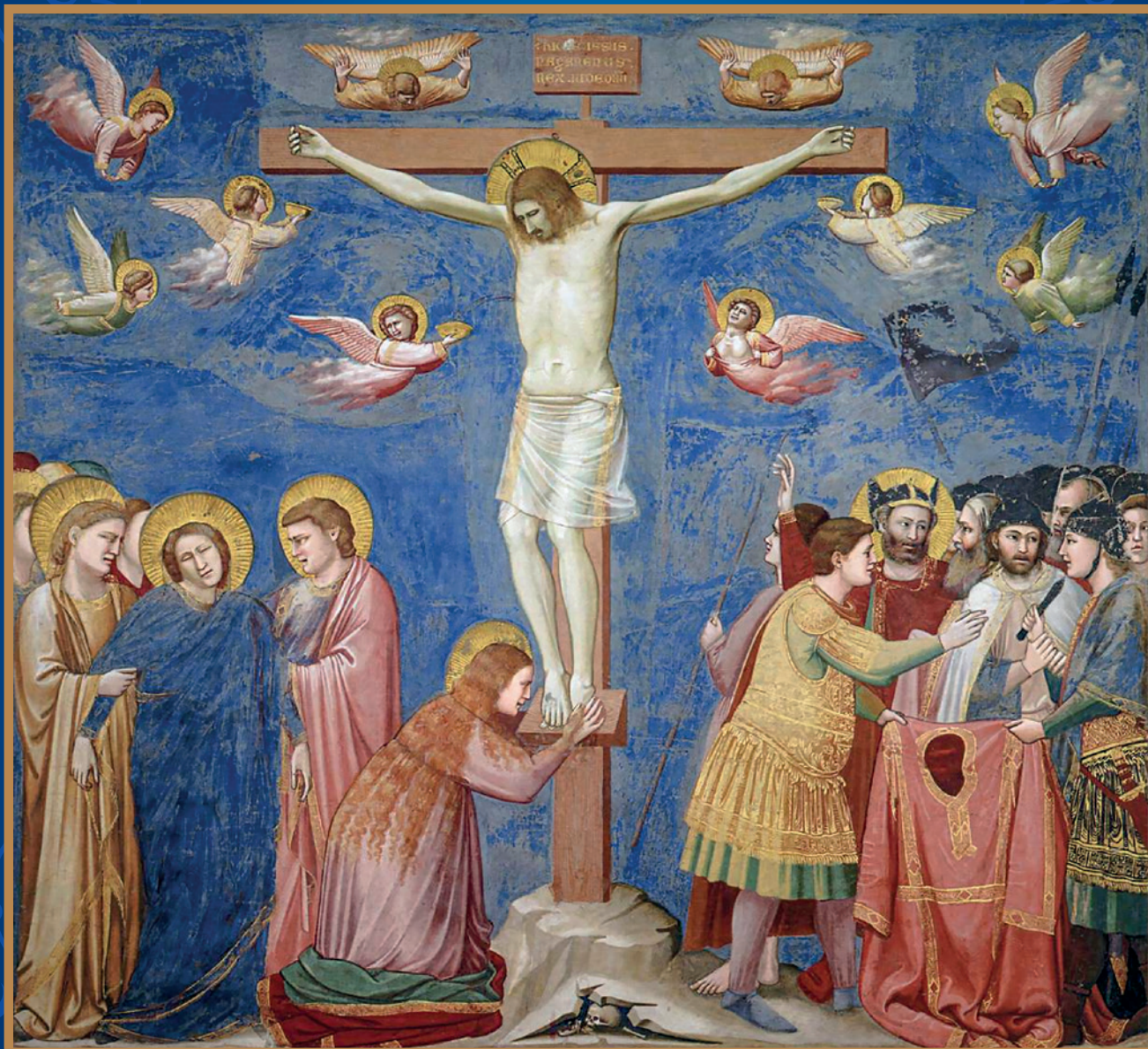




The Angels

Messengers from a loving God



■ Crucifixion by Giotto, fresco from Scrovegni Chapel, circa 1300

The true image of God
Sr Clare Crocket's story

The highest choir of angels
St Michael and purgatory
My fascinating journey of faith

St Michael's care is extraordinary because this is his mission given to him by God himself

The most brilliant of the angels mentioned in the Bible is St Michael. The Holy Church gives him the highest place among the angels. She refers to him as 'Prince of the heavenly hosts'. He is considered the guardian angel of Jesus Christ and the national guardian of the Israelites. We hear his praises from St Gabriel who speaking to the prophet Daniel says "Michael one of the chief princes" (Dan. 10,13), "At that time Michael will arise, the great Prince, defender of your people" (Dan. 12,1).

Because of his outstanding zeal for the glory of God at the time of Satan's rebellion he merited such glory and power he excelled through grace the angels that belong to the much higher choir of angels. We find St Michael in many books in the Bible and in the lives of many saints. They encourage us to pray to him and be under his protection. So when we feel strong temptations and we tend to give into them, we should turn to St Michael and ask for his assistance. He is an exceptional helper in our spiritual battle, he encourages us to call on him daily.

He was the protector and the defender of God's chosen people. Now he is the defender of the Church. He is invoked in sickness and most especially



in the hour of death. He appeared at different times to those who needed help and invoked his aid.

St Michael reveals himself today as a gift of the Merciful Father for the salvation of the whole of mankind.

Saints remind us of the angels. St Bernard says, "The angels constantly surround the souls of the faithful in their charge with the most tender care and love. They protect both our spiritual and our corporal life. They shield us from sudden dangers that threaten our lives, or come to our rescue when some harm has befallen us. They cause in our hearts pious and salutary thoughts and desires. They pray for and with us and offer our prayers of suffering and our good desires to the throne of God."

St Michael, St Gabriel, St Raphael, our guardian angels and all the choirs of angels pray for us. Pray for us now and forever. Amen.

I assure you of the constant daily prayers of the priests of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel for all our readers and their families.

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The Angels

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The song of Veronica

There you are, girl in the upper room,
given to you by your parents on your 14th birthday.
Now a young woman, a daughter of Israel, soon to be married.
The window looks out onto the street,
light comes through it,
on your knees fine cloth of white silk.
Embroider it for your wedding,
you look at it and wonder what pattern.

Noise in the street outside gathering
a crowd, shouts fiercely full of hatred.
The noise grows then the tread
of Roman soldiers, your heart grows cold.
What cruelty is coming?
The shouting now a storm.
Words take shape "Crucify him!"
Again and again, the voice of the crowd.

What poor man are they hating?
What has he done?
Dare she look out of the window?
She will dare, she rises, trembling.
She looks out, looks down.
There below is a space in the crowd.
Soldiers surround it.

In it a man lying.
A beam of wood across his back,
blood on the robe he is wearing.
She knows what the beam is for,
the man will be nailed to it.
Then it will be fixed on a post,
His feet will be nailed to that.

Sight often seen in a land ruled by Romans.
The man staggers to his feet,
he raises his head.
He looks up at Veronica, she knows him.
She heard him preaching in the Temple.
People said "No man ever spoke as this man speaks",
His look pierces her more than his words.



■ Saint Veronica of Binasco by François Joseph Navez, 1816

She is carried as if by a great wind,
out of her room, down the stairs.
She opens the door onto the street.
How will she dare?
What will the neighbours say?
Will she be safe in the crowd?
She forces her way past men and women.
She sidesteps a soldier, he looks at her amazed.
She stands in front of the man.
His face bruised.
Bloody from a crown of thorns.

That face – what can she do?
She can show love,
with the fine silk cloth she wipes that face.
For a moment the crowd falls silent,
in that silence he says her name.
Then the soldiers hurry him on, push her out of the way.

She gets back to the house,
shuts the door behind her.
In her room she looks at the cloth.
His face is on it.
She weeps but not with fear.
She weeps for love.
She weeps with courage.
He called me by my name

John Harwood-Stevenson, England



■ Sr Clare Crockett

The holiness of the empty hands of the Crucified One (part 1)

This article is an examination of the holiness of Sr Clare Crockett. Part 1 looks at holiness in a general way and Part 2 shows Sr Clare as a great demonstration of that holiness.

On the fourteenth of November of this year, Sr Clare Crockett would have been forty years old. In order to celebrate that birthday, I want to pose a profound question: is Sister Clare Crockett a saint?

Of course, that is not a question that any individual can answer by themselves, the answer lies with God, and will be discerned by his Church. In this article, I hope to present a hypothesis of holiness, to see what holiness truly is, and then to see if that holiness is reflected in the life of Sr Clare. There will be those who will say all kinds of nasty things, “don’t be hasty”, “who does she think she is”, “she spent so much of her life as an utter tear-away”, or even “we know her”. “She’s from the Brandywell”. Brandywell is a working-class Catholic estate on the Derry side of the river in the city in Northern Ireland. One of the estates that was set up to take the overflow of Catholic residents during the Unionist misrule.

We have got to realise that each of those statements comes from a similar place as those people in Nazareth who refused to accept the carpenter. We know exactly how that worked out. You may well have known Clare in life, but I am prepared to bet that you did not know her as God knew her and as God loved her.

Examination of holiness

I am going to begin this examination of holiness by turning to the world of literature. I want to draw your attention to two characters and to two very different stories. The first character, you will recognise immediately, and the other maybe not so much, maybe if you like musicals you’ll know the second one. The first, is Ebenezer Scrooge. He is the protagonist of the famous Christmas Carol of Charles Dickens. Ebenezer begins life in the novel as a villain, as a

money lending terrorist, and as a parasite who wants to draw the last penny out of everyone’s pockets.

Dickens’ description of this character is quite something: “Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn’t thaw it one degree at Christmas.”

What a description! What an account! Listen to the power of those words: “a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!” The character was a man who



■ Illustration of Jacob Marley and Ebenezer Scrooge, by Fred Barnard (1846-1896) in 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens, 1878

had literally turned life into a wet towel and who rung it out and continued to ring it out until he got the last coin for himself. Christmas, to him, was a humbug, charity was ridiculous, send poor people to prison or to the workhouses, and if they wouldn't go then let them just die and decrease the surplus population. His wretched employee Bob Cratchit only got fifteen shillings a week.

