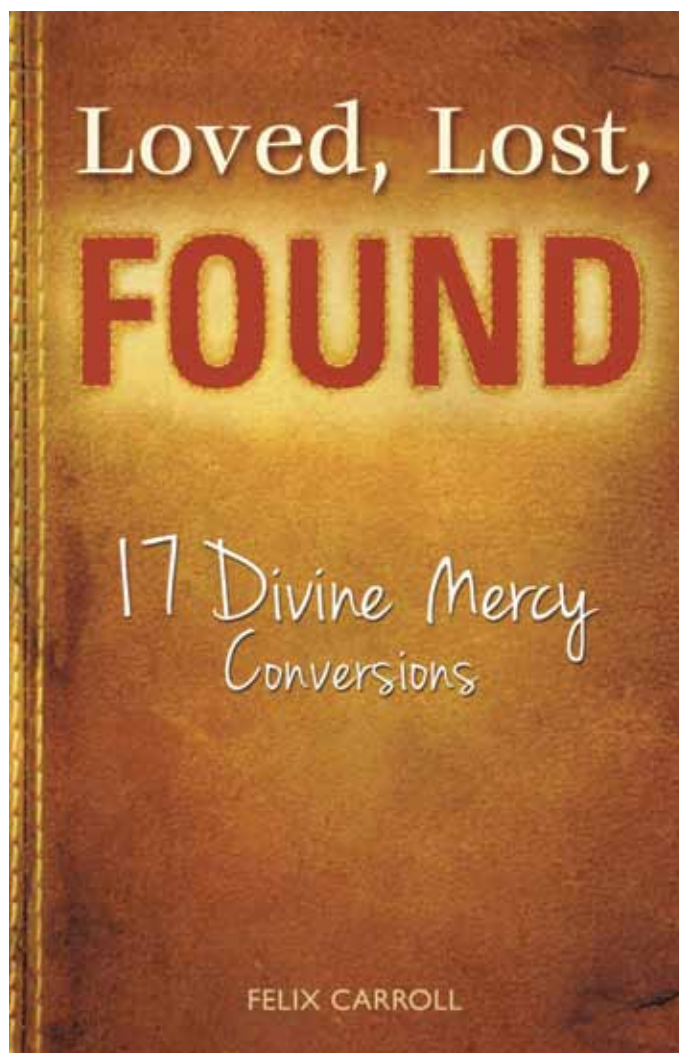
Spoiler alert: The 17 people we profile here all find God in the end. So the question is, why read stories if you already know their ending? The answer is simple: *Because you don't know the beginning.*

Between points A and B — between a person being “lost” and then “found” — are infinite permutations, boundless possibilities through the gift and subsequent hazards of free will, that only go to show how much God loves us. Probably the best way to appreciate his boundless love is to take a look at the facts — the brokenness and despair between points A to B — that lead to the conversion of hearts. In other words, we offer this book to illustrate that no matter what we’ve done, no matter how much we’ve made a mess of our lives, no matter how we’ve abandoned him in our fruitless searches for salvation in the material things of this world, God will embrace us when we turn to him with repentance, trust, and love. He will embrace us just as the father embraces the wayward son who returns home in the parable of the Prodigal Son (see Lk 15:11-32).

\*\*\*

The book begins with Maureen Digan whose miracle healing in 1981 led to the beatification of Sr Maria Faustina Kowalska.

As to St Faustina, her revelations in the 1930s — what we know today as the message of Divine Mercy — play a major role in each one of these conversion stories. Through St Faustina, Jesus reiterates for our times the Gospel message that he is Love and Mercy itself, and that he calls us to turn to him in trust, receive his mercy, and extend his mercy to others. In case you have never read St Faustina’s Diary, I highly recommend it.



The greater the sinner, the greater  
the right he has to My mercy.

*Diary, 723*

to purchase your copy of *Loved, Lost, FOUND* or *The Diary of St Faustina* please contact us, see back cover for details.