Simplicity and generosity

The second character could not be more different, he only appears in a few pages of the epic tale of Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, the whole action of this epic turns on one chance meeting, the

character I want to draw your attention to goes by the name of Bishop Myriel and he has only a comparatively small role in the book; appearing on only a few pages. Bishop Myriel is the chief pastor of the city of Digne, more than that, he is a bishop who is renowned for his simplicity and generosity. His own house has no ornamentation, and he wears an old thread-bare priest's cassock. He is a fictionalised version of what Pope Francis would later describe as of a pastor smelling of the sheep. It is on his pastoral duties that the bishop, runs into a dark and sullen man, a man called Jean Valjean.

Well, Jean up onto that moment, had lived a very unfortunate life, he had just spent many years in gaol, over the trifling offence of stealing bread in order to save his sister's children and

those years in gaol had twisted and contorted him. Just at that moment of meeting, Valjean is like a pressure cooker, ready to go off at any moment. His being paroled has only made things go from bad to worse, he has only met with rejection, derision and abuse. Bishop Myriel breaks Valjean's duck, he generously takes Valjean to his own house and sets before Valjean the only thing of any worth in that house; a silver service and treats Valjean as an honoured guest. However, Valjean in the night explodes in bitterness and resentment, and it pours out in large amounts against the very one who did him so much good. In the dark of the night, he wakes up, rifles the house, then taking all the silver service that he can carry, and runs into the night.

As he is about to escape with the loot, he is spotted by the gendarme, and dragged, kicking and screaming back to the bishop's house. Valjean, at this moment in the book, is looking



■ Bishop Myriel, an illustration by Gustave Brion in *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo, 1862

into a very dark hole that he is about to be thrown into headfirst. Dumped in the front room of the bishop's house, he can hardly look up at the bishop. The bishop surveys the situation, he forgets his rifled house, and he simply says to Valjean, "you forgot these" and hands him two more candlesticks, a completely unmerited, an unearned and an uncalled-for act of generosity that redeemed Valjean's life from darkness. Valjean is to use the silver to build a new life, the bishop had bought his soul for God as the musical says.

These are two ever so different characters, they are two representations of two clearly contrary forces, and between them are each and every human nature that has ever existed. Scrooge, the self-centred, self-obsessed, selfish and unredeemed nature and Bishop Myriel; the generous, the open-handed, the loving and grace-filled nature. There is but one problem now, where are we on the scale between these two characters? The answer is probably somewhere in the middle between the two. All too often, we turn a blind eye, to our grasping, clutching, covetous old nature, in the way in which we cling so tightly to our time, our energy, our talents, our strength, our nature and ourselves and we measure these elements out in such small, controlled quantities. At the same time, we have moments, in which we make the most of these most precious of things and generously give them away, just as Bishop Myriel did with his candlesticks.

Longing to give of oneself as Christ has

How do we move from one to the other? How do we become more like

Bishop Myriel? What the difference is between the two characters is best described by one of our Carmelites saints. St Elizabeth of the Trinity has an answer for us as she describes a Carmelite vocation. She tells us that "a Carmelite is someone who has looked at the face of the crucified one and has seen him offering himself as a victim for us; pondering on the tremendous vision of Christ's love he or she has understood the love burning within Christ and has longed to give himself or herself as He has." Not everyone is called to be a Carmelite, in that case, let me slightly change some of that wording, let me take away that second word Carmelite, and let me replace it with the word Christian. "A Christian is someone who has looked at the face of the crucified one and has seen him offering himself as a victim for us; pondering on the tremendous vision of Christ's love, he or she has understood the love burning within Christ and has longed to give himself or herself." For Elizabeth, the key difference between Scrooge and Myriel is that one of them penetrated into the heart of Jesus Christ crucified, coming to know the meaning of that cross and to live it out.

The skewered hands of the Crucified One

Just to follow up on this point, I want us to meditate on the crucifix, and in particular the skewered hands of the Crucified One. Let us stand before the cross and see as Jesus's hands are grasped hold of. They are dragged to a certain place and then very deliberately weighted down. A detachment of Roman legionaries set irreverent hands on him and shape him to their

purpose. A measure of old fibrous rope is wound around his hands, tying them down to this strange wooden structure. Jesus' hands are strapped down and drawn tight, so that even if they flinched these soldiers will not miss their mark with their hammer. And the nails are driven through his hands fixing him irrevocably to that cross. He is going to remain in this spot, he can go no further, up there he hangs hardly able to move a finger now, those hands are totally helpless and absolutely weak. What a strange Lord we have taken to ourselves?

The power for others, the power of service

As we contemplate that cross it should make us shudder to recall that those hands, those very hands that hung up on the cross, are the very same ones, that with one sweep, called forth creation out of nothing, that tossed the stars out into space, and literally set the world spinning on its axis; yet here they are and here they will stay!

A demonstration, if we didn't already know, that this Lord of ours is not like any other; he does not jealously guard what is his, he does not hold on to what is his own, or to his own rights, but rather with open hands gives them over. His rights, his privileges, his possessions, his very body and his very blood are meant for others, even for those who reject him, strike him, despise him and kill him. He lays everything that he is down for humanity. He lets them go for us, he gives them up, the Lord's power is not to do whatever he pleases but rather is a power for others, it is the power of service.



■ Crucifixion of Christ by Callisto Piazza, 1538

Look at the foot of the cross

As we go on meditating upon the face of the crucified one, all of a sudden, each one of us are forced to take a good look at our own hands. We realise instantaneously, the profound distance that lies between ourselves and Christ! Each of us are supposedly the servant and yet we are free to go and do as we please. Yet the master is bound, imprisoned and fixed upon a cross. The Lord is tied up, but the servant is at liberty?

We look down at our own hands and we consider just how many times

they've only ever carried out what we have wanted them to do. How often have they merely cherry picked at what was convenient, what suited, and they have often only reached and taken the sweetest and juiciest morsels in life. His hands are pierced through and through so, that they cannot hold or withhold anything from us. This freedom that we cling to, every bit as tenaciously as Scrooge did, was never meant to be only about us, this freedom, we cannot let go off, is not freedom at all, it is slavery to our own whim and to our own self. We have got to see at the foot of the cross that we are oftentimes stuck with Scrooge in his counting house wringing out life for ourselves.

Generously give to others

In order to find the open hands of Bishop Myriel, the open hands of the Lord himself, to let go of the candlesticks, we must learn our lesson from the wounds of the Lord. Freedom is not something to be hoarded for ourselves and to be parcelled out in small manageable amounts, it is to be radically and generously given to others. The former Jesuit General, Father Pedro Aruppe, many years ago gave a beautiful definition for Christianity. A Christian, he argued, was a man or woman for others. Men and women who live their whole lives not for themselves, but first and foremost, for their Father in heaven, the Son, Jesus Christ and for their Holy Spirit; then secondly, men and women who cannot conceive of life without concern for their neighbour, whoever and wherever they find them.

The words of our neighbours cry out loudly to us all the time, "I am in need", "I am hungry", "I am thirsty", "I am in prison", "I am lonely", "my love has been destroyed" and "I am addicted". It is only when we respond, and we do not leave it to others that we finally discover the hands of Bishop Myriel and the crucified hands of the Lord. When we love the other, when we open our hands to them and when we give them some type of service, it is only then that our hands become crucified every bit as much as St Padre Pio's hands!

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Part 2. Sr Clare and the Open
Hands of the Lord

Divine Mercy Sunday: what's this feast all about, anyway?

To put on a great banquet for one's friends, the first step is to send out proper invitations. The invitations must say WHY the banquet is being held, WHEN it will take place, WHO is invited, and WHAT TO EXPECT (such as cocktails on the lawn, followed by a buffet meal).

In fact, the *Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska* is filled with invitations from our Lord Jesus Christ to celebrate with Him the great Feast of the Divine Mercy. This year, we celebrate this Feast on Sunday, April 24. In numerous passages, Jesus spelled out for her “why,” “when,” “who,” and “what to expect” at this special banquet.

First, why did Jesus ask the Church, through St Faustina, to institute the Feast of Mercy? As recorded in *Diary* entry 965, Jesus said to Faustina: “Souls perish in spite of My bitter Passion. I am giving them... the Feast of My mercy. If they will not adore My mercy, they will perish for all eternity. Secretary of My mercy, write, tell souls about this great mercy of Mine, because the awful day, the day of My justice is near.”

In short, the main reason that Jesus wanted this feast to be established is that He wanted to “throw a lifeline”, so to speak, to souls who are perishing, souls who are drowning in sin and despair. That lifeline is this Feast, with all the tremendous

promises of graces and benefits which Jesus attached to it. As He said to St Faustina, He wanted to make this Feast day a special “refuge and shelter” for the “consolation” of souls. In *Diary* entry 1517, Jesus said: “...the Feast of My Mercy has issued forth from My very depths for the consolation of the whole world.” In short, Jesus gave us this Feast as both a comfort and a lifeline for souls.

Second, “when” is this Feast to be celebrated? The answer was given directly to St Faustina on numerous occasions. For example, in *Diary* entry 299, Jesus said to her: “I desire that the First Sunday after Easter be the Feast of Mercy.” Today that Sunday is called in the Roman Missal “The Second Sunday of Easter, or Divine Mercy Sunday.”

Third, in order to discover “who” is invited to this great Feast, and what kind of spiritual “banquet” our Lord wants to spread for us on that day, we need to consult *Diary* entry 699, in which Jesus spells out in detail the meaning of this feast

day, and the comforting promises He attached to it. Jesus said to St Faustina: “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 grace flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as 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. Everything that exists has come forth from the very depths of My most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness.



It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the First Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy.”

From these words of our Lord, it should be clear who is invited to the Feast of Mercy. He states clearly: “I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls” - that is, for all penitent souls without exception - but “especially” for “poor sinners”. So, the special guests at the Feast of Mercy - the guests who will receive the most attention - are poor sinners, those who are most in need of His mercy.

This means, of course, that this banquet is spread especially for poor sinners who *know in truth* that they are poor sinners. It is only *repentant* sinners who will be able to receive all the graces offered by Jesus on this special day. That is why Jesus asks us to prepare for this feast day by making a good confession. Just as in Christ’s parable of the Pharisee and the Publican it was the publican who went away from his prayers

“justified”, for he had come before the Lord with nothing but a simple cry from his heart for mercy: “Lord have mercy on me, a sinner!” (Lk 18:9-14).

The Feast of Mercy is especially for souls like that, souls open to receive Christ’s forgiveness and grace because they know that they need it so badly. This Feast is for the lost, that they might be found, and for those struggling to grow in faith, hope and love, that they might be refreshed and strengthened. On the other hand, those who believe that they have no need of divine mercy will not be able to receive mercy on that day. They are like the Pharisee in the parable: God cannot fill them with His grace, because they are already full of *themselves*!

Then what are the graces and benefits that our Lord wants to spread out before us on Mercy Sunday? Again, Jesus said to St Faustina (*Diary*, 699): “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 are open all the divine floodgates through which graces flow.”

What Jesus is offering to us here is a complete renewal of baptismal grace, a complete cleansing of the soul and washing it clean, renewing within us all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit that we received at our baptism.

Of course, it is certainly true that whenever we make a good confession out of perfect contrition for sin and pure love for God, we can receive the same complete renewal of baptismal grace, the same complete cleansing of our souls that Jesus promised we could receive from Holy Communion on the Feast of Mercy.

The problem is: how many of us make our confessions as an act of perfect contrition and pure love of God? Unless we are well on the road to sanctity, it is very rare that we are able to do this. Nevertheless, Jesus is so generous and merciful toward us that on Divine Mercy Sunday, He has given us another way to attain the complete refreshment of our souls in grace. If only we make a sincere confession in preparation for the Feast, and then receive Holy Communion on that day with trust in His divine mercy, we can receive the same complete spiritual renewal.

He does not ask of us an act of perfect love of God, or perfect contrition on that day in order that we may receive such a gift. All He asks is that we come to Him with *trust* (*Diary* entry 1578): “The graces of My mercy are drawn by the means of one vessel only, and that is - trust.

The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive."

Trust is a combination of "faith" (the acceptance of all that God has revealed through Christ and His Church), "hope" (confidence in His promises of forgiveness, the help of His grace, and eternal life), "humility" (relying on God rather than ourselves for strength, guidance and salvation) and merely imperfect "love" (clinging to Christ because of His promised benefits).

The renewal of baptismal grace that we receive from the Holy Communion on Divine Mercy Sunday serves to strengthen us in all these virtues, but especially in our love for Jesus Christ, so that we begin to love Him for His own sake - for the glory of His name, the spread of His kingdom, and for the consolation of His Heart - and not just for ourselves, for our own benefit. In short, by trust we open the door to Christ so that He can pour out upon us a whole ocean of graces on Divine Mercy Sunday!

Jesus left several instructions with St Faustina concerning how this Feast of Mercy should be observed. As we have already seen, Jesus asked that the Feast be observed on the Sunday after Easter; He asked us to come to Him in Holy Communion on that day with complete trust in His mercy; He said that we should make a good confession in preparation for this Feast (St Faustina made her confession on the day before Divine Mercy Sunday - see *Diary* entry 1072). Finally, we are to receive Holy Communion on the Feast day itself in order to receive the complete renewal of baptismal grace that He wants to pour into our hearts.

Jesus also left three more instructions for St Faustina that must not be forgotten.

First, He wanted priests to proclaim clearly the message of Divine Mercy on Divine Mercy Sunday. *Diary* entry 570: "On that day, priests are to tell everyone about My great and unfathomable mercy."

Diary entry 1521: "...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."

By His providential design, our Lord has already given a helping hand to priests to carry out His plan for Divine Mercy Sunday. The fact is that the traditional texts of the Missal for that Sunday already proclaim His Mercy loud and clear. For example, there is the gospel reading about Jesus appearing in the upper room on Easter Sunday night, bestowing a blessing of peace on His apostles, and giving them authority to forgive sins in His name. The epistle is taken from the first chapter of 1 Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in His great mercy has given us a new birth as His sons, by raising Jesus Christ from the dead." Even the opening prayer for the Mass begins with the words "God of mercy".

Second, Jesus asked that the Image of the Divine Mercy be publicly venerated on this Feast day. In *Diary* entry 341, for example, Jesus said to St Faustina: "...I want the image to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter, and I want it to be venerated publicly so that every soul may know about it."

To "venerate" a sacred image or statue simply means to perform some act, or make some gesture of deep

religious respect toward it because of the person whom it represents: in this case, our most merciful Saviour. A parish might venerate the image by having prayers to the merciful Jesus said before it, and/or placing flowers before it and putting it on view in a position of prominence in the sanctuary, and/or by censuring the image (i.e., using incense), honouring the image along with the altar and sacred vessels during the liturgy.

It should come as no surprise that Jesus wanted this image to be venerated on Divine Mercy Sunday. After all, the Image of the Divine Mercy sums up the whole devotion to God's mercy in one picture. It depicts His merciful love for us both in His Passion (in the Blood and Water flowing from His breast, as it did on Calvary) and in the Resurrection - the whole Paschal mystery. Also, in the inscription at the bottom of the image, we find a summary of the basic response that Jesus asks of each of us to His merciful love: "Jesus, I trust in You."

In short, our Lord not only wants His priests to proclaim the message of Divine Mercy in words on that day; He also wants the message to be proclaimed through a sacred image - a visual aid, so to speak - because He knows well the truth of what we commonly say: "A picture is worth a thousand words."

Finally, Jesus made it very clear to St Faustina that in preparation for the Feast of Mercy we need to be merciful to others, through our actions, words and prayers. If we are not practicing the works of mercy in our lives, then our celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday would be a kind of blasphemy, rather than an offering pleasing to the Lord, as



the prophet Micah asks: "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old...? He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic 6:6-8).

This requirement is simple enough to understand. Jesus Himself

repeated it to His disciples: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36). He taught St Faustina much the same thing, in connection with the Feast of Mercy: "... I demand from you deeds of mercy which are to arise out of love for Me. You are to show mercy to your neighbours always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse or absolve yourself from it... Yes, the first Sunday after Easter is the Feast

of Mercy, but there must also be acts of mercy ..." (*Diary*, 742).

Not only are the works of mercy a good preparation for this feast day, they are also the fruit that the Lord intends to grow as a result of the graces poured out on this day. The mercy we receive in our hearts on Divine Mercy Sunday is meant to be shared with others. The graces poured into our hearts by our merciful Lord are meant to flow *through* our hearts to our neighbours in need.

In this way, Divine Mercy Sunday even enables us to show a kind of "mercy" to Jesus Himself: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me ... truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25: 35-40).

Whether we are showing mercy to the materially poor, or to the spiritually poor, we are sharing divine mercy with those whose plight is ever close to the compassionate Heart of our Saviour. What better way to complete our celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday than to share it with the poor - and thereby return it to Him?

Thanks be to God for inviting us to this great banquet of mercy on Divine Mercy Sunday!

Dr Robert Stackpole

Director of the John Paul II Institute
of Divine Mercy, an apostolate
of the Marian Fathers
of the Immaculate Conception.

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The true image of God

What is God like? God is holy and this is the reason we have reverence and kneel down before Him in the Blessed Sacrament. We sing, 'Holy, Holy, Holy!'

God is omnipotent and powerful. It comes to my mind when I look at the sky full of stars or when I have no influence over unfavourable weather conditions. God is really omnipotent and so powerful He created the world.

God is just. He will reward and He will punish but, His justice has an internal dimension. He does not want sinners to be left to die but to be converted and turn to Him and live.

God is holy, omnipotent and just. But if God were only omnipotent and just, you would keep a distance and hide from Him. What is God like to want people to come to Him and to accept His will and to trust in Him?

God is love. He loves us so much and His love is unconditional. God loved us so much that He gave us His son Jesus Christ. He died for us on the cross. Whoever you are, if you had been the only person in the world, Jesus would have died for you. He died for me.

His merciful love to the world

"This distrust of My goodness hurts Me very much. If My death has not convinced you of My love, what will?"



(Diary, 580). Jesus revealed the goodness of God and his merciful love to the world. And yet, it so difficult for us to trust in God, our deep wound of distrust left by the original sin and our personal sins. Through the 'Diary of Sr Faustina' she helps us to deepen our knowledge of God's merciful love, most fully revealed by Jesus's passion and death on the Cross. This knowledge evokes and grows an attitude of trust in us, so we fulfil God's will contained in the Commandments, the word of God or inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The will of God, is mercy itself.

The value of confession

When we come to confession His blood purifies our soul and we are forgiven and set free.

The cross is not a sign of condemnation; the cross is a sign of justification and forgiveness.

Jesus wants us to also meditate on His Passion. Jesus said to Sr Faustina, "There is more merit to one hour of meditation on My sorrowful Passion than there is to a whole year of flagellation that draws blood; the contemplation of My painful wounds is of great profit to you, and it brings Me great joy" (Diary, 369).

True love of God

Sr Faustina wrote, 'God made known to me what true love consists in and gave light to me about how, in practice, to give proof of it to Him. True love of God consists in carrying out God's will. To show God our love in what we do, all our actions, even the least, must spring from our love of God. And the Lord said to me, "My child, you please Me most by suffering. In your physical as well as your mental sufferings, My daughter, do not seek sympathy from creatures. I

want the fragrance of your suffering to be pure and unadulterated” (Diary, 279).

Approach Jesus, He wants to enter your life

We must submit our lives fully to the Lord so that He can reveal to us His will for our lives. So do not be afraid of approaching Jesus.

I do not know your life, but come to Jesus. He is approaching you from this Divine Mercy image, taking a step forward He wants to enter my life and your life.

The ‘Diary of St Faustina’ has the title ‘Divine Mercy in my Soul’. During our lifetime we can discover the presence of God’s love and mercy. What are you grateful for? What has God done for you? How many sins has He forgiven you? How have you experienced His unconditional love and mercy?

When you answer these questions, you will discover the presence of God’s love and mercy in your life and how you would like to respond to it.

Prayer

Lord come to me, come to my heart, come to my mind, come to my soul and my body. Fill me with your love. I Trust in You. Give me your Holy Spirit. Be my Lord and Saviour. I do Trust in You. Amen.

Fr Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA

SCAPULAR INVESTITURE

Rite of blessing and investiture of the Scapular of St Michael the Archangel.

Any priest or deacon can conduct the ceremony of blessing and bestowing of the Scapular of St Michael the Archangel according to the following ritual.

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R. Who made heaven and earth.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

Almighty, everlasting God, who dost graciously defend thy Church from the wiles of the devil through St Michael the Archangel, we humbly implore thee to bless + and sanctify + this scapular introduced for arousing and fostering devotion among thy

faithful toward this great protector. And do thou grant that all who wear it may be strengthened by the same Holy Archangel, so as to vanquish the enemies of body and soul, both in this life and at the hour of death. Through Christ our Lord.