# From the Apostolate...

You are warmly invited to the Monthly prayer groups and events organised by the Divine Mercy Apostolate, Marian Fathers

## THE HOUR OF MERCY

First Friday Every Month



### Church of Our Lady

2 Windsor Road, Ealing, London W5 5PD  
2 minute walk from Ealing Broadway station

### Programme

- 2.30 pm Rosary
- 3.00 pm Hour of Mercy, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Divine Mercy Chaplet
- 3.30 pm Holy Mass
- 4.30 pm Tea and coffee in the church hall, opportunity to purchase devotional items

## DAY OF PRAYER WITH MARY TO THE DIVINE MERCY

First Saturday Every Month



### Divine Mercy Apostolate

1 Courtfield Gardens, West Ealing, London W13 0EY  
tel. 020 8998 0925

### Programme

- 10.45 am Morning Prayer
- 11.00 am Rosary
- 11.30 am Holy Mass
- 12.30 pm Meditation
- 1.00 pm Lunch Break
- 2.00 pm Talk
- 3.00 pm Hour of Mercy, Exposition, Chaplet, Veneration of St Faustina's Relics
- 4.00 pm Evening Prayer  
(please bring your packed lunch)

## Graces

If you have received graces through devotion to the Divine Mercy that you would like to share with the Apostolate, please write to:

Fr John - Graces  
Messenger of Divine Mercy  
1 Courtfield Gardens  
London W13 0EY  
email: frjohn@divinemercury.org.uk

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ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER



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### DAILY MASS

Monday - Friday 2.30 pm

### HOUR OF MERCY

Monday - Friday 3.00 pm

1 Courtfield Gardens, London W13 0EY  
Tel: 020 8998 0925

E-mail: info@divinemercury.org.uk  
www.divinemercuryapostolate.co.uk

# Divine Mercy Retreats

*All Welcome!*



## Divine Mercy Advent Retreat

7 & 14 December 2013, Saturday,

11.00 am - 4.00 pm

English Martyrs, Chalkhill Road, Wembley  
Park, London HA9 9EW



For more information please contact:

**THE DIVINE MERCY APOSTOLATE**

**MARIAN FATHERS**

1 Courtfield Gardens, London W13 0EY

Tel: 020 8998 0925

E-mail: [info@divinemercy.org.uk](mailto:info@divinemercy.org.uk)  
[www.divinemercyapostolate.co.uk](http://www.divinemercyapostolate.co.uk)

### Divine Mercy Word Search No. 3

*Find the words below, horizontal, vertical, diagonal  
and backwards!*

Maranatha  
Come Lord  
Gaudete  
Rejoice  
Incarnation  
Nativity  
Christmas

O Sapientia  
O Adonai  
O Radix Jesse  
O Clavis David  
O Oriens  
O Rex Gentium  
O Emmanuel

O Wisdom  
O Lord  
O Root of Jesse  
O Key of David  
O Rising Sun  
O King  
O God with Us

E	O	K	E	Y	O	F	D	A	V	I	D	P	L	S	M
C	O	H	L	X	F	O	I	X	K	N	C	O	F	P	A
G	O	D	E	O	R	I	S	I	N	G	S	U	N	H	R
N	R	B	U	R	S	U	H	T	I	W	D	O	G	O	A
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C	O	U	I	N	G	A	U	D	E	T	E	H	P	E	I
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# DIVINE MERCY

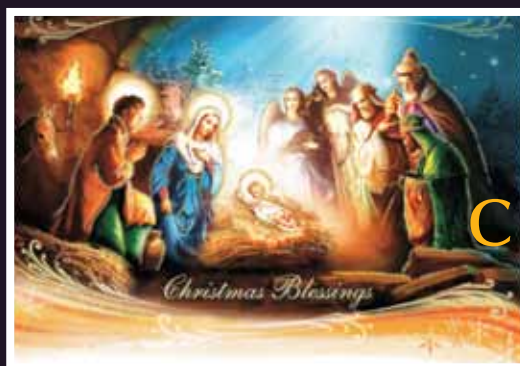
## PUBLICATIONS AND GIFTS



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d



e

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