P. Let us pray.

Lord, look upon us praying and kindly hear the supplication of your servant dedicated to the special protection of St Michael the Archangel that through his intercession s/he may avoid any offence against you and may reach holiness in this life and after death the prize of eternal life. Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen



The Seraphim

I propose to you a trip to the world of God and His Angels, which is a real *terra incognita*, a mysterious land still unknown for today's people. We will be guided by the Sacred Scriptures, Tradition and the teaching of the Church.

This guidance can be expressed in two different languages: scientific and popular science, theological and colloquial. However, both ways of speaking are drawn from the same sources: the Bible, Church Tradition and Sacred Liturgy. They differ only in the method and manner of approaching the same reality. Literature and art that try to express and consolidate human experiences in this field will also be very helpful.

The Areopagite

The Fathers of the Church attempted to classify the angels from the 2nd century onwards. There were quite famous saints and scholars that dealt with the subject: St Ignatius of Antioch, St Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian, Origen, St Cyril of Jerusalem, St Gregory of Nazianzus, St Ambrose and St Augustine.

However, an anonymous Syrian monk contributed to the subject most. He lived at the turn of the 5th and 6th centuries and is now known as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.

On the basis of Greek philosophy he made a classification of the angels that has been in use till today. His work *Celestial Hierarchy* has enjoyed great respect and recognition throughout the ages. It was accepted

and appreciated by the greatest theological authorities, such as St Albert the Great, St Bonaventure and St Thomas Aquinas.

It is also worth mentioning the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite on the later speculative mysticism of writers such as Meister Eckhard, Johannes Tauler and John of Ruysbroeck, but which found its culmination in the works of St John of the Cross.

According to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite the angelic hierarchy consists of nine choirs divided into three triads. The first triad, standing closest to God, are the choirs of Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones.

Isaiah's vision

We know about the existence of the Seraphim thanks to Isaiah, one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament (Is 6: 1-8). He is the only author of the Sacred Scriptures who mentions these mysterious beings. Since the Seraphim's task is to constantly adore God and stay close to His throne, there is no mention of any contact between them and people.

Therefore, we can assume that Isaiah experienced something extraordinary. We can even say that God revealed a great secret to him.



■ Mosaic of a seraphim in the Cathedral of Cefalu (1145-60)

In the year of King Uzziah's death, in 742 BC, at the end of Israel's period of prosperity and autonomy, Isaiah encounters an extraordinary event: a vision of God. He sees God in the Temple of Jerusalem. God Himself is depicted anthropomorphically: He is sitting on the throne and accompanied by the Seraphim.

Each of the Seraphim has typically human features: face and legs, hand and voice. In addition they have got three pairs of wings: they cover their faces with two wings, they cover their legs with two wings and they fly with two other wings.

Their close presence at God's throne suggests strong and affectionate bonds to God. God is a ruler surrounded by his entrusted and loyal retinue. The very image emphasises the greatness, power and holiness of God surpassing any human greatness and power.

Isaiah's vision divides into two parts. In the first part, the theophany of God and His transcendence are presented; "They were shouting these

words to each other: 'Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth. His glory fills the whole earth.' The door-posts shook at the sound of their shouting, and the Temple was full of smoke" (Is.6: 1-4).

As the Scriptures say, no one can see God and stay alive (Ex 33:20; Judg. 13:22), hence Isaiah only sees the edge of His garment. And even the Seraphim, the purest spirits, are unable to look at God, but cover their faces, constantly adoring Him and professing His supreme holiness.

The vision fills Isaiah with horror, as we read in the second part of the description; "Then I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh Sabaoth'" (Is 6:5).

Isaiah feels unworthy seeing the hosts of the Lord. But then one of the Seraphim flies to him holding a live coal taken from the altar. The angel touches Isaiah's lips with the words; "Look, this has touched your lips, your guilt has been removed and your sin forgiven" (v.7). The Seraphim carries out a purification of Isaiah thanks to which the distance between a prophet and the majesty of God is reduced.

God then turns to the Seraphim as if for advice on governing the world, saying, "Whom shall I send? Who would go for us?" (v. 8a). Indirectly, God calls upon Isaiah to prophesy in His name. Isaiah immediately expresses his readiness, saying; "Here am I! Send me!" (v. 8b).

The Hebrew noun in singular form *śārāp*, seraph, can be translated as "fiery". Isaiah probably uses this very word because he believes that the beings he sees are made of ever-burning fire. Since they surround God, they must have the nature of a burning fire, because God Himself is a devouring

and purifying fire (Deut. 4:24). Their position next to God's throne indicates their highest position in the angelic hierarchy. They are God's assistants; their purpose is to constantly adore God.

As they are most perfect among angels, they form the least numerous choir.

Other revelations

There are extra-biblical revelations of the Seraphim that happened to the great mystics. The first known case concerns St Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) and the other St Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582).

Thomas Celano, biographer of St Francis, recalls an extraordinary event: "Two years before St Francis gave his soul to heaven, he saw in a vision a man standing over him, as if a Seraph with six wings. His arms were spread out and his legs were joined and tied to the cross. Two wings were spread over his head, two spread as if to fly, and two were wrapped around his entire body. St Francis saw a being with six wings, which had imprinted the wounds of Jesus on his body. Some are inclined to consider that it was Christ Himself who took the form of the Seraphim, revealing himself to St Francis. Others believe that Christ bestowed on St Francis of Assisi as signs of his passion: stigmata through the Seraphim. Why was the Seraphim associated with stigmata? Because these heavenly beings were and are images of ardent love" (see *The First Life of St Francis of Assisi*).

In 1560 St Teresa of Ávila was wounded by the Seraph with the divine arrowhead. She saw an angel holding a long golden spear, the tip of which was as if made of fire. She

writes, "He pierced my heart several times leaving me burning with great zeal of God's love. So great was the pain of this piercing that it wrenched a groan from my breast; but the unspeakable martyrdom at the same time caused such a sweetness that surpassed everything that I didn't feel the slightest desire for it to end, and in nothing else my soul finds satisfaction, only in God Himself."

Here is how St Teresa describes the angel; "I saw him as a human being. He was not tall, rather short and very beautiful; his face radiating with heavenly zeal showed that he belonged to the highest order of angels, as if transformed into fire. He must have been from those called Cherubim" (see *Book of Life*, 29, 13).

St Teresa assumed that the angel with a fiery face who pierced her heart with a golden spear belongs to the choir of the Cherubim. However, Fr Domingo Bañez, the Dominican, her spiritual director and confessor, after examining her writings, identified the angel as a Seraph rather than a Cherubim. He wrote his opinion on the margin of the manuscript.

Our knowledge about the Seraphim remains very little. But this does not affect our mutual adoration and singing "Holy, Holy, Holy" to God during the Holy Mass.

Holy Angels, constantly adoring and glorifying the Holy Trinity, make every Christian aware that they are consecrated to God through the grace of Baptism and live their royal grace fully, zealously adoring and praising God and giving Him continual thanksgiving for the gift of redemption and divine childhood. Amen.

Fr Henryk Skoczylas CSMA

How should we protect our homes from evil?

Every so often we hear tell of extraordinary happenings which occur in people's houses or apartments. At least once every few months we have someone come to our office, asking that we come to bless their home because its inhabitants have to contend with inexplicable happenings and problems.

It can even be the case that an exorcist may be required to free a given place from the influence of the Evil One. Certainly, we should exercise our common sense, as it is obvious that an evil spirit can inhabit various places. These are generally places where people have experienced particular forms of evil or where sin is prevalent.

A pastoral visit – a priestly blessing

In many parishes the priest pays visits to his parishioners. The blessing of the home is one unquestioningly positive aspect of such a visit. The priest's visit to the home begins with a blessing, the sprinkling of the various rooms in the house with holy water with the intention of protecting its inhabitants from all dangers and influences of the Evil One.

The liturgical year comes to our aid and proposes a prayer which is recited in the form of a short exorcism: *God, our Father, enter this house and remove from it all the snares of evil; may Your Holy Angels*

dwell within it and protect us so we dwell in peace, and may Your blessing always accompany us. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

It is worthwhile, too, to say this prayer individually. It calls on the presence of the holy angels and asks them to bless our homes.

There is also a well-known practice to ask a priest to come and bless a newly-built house or a flat where a person or a family plans to move in.

Prayer – how to sanctify our time

We sanctify our time by regular prayer. A house which has become a place of prayer allows God's grace to act effectively. The presence of Christ sanctifies and transforms. At the same time, it protects and constitutes an impregnable barrier against the Evil One. Perhaps this is why we never hear of "possessed" churches or chapels.

It is worth including regular prayer in places where we live. Quite often family members quarrel, sometimes a lot, but it is important to forgive one

another. By lack of forgiveness we often permit evil spirits to act.

Regular prayer increases our own patience, Christian love and, brings peace, which is always a sign of the presence of the Risen Lord.

Holy water – a visible sign of blessing

The Church has sacramentals that have been used effectively for many centuries. St Teresa noted the particular power and long-lasting spiritual effects of the use of holy water. Few people, however, are aware that we can keep holy water at home. However, it fails to perform its intended function if kept locked in a jar.

Holy water is intended to remind us of the most important event in our lives – our baptism. It also calls down blessings upon us, by having been blessed by the priest. It may be worth our while buying a small holy water font and hanging it on the wall near the door in our home. Such a gesture would remind us of a heavenly reality and provide for an important element of our faith in God's grace and protection.



Katherine Harlow, www.unsplash.com

The Cross – a sign of redemption and victory over evil

The Cross is the sign of our salvation. It is a Christian calling card, by which we are recognised in the world. On the one hand, we see suffering and death in the Cross. On the other, we believe that this way made sense and led to the Resurrection. The presence of a crucifix at home bears witness to our belief that we can give every type of suffering, sickness and all our troubles to Jesus. Thanks to it there occurs a miraculous exchange. Giving Him what is the worst for me, including my sinfulness, I obtain an assurance of my salvation already in this world.

The Cross, however, is also the symbol of defeat. It vanquished the Evil One, who wished to use it to ruin God's plans, while himself falling into the snare which he had prepared

for the Son of God. He, who wished to obtain victory by means of Jesus' death, was vanquished by this death in the name of love.

Holy images

Each of us has his or her favourite saint and, just as we carry photos of our loved ones with us, so should we also consider hanging icons or small pictures in our homes. In the past there was a tradition of hanging pictures of Jesus and Mary on a wall. These were frequently accompanied by pictures of the Last Supper and pictures of guardian angels in the rooms of children. This practice is dying nowadays. Holy pictures are being replaced by posters or abstract images.

Hanging holy pictures on our walls reminds us of the environment in which we should live and is our signpost in life. Prayer before a picture or icon concentrates our thoughts and

allows us to contemplate God and the lives of the saints. Some see it as a form of idol worship, but people have always needed signs to touch the reality concealed behind them. I see nothing wrong in having a picture, an icon or a statue. Saints encourage us to be holy and their presence sanctify our homes.

Let us not be afraid to avail ourselves of the means which the Church and our faith provides in the battle against evil. Every Christian home is a place of spiritual battle and attack from the Evil One. It is a matter of doing all we can to invite God into our homes and our family life there.

Let us pray for angelic protection of our homes:

God, our Father, enter this house and remove from it all the snares of evil; may Your holy angels dwell within it and protect us so we dwell in peace, and may Your blessing always accompany us. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Fr Mateusz Szerszeń CSMA

Mary, Star of Hope

With a hymn composed in the eighth or ninth century, thus for over a thousand years, the Church has greeted Mary, the Mother of God, as “Star of the Sea”: *Ave Maris Stella*. Human life is a journey. Towards what destination? How do we find the way?

Life is like a voyage on the sea of history, often dark and stormy, a voyage in which we watch for the stars that indicate the route. The true stars of our life are the people who have lived good lives. They are lights of hope. Certainly, Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history. But to reach him we also need lights close by - people who shine with his light and so guide us along our way.

Who more than Mary could be a star of hope for us? With her “yes” she opened the door of our world to God himself; she became the living Ark of the Covenant, in whom God took flesh, became one of us, and pitched his tent among us (cf. Jn 1:14).

So we cry to her: Holy Mary, you belonged to the humble and great souls of Israel who, like Simeon, were “looking for the consolation of Israel” (Lk 2:25) and hoping, like Anna, “for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Lk 2:38). Your life was thoroughly imbued with the sacred scriptures of Israel which spoke of hope, of the promise made to Abraham and his descendants (cf. Lk 1:55). In this way we can appreciate the holy fear that overcame you when the angel of the Lord appeared to you and told you that you would give birth to the One who was the hope of Israel, the One awaited by the world.

Through you, through your “yes”, the hope of the ages became reality,

entering this world and its history. You bowed low before the greatness of this task and gave your consent: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it happen to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). When you hastened with holy joy across the mountains of Judea to see your cousin Elizabeth, you became the image of the Church to come, which carries the hope of the world in her womb across the mountains of history. But alongside the joy which, with your *Magnificat*, you proclaimed in word and song for all the centuries to hear, you also knew the dark sayings of the prophets about the suffering of the servant of God in this world. Shining over his birth in the stable at Bethlehem, there were angels in splendour who brought the good news to the shepherds, but at the same time the lowliness of God in this world was all too palpable.

The old man Simeon spoke to you of the sword which would pierce your soul (cf. Lk 2:35), of the sign of contradiction that your Son would be in this world. Then, when Jesus began his public ministry, you had to step aside, so that a new family could grow, the family which it was his mission to establish and which would be made up of those who heard his word and kept it (cf. Lk 11:27f). Notwithstanding the great joy that marked the beginning of Jesus’s ministry, in the synagogue of Nazareth you must already have

experienced the truth of the saying about the “sign of contradiction” (cf. Lk 4:28ff). In this way you saw the growing power of hostility and rejection which built up around Jesus until the hour of the Cross, when you had to look upon the Saviour of the world, the heir of David, the Son of God dying like a failure, exposed to mockery, between criminals. Then you received the word of Jesus: “Woman, behold, your Son!” (Jn 19:26).

Do not be afraid, Mary!

From the Cross you received a new mission. From the Cross you became a mother in a new way: the mother of all those who believe in your Son Jesus and wish to follow him. The sword of sorrow pierced your heart. Did hope die? Did the world remain definitively without light, and life without purpose? At that moment, deep down, you probably listened again to the word spoken by the angel in answer to your fear at the time of the Annunciation: “Do not be afraid, Mary!” (Lk 1:30).

How many times had the Lord, your Son, said the same thing to his disciples: do not be afraid! In your heart, you heard this word again during the night of Golgotha. Before the hour of his betrayal, he had said to his disciples: “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the

Ave Maris Stella

1. Hail, bright star of ocean,
God's own Mother blest,
Ever sinless Virgin,
Gate of heavenly rest.
2. Taking that sweet Ave
Which from Gabriel came,
Peace confirm within us,
Changing Eva's name.
3. Break the captives' fetters,
Light on blindness pour,
All our ills expelling,
Every bliss implore.
4. Show thyself a Mother;
May the Word Divine,
Born for us thy Infant,
Hear our prayers through thine.
5. Virgin all excelling,
Mildest of the mild,
Freed from guilt, preserve us,
Pure and undefiled.
6. Keep our life all spotless,
Make our way secure,
Till we find in Jesus,
Joy forevermore.
7. Through the highest heaven
To the Almighty Three,
Father, Son and Spirit,
One same glory be. Amen.

Ave Maris Stella is a popular liturgical hymn of unknown origin. It can be dated back to at least the 9th century for it is preserved in the Codex Sangallensis. Today it is still in use in the Divine Office, the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, and as a Benediction hymn.



world" (Jn 16:33). "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (Jn 14:27). "Do not be afraid, Mary!" In that hour at Nazareth the angel had also said to you: "Of his kingdom there will be no end" (Lk 1:33).

The joy of the Resurrection

Could it have ended before it began? No, at the foot of the Cross, on the strength of Jesus's own word, you became the mother of believers. In this faith, which even in the darkness of Holy Saturday bore the certitude of hope, you made your way towards Easter morning. The joy of the Resurrection touched your heart and united you in a new way to the disciples, destined to become

the family of Jesus through faith. In this way you were in the midst of the community of believers, who in the days following the Ascension prayed with one voice for the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14) and then received that gift on the day of Pentecost. The "Kingdom" of Jesus was not as might have been imagined. It began in that hour, and of this "Kingdom" there will be no end. Thus you remain in the midst of the disciples as their Mother, as the Mother of hope. Holy Mary, Mother of God, our Mother, teach us to believe, to hope, to love with you. Show us the way to his Kingdom! Star of the Sea, shine upon us and guide us on our way!

Pope Benedict XVI
Spe Salvi (49-50)



Karl Fredrickson, www.unsplash.com

My fascinating journey of faith

I came to understand the connection between Divine Mercy, Saint Michael the Archangel and the Flame of Love and its role in salvation.

My journey in faith earnestly began at the age of 13 years. I decided that God was not in the Catholic Church and decided to pursue Him elsewhere. As I read my Bible, I had questions. Why do we keep Sunday if the commandments say keep the seventh day? How do you get three days and three nights between Good Friday and Easter Sunday? Why do we have statues if the commandments say no graven images? No one seemed able or willing to answer my questions. I went to

confession because I was horrified to realize I had broken the spirit of the Law for all ten commandments only to be told by the priest that I had not. So I left . . . for 25 years.

I joined the Worldwide Church of God and observed the seventh day Sabbath and the Biblical Holy Days like Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. Later, I changed from studying double majors in physics and voice performance to pursue a degree in theology with the dream of serving in the ministry. But early in my first year of theology something just wasn't right despite all my advisors telling me I was doing fine.

I was perplexed by a few quotes from scriptures. Rom. 8:7 said the carnal mind was enmity against God and could not be subject to it.

I wondered why. Can't one simply decide to keep the law? If we boil the law down it comes down to love so maybe Saint Paul is talking about love but that made it worse. Do only Christians love? Don't Buddhists, Muslims and atheists love their children and wives? What is different about the love of those who have the Holy Spirit? In the New Testament, James (1:2) tells us to count it all joy when we meet various trials. Why in the world would I count it all joy?

Enter Grace

I struggled for months and then finally found the answer in St Paul's letter to the Philippians (2:3-8). Jesus, equal with God, with nothing

to gain, emptied Himself to die for us in love. Indeed, it is by His sacrifice that we know what divine love looks like (as opposed to human love) (cf. 1 John 3:16, 4:9). Most of my love and good was still inherently selfish. I felt good when keeping God's law and bad when disobeying it. I wanted the reward of the saved and to avoid the fate of the lost. I loved because of what I received. God loves because He is Love. My love was not eternally sustainable as it lasts only as long as I receive what causes me to love and thus my love is unworthy of heaven. God's love is eternally sustainable because it is not dependent upon what He receives. It is what He is.

Then came the most absurd moment. I fell to my knees in a prayer closet and cried out to God, "I get it God. I need to be selfless love like You. I want to be selfless love like You . . . for entirely selfish reasons!" There

was no escape from my selfishness. It was my very nature. I could only view the world from behind my own two eyes. I needed a miracle greater than the parting of the Red Sea to change the very nature of what I am. Then it struck me like a thunderbolt: that's what Christianity is! It is not a religion; it's a miracle. It's the miraculous transformation of our human nature into the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) by the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can think, feel, act, and be as God – so we can love as God loves and thus be capable of eternal life. Without realizing it, I had stumbled into the Catholic doctrines of Original Sin and Sanctifying Grace. That also explained James 1:2. With my mind on myself, trials are a burden. With my mind on what those trials can do for others, I count it all joy. I had stumbled upon the Catholic concept that, to enable us to participate in Divine Love in the experience of our bodies, God has made suffering salvific.

So much of how the whole world works fell into place in an instant. It was all so clear but there was still a problem. I never heard this from the pulpit. As far as I knew, no one spoke of this. Was I wrong?

Enter the Saints

To its credit, the Worldwide Church of God began to examine its teaching and think that it was wrong. This set off a firestorm. It was as if I was reliving the circumcision debate of the first century. People had lost jobs, careers and families over the Sabbath and the Holy Days and were now being told they were not necessary. There were death threats against us ministers, schisms and incredible upsets.

As a minister, it was my job to teach the truth and hold the Church together. What was the truth? My whole world was crumbling. Everything I had lived for and sacrificed for was crashing around me. Indeed, the rains had come and the wind was beating against the house. It had all blown away except one pole driven so deeply into the ground that it reached the centre of the Earth and I clung to it desperately: God loved me and He was not going to throw me away for an academic mistake.

I decided to research it as any other research project and supplement the primary sources (the Bible) with secondary resources. I began reading the Ante-Nicene Fathers – the earliest post-biblical writings of the Church – and was in for the shock of my life: they were very Catholic! There it all was: the real presence in the Eucharist, Apostolic Succession and the validity of the Oral Tradition.

In my thinking at that time, I asked how could a religion as corrupt, superstitious, pagan and Mary worshiping as Catholicism be legitimate? So I decided to research what the Catholic Church taught and was in for another shock. It was nothing like I was taught in "Catechism" (which, as a boy, seemed to me was nothing) nor what others had told me about the Church. It was the most remarkably, biblically, theologically, historically, logically consistent teaching!

So, the first Sunday after Easter in 1998, I returned to the Church. In doing so, I found an unexpected treasure – the writings and lives of the Saints. I devoured Saints Francis de Sales, Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Catherine of Siena, the life of Saint Francis of Assisi



Jasmin Staab, www.unsplash.com

and others. In them, I at last found validation of what I had learned so long ago – that Christianity was indeed the miraculous transformation of our nature into the Divine nature by the power of Grace.

Enter Divine Mercy

A couple of years later, I was asked to cantor a service at the local Franciscan Monastery – for something I had never heard of before: Divine Mercy Sunday. I picked up a few pamphlets and began to read. Over the next few months it seemed that whenever I touched this new thing called Divine Mercy, beautiful things happened. I purchased a copy of the Diary of Saint Faustina and put it on my night table for bed-time reading. After finishing all 644 pages, I just about cried because there was no more to read! After the Bible, I think Divine Mercy in My Soul has been the most influential book in my life. It is the most extraordinary love story. From that love flows a great desire to save souls – to bring them the overwhelming mercy of God.

As I continued to dwell upon what it means to love selflessly as God does and seek to bring all to His mercy, the force of both truthful logic and grace were inexorable. When we transition from “what do I have to do” to “what can I do – how far can I take love,” life changes dramatically. Our entire life becomes joined to the redemptive life of Jesus – every breath, every decision. Everything is sacrificed for the salvation of souls – the meaning of white martyrdom. Yet, once again, I did not hear this from the pulpit. Once again I asked if I was crazy and misguided.

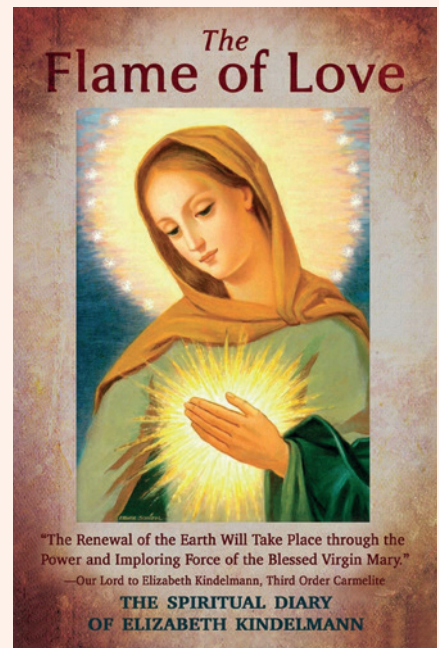
Enter the Flame of Love

After many years, a decade plus, I decided to reread some of the great classics that so shaped my life – The Imitation of Christ, The Interior Castle, The Dialogue. With great joy and expectation I returned to the Diary of Saint Faustina – so eager to reread this inspiring love story. For some reason, whenever I did, something said, “Put it down.” Disappointed but not wanting to disobey, I did. I was about to encounter the second great movement given for our time. By “divine accident,” I came in contact with The Flame of Love.

The Flame of Love is the Movement of Grace and builds upon the Movement of Mercy – the two great movements given to the Church at this time, for there is nothing the world needs more right now than Grace and Mercy. In God’s Mercy and Grace, we have everything we need.

A Little Background

Our Mother Mary did not start the Flame of Love with a monk or nun or priest but rather a struggling mother because she said a mother would understand her motherly sorrow and the pain caused by the great destruction of families. The Flame of Love was first given to a Secular Carmelite and widowed mother of six named Elizabeth Kindelmann in Communist Hungary from 1961 until her death in 1985. Her Diary is the foundational document of the Flame of Love. Her struggles under Communism, prepared Elizabeth’s faith for the great task of beginning the Flame of Love.



In giving the Flame of Love to the Church, Mary said she would bring about the greatest outpouring of graces since the Word was made flesh. To do this, Mary does not give us a lot that is new but calls us back to all the great practices of grace we have always had but have neglected, e.g., an intense prayer life, Mass, Adoration, regular fasting, voluntary sacrifices for love of others, vigil prayer, a spirit of humility and continuous repentance, and renouncing our selfish use of time in a complete dedication to the salvation of souls. She intensifies and magnifies grace and asks us to help spread the effect of grace over all of humanity. She states this will be her greatest miracle, not a great shrine and event like Fatima or Lourdes but, the miracle of countless families ablaze with the light of grace making Jesus powerfully present in the Church and world and driving out darkness.

Mary places the Flame of Love (who is Jesus) right at the heart of the Church. It is all about Jesus; it is all about Grace. Even the three

new devotions given in the Flame of Love all point to and magnify the message of the gospel we have had all along. First, Jesus and Mary asked us to meditate on the five wounds of Jesus. This roots us in the mercy and unfathomable sacrificial love of God. Then Mary asked us to plead that she would spread the effect of grace of her Flame of Love (Jesus) over all of humanity. This is so important to her that she asked us to embed this request right into the Hail Mary: “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, spread the effect of grace of thy Flame of Love over all of humanity, now and at the hour of our death.” She also attached the extraordinary grace to this Flame of Love Hail Mary that she would release a soul for every three Hail Marys prayed with reference to the Flame of Love – except for November when she would release ten for every Hail Mary prayed this way.

Spreading the effect of grace of the Flame of Love over all humanity is the means of salvation. That is the means of making Jesus present in the Church and the world and therein is the third addition. In the Flame of Love, Jesus gives us the Prayer of Union with Him. He said this prayer expresses His greatest desire for us – His prayer to us:

*May our feet journey together,
May our hands gather in unity,
May our hearts beat in unison,
May our souls be in harmony,
May our thoughts be as one,
May our ears listen
to the silence together,
May our glances profoundly
penetrate each other,
May our lips pray together to gain
mercy from the Eternal Father.*

This prayer is easy to misunderstand. It is not a “me and Jesus” prayer. It is not asking Jesus to enter our lives – for our feet to journey to our happy place together. It is Jesus asking us to enter His life – for our feet to journey with Him to Calvary, for our hands to gather souls, for our hearts to join the life of the Trinity through His heart, for our thoughts to be His thoughts for the salvation of souls, and to pray for mercy not for ourselves but for others. This is the outcome, the effect, of Grace – to be so united with Jesus that we enter His life – that we become active participants in His redemptive life of sacrificial love (Gal. 2:20, Phil. 3:7-10, Col. 1:24).

So I was confirmed in my understanding! It is only logical that truly selfless love will lead us to pour out our lives for others in union with the life of Jesus within us by grace (1 John 3:16). When I read the Spiritual Diary of Elizabeth Kindelmann, the Diary of the Flame of Love, I found in 300 pages laid out clearly before me what God had taken 47 years to teach me through prayer, Bible study and silence before His presence in the tabernacle. Here, planted in the fertile soil of God’s Mercy, was the fruit borne of Grace. Mercy and Grace.

Even in what is new in the Flame of Love, we are brought back to the heart of the Church. By meditating on the five wounds we are rooted in Mercy – the wellspring of all God’s actions toward us. The spreading of the effect of Grace is the means of salvation, and the Unity Prayer is the final goal – intimate union with Jesus. And when Jesus is so present in the world by the power of Grace, the power of the evil one is broken (1 John 3:8) and the end result is the salvation of souls

– the gospel! But why were we given the Flame of Love now?

Enter St Michael and his Angels

I came to understand the connection between Divine Mercy, Saint Michael the Archangel and the Flame of Love and its role in salvation.

When Jesus and Mary gave us the Flame of Love in the early 1960’s, they warned that Satan was about to unleash his most vicious attack yet against humanity and especially against families. This is consistent with other warnings, be it Sister Lucia’s statement that the final battle would be over families or, our Lady of Buen Suceso (our Lady of the Good Event) who, over 400 years ago, warned that after the middle of the 20th century, marriage would be undermined and innocence corrupted. It was in the 1960’s when we began sowing the seeds of the sexual revolution, whose harvest we are reaping today, and when the Flame of Love was given.

Mary said that Satan’s hatred would hurl its flames so high that he believes his victory is at hand but she would fight fire with fire and put out the fire of hatred with her Flame of Love. She stated that her Flame of Love would “blind” Satan, i.e., break his influence over souls so they are able to turn to God. Grace makes Jesus present and where Jesus is, the works of the evil one are cast down.

Before, and especially after, the days of Pope Leo XIII we have sought Saint Michael’s help to battle against the evil one. In the Flame of Love, our Blessed Mother calls us directly into the battle. It is not enough to protect



■ The interior of the Shrine of St Michael the Archangel, Monte Sant'Angelo, Italy

ourselves and our families from such a vicious attack. We must go on the offensive and we must teach our children to go on the offensive, not by being militant and aggressive but by embracing a life of self-sacrificial grace. When we and our children make Jesus present in our families by the power of grace, Satan is driven out. We join Saint Michael and his angels as active participants in the battle to displace evil in the world. Indeed, our war is a war of displacement. Light, the light of the Flame of Love – Jesus alive in us by grace – does not need to fear or even think about the darkness. That is the essence of our victory.

Imprimatur

For many years the Flame of Love Movement could not be investigated within Hungary. Meanwhile, it took root in Latin America and from there

it spread to Canada and the United States and continues to grow quickly throughout the world. In 2009, the diocese of Esztergom-Budapest was finally able to conclude its investigation. His Eminence, Cardinal Péter Erdő, granted his imprimatur to the Diary and his approval with juridic personality to the Flame of Love Movement.

“With these words, I establish in the Archdiocese of Esztergom-Budapest the ‘Movement Flame of Love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary’, as an ecclesial association of the faithful in Christ. It is a private association enjoying a juridical personality.”

Triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart

Jesus and Mary have not left us helpless in the great attack we see against family, society and the Church at this

time. They have shown us what to do and given us the means. When the effect of grace of the Flame of Love of Mary's Immaculate Heart, the grace of Jesus Himself, spreads over all of humanity, Satan's stranglehold will be broken and Mary's Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Flame of Love is that Movement of Grace built on the foundation of Mercy.

As a result of this extraordinary spiritual journey, I had been brought back full circle to the teaching and mission of the Church in the world and been given the responsibility of inviting the people of God to spread His Grace and to dispel the darkness of Satan.

Oh dearest Mother, spread the effect of grace of your Flame of Love over all of humanity!

John A. Sullivan III, USA
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www.flameoflove.us

My mercy does not want this, but justice demands it

Each of us has probably a very clear image rooted in our consciousness of the nature of heaven and hell. Fed on popular culture, our imagination, can, even at this precise moment, conjure up stereotypical pictures of angels on clouds or cauldrons of sinners boiled in tar. What does purgatory look like, however?

Theological debates on the nature of this state continue to this day. What, then, should we know of the state where it is likely that many of us will reach?

Modern times are characterised by a disturbingly prevalent tendency to look for ways of remaining within our “comfort zone”, constantly experiencing pleasure and satisfaction. It is certainly a lot easier for us to live our lives forgetful of the existence of hell, culpability, punishment or of a sense of responsibility for our sins. This tendency penetrates even the teaching of the Church. We sometimes see pastors who attempt to attract new believers and not to put off existing members of the faithful, assuming the role of a salesman concerned to maintain customer satisfaction. This is why the subjects of hell and purgatory are frequently neglected, even within the Church. Forgetfulness of the existence of the Evil One is his greatest success.

Many believers do not acknowledge the existence of purgatory...

When Our Lord Jesus took St Faustina to purgatory, he said of this place: “My Mercy does not want this, but justice demands it” (Diary 20).

This mystical experience gives us, firstly, proof of the existence of purgatory, acknowledged by the Church and, secondly, a warning against a false idea of the Divine Mercy. Even we, as Catholics, are apt to think that the Divine Mercy has triumphed and that we are therefore already saved. This view is generally formulated to mean that: “In order to be saved, it is sufficient to be a good person”. I am afraid that the truth is much more severe and harder to accept. The degree of holiness to which we are called is of a much higher order.

How should we explain this to the faithful, however? The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that those “who die in God’s grace and friendship imperfectly purified, although they are assured of their eternal salvation, undergo a purification after death, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of God” (CCC 1054). What is the difference between death in a state of grace and complete purification?

Let us begin by saying that it is not God who sends us to purgatory. At their judgement, God reveals to people the state of their souls at the time of their death and the soul

voluntarily undergoes the sufferings which cleanse it of the stains of its earthly life.

St Catherine of Genoa had a mystical vision in which she saw souls voluntarily throwing themselves into purgatory...

Equally vivid is the comparison of a soul in purgatory to a wedding guest who light-heartedly visits his friend’s house. He pays no attention to his lack of wedding garment until the glare of the approaching bridegroom reveals to him his own impurity and inadequacy. Despite having received an invitation, he will be unable to cross the threshold of the wedding feast (cf. Matt 22: 2-14).

Desiring greatly to sit at the feast with the bridegroom, the guest will go first to undergo the purification which he had neglected earlier. Purgatory is therefore the state in which we prepare to meet our greatest friend – God.

We should certainly emphasise that the visions of purgatory accorded the mystics were granted them in particular and should be interpreted in some ways as metaphors.

In this conversation we are trying to present a clearer picture of

purgatory than would be covered in a dictionary definition.

When we formed the Michaelite Intercessors for the Holy Souls we were impelled by a belief that it was necessary to raise people's awareness. In order to feel the urge to pray for the holy souls in purgatory, we first need to understand the nature of purgatory and the situation in which the souls there find themselves.

What situation are we referring to?

There are narratives told by the holy souls which stress the fact that there is no suffering on earth comparable to that of purgatory. Therefore each of our sufferings while on earth, whether physical or psychological, should be offered up to Jesus.

In His sacrifice on the Cross, He showed us that there is no other road to salvation except through suffering. Each of our earthly sufferings is therefore a blessing, and what we do not atone for on earth we will have to atone for in purgatory, magnified to a greater extent. According to what the holy souls have told us, each level of purgatory differs only from that of hell in that there is a way out. The same is true of the suffering caused by distancing ourselves from God and our longing for Him.

How therefore should we help the holy souls to free themselves from this horrifying predicament?

I would like to cite the words of one of our patron saints, St Stanisław Papczyński, who said that a person who is not moved by their fate and does not desire to assist them when he or she is able to do so, is godless. St Padre Pio is also quoted as saying that we should empty purgatory. The souls there are no longer able to help themselves and rely wholly on our help.

Are the faithful generally aware of this, however?

I am under the impression that this awareness was much greater in the past.

Once we become aware of the extent of the suffering and loneliness of souls in purgatory, prayer for them comes naturally to us.

However, once we have said our farewells to our deceased loved ones, the awareness that they are still in need of our help generally fades over time. Our empathy for others tends to be limited to the suffering which we can actually see and witness. We pay undue attention to the needs of the body to the detriment of those of the soul. This disproportion has been particularly apparent in recent months.

I would like to remind all, who think that the souls of their loved ones must surely go to heaven, of the words of Sister Lucy, witness to the apparitions of Fatima. She questioned Our Lady as to the fate of her friend Amelia, who had died. Our Lady is reported to have told Lucy that the soul of her friend (yet a child, after all) was not damned but that she would remain in purgatory until the end of the world. It is therefore possible that many of our loved ones remain in purgatory without assistance for many years. It is as if we had left our parents in a care home and cut off all contact, forgetful of the love they have shown us.

I would wish that as much public attention was focussed on saving souls as on saving our physical bodies. Spiritual health is, after all, of much greater importance than physical health. I like the initiative urging people to have Masses said for the dead, instead of paying for wreaths of flowers. Floral wreaths serve only to delight our eyes and bring no benefit to the soul of the deceased person. The

beautiful old tradition of Gregorian Masses for the dead should also be more widely publicised.

We usually pray for our loved ones on the 1st and 2nd of November (the Feast of All Saints), while we forget that each and every celebration of the Eucharist includes an element of prayer for the souls in purgatory...

Participation in the Eucharist and taking Holy Communion in the intention of the holy souls is certainly the most important "life belt" we can give them - and ourselves. Each Holy Mass is a Living Sacrifice by the Lord Jesus, in which each of us is invited to participate. There are many pictorial representations of the moment of the elevation of the Blood of Christ during Mass, which, flowing down from the chalice in the priest's hands puts out the flames in which the holy souls find themselves. It would be hard to find a more eloquent representation of the meaning of the Holy Eucharist.

Given your earlier reference to the words of the saints, I would like to ask about their role. Paintings of purgatory frequently portray holy "intercessors" assisting them on their way to heaven. Sometimes it is St Gregory or St Teresa of Avila, but more frequently Our Blessed Mother or St Michael the Archangel. What is their role in bringing souls out of purgatory?

The role of Our Lady is key. From the very beginning she is a link between us and God. In the "Hail Mary" we beseech her to "pray for us, sinners ... now and at the hour of our death". It is very important that we should say these words in full consciousness of their meaning.



■ An Angel Frees the Souls of Purgatory by Ludovico Carracci, c.1610

The holy souls call Mary the Star of the Sea. This term appeared already in the medieval Marian hymn “Ave Maris Stella”. It includes the symbolism of the cold, damp sea breeze which soothes the burning flames of purgatory. Mary visits purgatory on her feast days and on each First Saturday, she takes purified souls to heaven.

This is why I appeal to people that we should entrust the souls of our dear departed into the hands of the Mother of God.

It is certainly worth our while to choose saints to whom we have a particular devotion, so that we may also count on their prayerful intercession at the hour of our death.

What of St Michael the Archangel, who is so close to our readers. What is his role?

According to the revelations of holy mystics, St Michael the Archangel is the one who conducts souls from the temporal to the eternal world. He can also defend us in this last struggle with evil. He comes to the aid of souls in purgatory, defending them against the attacks of evil spirits, as they are beset by demons at the lower levels of purgatory, which increases their suffering. It is worth our while to ask St Michael for his protection from them.

Why did you decide, however, that intercessory prayer for the souls

in purgatory should be in a group rather than individually?

“For where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them” (Matt 18:20).

Certainly there is a purely human aspect to this in that as a group it is easier to speak to parish priests, to organise meetings and, above all, to evangelise, to share our particular charism...

How, in short, would you describe this charism?

I would compare our group to an ambulance crew whose job it is to bring help to souls in purgatory. Medical training is not mandatory for this job, however. What is absolutely necessary is steadfast faith in Divine Mercy and love for our neighbour, evident in a readiness to undertake various sacrifices for these intentions.

We are certainly necessary for those souls who have nobody left to pray for them at their passing. Priests sometimes fall into this category. We encourage people to take responsibility for prayer for those who serve us in our parishes.

Let us return to the idea of a sense of community.

It plays a key role in terms of our motivation. This year we organised a form of relay with the motto: “100 Masses for the Holy Souls”. Each member and sympathiser would add the Masses they requested to the total until the number reached one hundred. The total would be displayed in the parish so parishioners could see it and become more aware of the importance of prayers for the holy souls.

Do parishioners frequently approach your group with prayer requests for particular people?

We do not yet formally function as a support group in these terms, although we are considering having a box in which people can place their intentions.

We do get requests for prayer from people approaching us before Masses or meetings asking us to pray for their recently deceased loved ones.

What kinds of prayer do you say for the holy souls apart from participation in Holy Mass?

The Holy Rosary and reflection on the Passion in the Stations of the Cross. We have already mentioned the offering of one's sufferings and therefore experiencing it in a conscious manner. I do not refer only to physical suffering but offering up one's loneliness and the hurts caused us by others.

Our forgiveness for those who have hurt us bring down graces not only for ourselves but can also be a wonderful offering for the souls in purgatory!

Our daily troubles can be another such offering at times when we find it hard to find a moment to assist the holy souls in prayer.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1032) commands us to offer alms and works of penance as well as prayers for the dead. Do you also practice this type of service?

At our present stage of formation as a group we are trying to build a greater awareness of the need to pray for the souls of the dead, not only those close to us, but for all souls in purgatory. Each member of the group chooses his or her own way of doing so.

I am sure that fasting is an effective means to support the holy souls. Our Lord himself told us this in the Gospel. We should remember that

fasting is not necessarily a matter of the body. To fast is to deny oneself some pleasure. An example could be to abstain from the use of social media for a week. Some may find this a greater form of abstinence than a day's fast on bread and water!

We don't know exactly how many indulgences we can offer for the souls

in purgatory. The list of these is more than ten, some of which we may be unaware we fulfil each day. Examples include recitation of the Rosary, whether in church with others or in our families, reading the Bible for half an hour, saying the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy before the Blessed Sacrament, whether exposed or in



■ St Michael Weighing Souls by Juan de la Abadia, c. 1480-1495

the tabernacle. It is therefore worth our while asking God, just after we wake, that we wish to offer any conditions for indulgences, whether consciously or unconsciously, for the holy souls.

It is unfortunate that the subjects of indulgences, fasting and penance are marginalised. They are concerned with suffering and contemporary man seeks pleasure, joy and satisfaction. The human definition of happiness involves the constant experience of pleasure, while the Divine definition involves being in the presence of God.

In terms of this very specific prayerful service can we speak of any evident fruits? If we pray for healing, we are capable of checking if it has occurred or not... If we pray for souls in purgatory the matter is less clear. Is that fact not in itself discouraging?

As Catholics, we should be aware that no prayer goes unheard. Part of our faith in God the Father is also a faith in the fruits of our prayer. If a soul for whom we have been praying has already attained heaven, our prayer passes to benefit other souls in purgatory, according to Divine wisdom. This question is one of the most frequent asked of us.

The knowledge that our prayers, sacrifices and sufferings can serve to atone for others and assist them to attain salvation is absolutely extraordinary and encouraging.

Another form of assistance is the Eucharist, as I mentioned earlier. Daily attendance at Mass and reception of the Blessed Sacrament is a great gift for the souls in purgatory, but also a great gift to my own soul.

A significant and moving fruit of prayer is the certainty that all the

souls whom we have helped become our defenders and helpers at our own judgement before the throne of God. Recalling this fact is a tremendous encouragement to pray for the holy souls in purgatory.

Many people are unaware that we can also turn to the souls in purgatory for help, similarly to the way we can turn to our own Guardian Angels. I obviously try not to take unfair advantage of their goodness, but their intervention has proved effective even in such minor matters as reaching a garage while driving with a damaged tyre or managing a theoretically impossible approach up a muddy mountain slope.

Many such testimonies can be found on the internet. We can take them with a pinch of salt, but is it not beautiful that God also hears the prayers of the souls in purgatory? The holy souls transform us. They pray and intercede for us to God. Each person who prays for them also receives their support. I feel that much that is good in my life was obtained as a result of their intercession.

Sometimes there are cases in which someone, after dreaming of their dead spouse or other family member, goes to ask for a Mass for them. In one of the parishes in Rome there is even a Museum of the Holy Souls in purgatory, in an attempt to document such occurrences.

Curiosity is a natural human characteristic, though I would warn against seeking sensationalism. I would warn all the more against attempting to make contact with the souls in purgatory, which can end in demonic possession. People are unaware that they thereby enter the spirit world,

in which evil spirits may show an interest in us.

Contact with the holy souls in purgatory is a grace from God, though many of those who end up zealously praying for them may have initially been motivated by a selfish desire. The grace of seeing purgatory and the souls present there more directly, was generally granted to holy mystics. For us, the basic sources of information about purgatory are the Holy Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, to which the writings of the saints take second place.

We should always treat all dreams and private revelations with a measure of caution. Certainly, God in His wisdom can allow such situations and I also meet with such stories. Let us treat them, however, as souls calling for prayer and pray for them.

How did the idea of the Intercessors of the Holy Souls come about?

It all began with one particular family saved from breakdown thanks to the Novena to Our Lady of Pompeii said by the wife, which freed her from addiction and other problems. As a result of Our Lady's intervention into their lives, the family made a commitment to the holy souls in purgatory. It began as a prayerful commitment by that particular family and was later shared with other members of their parish.

As far as I am concerned, the key to this in my own life was reading the famous "Manuscript on Purgatory" by Sr Mary of the Cross. The text opened before me the true state of my soul and I stood before my own sinfulness. I had earlier not wanted to think about punishment and hell, thinking that, being baptised, I was automatically entitled to salvation. Thanks to

Sr Mary of the Cross, I realised how many others such as myself remain in purgatory, and, being aware of this fact, I should help them.

The breakthrough in terms of our initiative came with the approval of our parish priest, Fr Kazimierz Joniec CSMA. The idea to form a prayer community met with widespread interest from parishioners. Several dozen people turned up to our first meeting two years ago.

What form do your meetings take? What formation programme do you have?

We try to organise monthly meetings at which Holy Mass is preceded by a talk or lecture. For the first half year, we concentrated on the topic of the true nature of purgatory, so that we may awaken a need within ourselves to pray for the souls there. In the second half of that year, we invited priests and sisters from religious orders whose charism includes prayer for the holy souls, in which we learnt what the saints, like our patrons St Stanisław Papczyński, St

Faustina and St Michael the Archangel, had to say on the subject of purgatory. We are now at a stage of our formation where we work on ourselves and offering up our efforts up for the sake of the holy souls.

The number of people involved is between 30 and 100 (the pandemic stopped it for now). Anyone can come and pray with us. They do not have to enrol. What joins us is the need to pray for the souls in purgatory.

What would you say to those readers who feel an inner call to pray for the holy souls?

I would like to invite them to find the information given in Catholic web-pages. I would also like to appeal to you not to put off prayer for the holy souls. They wait for our assistance. Please start today!

Karol Wojciechek was speaking to **Konrad Zaręba** from the Michaelite Intercessors of the Holy Souls in the parish of Our Lady, Queen of Angels, Warsaw, Poland

Prayer of the Michaelite Intercessors of the Holy Souls

Eternal Father, We offer You the Most Precious Blood of Your Divine Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in unity with all the Holy Masses said throughout the whole world this day, for the suffering souls in purgatory, for the dying, for all the sinners in the world, for the sinners in the Universal Church, for sinners in my own family and in my home. Amen.

Prayer for the Holy Souls

Best and dearest Mother, look with your merciful gaze upon the abandoned souls, bring them effectual help among the desolation in which they remain and arouse the hearts of the faithful to pray for them!

A prayer of trust and confidence in God's Mercy

O Lord, we ask for a boundless confidence and trust in your Divine Mercy and the courage to accept the crosses and sufferings which bring immense goodness to our souls and that of Your Church.

Help us to love You with a pure and contrite heart, and to humble ourselves beneath Your cross, as we climb the mountain of holiness carrying our cross that leads to heavenly glory.

May we receive You with great faith and love in Holy Communion, and allow You to act in us as You desire for your greater glory.

O Jesus, most adorable Heart and eternal fountain of Divine Love, may your prayer find favour before the Divine Majesty of your heavenly Father. Amen

St Francis prayer before the Crucifix

Most High, glorious God, cast Your light into the darkness of my heart.

Give me right faith, firm hope and perfect charity and profound humility of wisdom and perception, O Lord, so that I may do what is truly Your holy will. Amen.

St Pio of Pietrelcina

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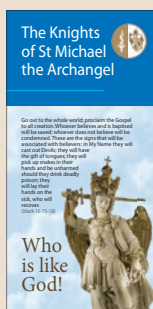
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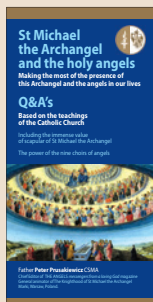
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Details of churches / shops and distributors – see subscription form inside middle of magazine

WALES 2022

Fri 22 April 2022

**DIOCESAN SHRINE
OF DIVINE MERCY**

**Church of the Sacred Heart
School Road, Morriston**

Swansea. SA6 6HZ

Contact: Canon Jason Jones S.T.B

Phone: +44 (0) 179 277 1053

Email: morriston1@menevia.org

3:00pm Hour of Divine Mercy

**6:00pm Talk: Faustina and St Michael,
followed by Holy Hour, Confessions**

7:30pm Holy Mass.

ENGLAND 2022

Sat 23 April 2022

9:30 – 11:15am

**Talk: Delving Deeper into
the Divine Mercy**

Bristol Cathedral

Church of Saints Peter and Paul,

Clifton Park,

Bristol, BS8 3BX

9:30am Holy Mass

Eucharistic Holy hour

(Confessions during that time)

Concluding with Benediction

Sun 24 April 2022

Divine Mercy Sunday

Elmore Abbey

Church Road, Speen, Newbury,
Berkshire RG14 1SA

**2:00pm Holy Mass with homily,
Divine Mercy Chaplet, followed
by Benediction. Concluding with
an individual veneration of a first
class relic of St Faustina.**

Sat 30 April 2022

6:00pm Vigil Mass

Talk: St Michael and St Faustina

**Our Lady of the Sacred
Heart R.C. Church**

82 Knox Road, Wellingborough,
Northants NN8 1JA

Contact: Fr Paul Inman

Email: parish.wellingborough
@northamptondiocese.org

Sun 1 May 2022

9:30 and 11:30am Sunday Masses

Talk: Divine Mercy

St Mary & St Benedict R.C. Church

52a, Raglan Street, Coventry, CV1 5QF

Contact: Fr Jimmy Lutwama, AJ

Phone: +44 (0) 24 7625 8901

Email: stmaryandbenedictch
@yahoo.com

SCOTLAND 2022

Mon 2 May 2022

10:00am Holy Mass

Talk: St Michael and the holy angels

St Thomas of Canterbury RC Church

56 Dishlandtown Street,

Arbroath DD11 1QU

Contact: Fr Andrew Marshall

Phone: +44 (0) 1241873013

Tues 3 May 2022

11:30am Eucharistic Holy Hour

12:30pm Holy Mass

Talk: The Knighthood of St Michael

St Peter R.C. Church

3 Chapel Court, Justice Street,

Aberdeen AB11 5HX,

Contact: Fr Gábor Czako

Phone: 01224 626359 (office)

Email: immacu4@gmail.com

**Eucharistic Holy hour with Chaplet
of St Michael. Procession with
the crown. Concluding with
an individual veneration of
a first class relic of St Faustina**

Further info: Contact Noreen Bavister

Phone: +44 7795 318 605

www.stmichaeltheangel.info

view under Missions

USA 2022

13-15 May 2022

**Theme: The secrets of the Angels
and St Faustina**

St Clare's Retreat Centre

2381 Laurel Glen Road

95073 Soquel, California

Phone: +1- 831-423-8093

Email: stclaresretreatcenter@gmail.com

Website: stclaresretreat.org

Tues 17 May 2022

**Theme: The secrets on the angels
and St Faustina**

Our Lady of Peace Retreat

3600 SW 170th Avenue

Beaverton, Oregon 97003

Contact: Carolyn Callaghan

Sr Agnes Clare, Retreat Directress

Phone: +1-503-649-7127

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Website: www.olpretreat.org

