

August 2021
Meditation I.

ENTRUSTING THE WORLD TO DIVINE MERCY

Saint John Paul II the Great during his long pontificate (1978-2005) made eight apostolic journeys to Poland. Each time, until the 7th Pilgrimage in 1999, in which the motto were the words from the First Letter of St. John the Apostle, "*God is love*" (1 Jn 4: 8), the Holy Father proclaimed in Poland truths that resulted directly or indirectly from God's revelation and through which he indicated how Poles should live the Christian faith at a given moment of their national history. However, when in 2002 he came to his homeland for the last time, the motto of his 8th Pilgrimage was: "*God rich in mercy*". Its formulation referred to the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians (cf. Eph 2: 4), its content expressed the essence of God's action towards people from the first moment of their creation, while its message referred to what Christ revealed to Sister Faustina Kowalska from the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in visions that took place in Poland. They began in 1924 in Łódź and ended in 1938 in Kraków.

A message of hope

Despite these Polish accents, the message of this Pilgrimage was addressed primarily to the whole world, not only to Poland and Poles. It had and to this day it has a truly universal character, just as the words of the address of John Paul II during the welcome ceremony to his Homeland on August 16th, 2002 are completely universal, although he addressed them directly to his compatriots: "*I bring today the message of hope that springs from the Good News: God, rich in mercy, daily reveals his love in Christ. It is he, the Risen Christ, who says to each and every one of you: "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore" (Rev 1:17-18). This is the message of Divine Mercy that I bring today to the nation and to my countrymen: "Fear not!" Trust in God who is rich in mercy. Christ is with you, the unfailing Giver of hope.*"¹

Thus, St. John Paul II the Great wanted to contribute to the fulfillment of the words that the Lord Jesus addressed to Sister Faustina in May 1938, a few months before her death: "*I have a special love for Poland, and if she is obedient to My will, I shall raise her up in power and holiness. From Poland will com the spark that will prepare the world for my final coming*" (Diary, 1732). From this passage of the Diary of St. Faustina made by the Pope on August 17th, 2002, in Krakow Łagiewniki, he said: "*May this message radiate from this place to our beloved homeland and throughout the world. May the binding promise of the Lord Jesus be fulfilled: from here there must go forth "the spark which will prepare the world for his final coming" (cf. Diary, 1732). This spark needs to be lighted by the grace of God. This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world. In the mercy of God the world will find peace and mankind will find happiness! I entrust this task to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to the Church in Kraków and Poland, and to all the votaries of Divine Mercy who will come here from Poland and from throughout the world. May you be witnesses to mercy!*"²

Meeting with the message of mercy

John Paul II prepared himself for this call for most part of his life, although he was initially unaware of it. As a young man, he had heard almost nothing about Sister Faustina. It was only during the times of World War

¹ St John Paul II, *Address during the welcome ceremony*, Krakow Balice Airport, Friday, August 16th 2002, n.3.

² St John Paul II, *Homily of the Dedication of the Shrine of Divine Mercy, Kraków-Łagiewniki*, Saturday August 17th 2002, n. 5.

II and the brutal persecution to which the Polish nation was subjected by the Germans that, on the one hand, he personally experienced the terrifying enormity of human evil, hatred and violence, and on the other hand, he opened himself to the power of God's mercy. Immediately after the canonization ceremony of Sister Faustina, which took place on April 30th, 2000, on the Second Easter Sunday, during a meeting with invited guests at the House of St. Martha at the Vatican, the Pope shared his reflections, reaching back to the times of war: *"Today, while celebrating this canonization, I remembered the war years. For five years I was educated to the priesthood in the shadows of Łagiewniki. And it was because I worked in Solvay, that is, in Borek Fałęcki, and every day I came to work through Łagiewniki. I have entered this church-chapel many times, which today is becoming a great worldwide sanctuary. Back then, I knew very little about Sister Faustina, something about God's mercy, and this was the time when this dual charism of Krakow - mercy and Faustina - fulfilled its mission primarily in the occupied countries. We, who lived this occupation on the spot, in Krakow, Poland, experienced in a special way the presence of God's mercy. This is what I remembered today during the canonization. I remembered what I had not known before that, at this very time of contempt, there was growing among us, a great new revelation, a revelation of God's mercy, which was to go into the whole world. I would like to thank the Divine Providence and Sister Faustina for this "*

These so personal memories of St. John Paul II were enriched two years later, when he said on August 17th, 2002, at the end of the Holy Mass celebrated in Łagiewniki: *"At the end of this solemn liturgy, I desire to say that many of my personal memories are tied to this place. During the Nazi occupation, when I was working in the Solvay factory near here, I used to come here. Even now I recall the street that goes from Borek Fałęcki to Debniki that I took every day going to work on the different turns with the wooden shoes on my feet. They're the shoes that we used to wear then. How was it possible to imagine that one day the man with the wooden shoes would consecrate the Basilica of the Divine Mercy at Łagiewniki of Kraków."* ³

Meetings with the "secretary" of the Divine Mercy

Before that, however, *"that man in wooden clogs"*, who became the Pope, beatified Sister Faustina in Rome on April 18th, 1993. In the homily delivered then, he addressed her directly: *"I greet you, Sister Faustina. From today the Church calls you blessed (...). Can you not think that it was you - the poor and simple daughter of the Polish people of Mazovia - that Christ chose to remind people about the great mystery of God's Mercy. You took this secret with you when you left this world after a short and suffering life. At the same time, this mystery became a truly prophetic call to the world, to Europe. After all, your message of Divine Mercy was born on the eve of the terrible cataclysm of World War II. You would probably be surprised if you could experience on earth what this message has become to the tormented people of this time of contempt, how widely it has spread out into the world. Today - we believe so deeply - you see in God the fruits of your mission on earth. Today you experience at the very Source who your Christ is: dives in misericordia. (...) Sister Faustina's mission continues and brings amazing fruits. How amazingly her devotion to Merciful Jesus makes its way in the world and wins so many human hearts! It is undoubtedly a sign of the times - a sign of our twentieth century. The balance of this age, which is about to end, contains, in addition to the achievements that have surpassed previous eras many times, a deep anxiety about the future. Where then, if not in God's Mercy, will the world find salvation and a light of hope? Believers can feel it perfectly intuition! "* ⁴

³ St John Paul II, *Address to the faithful at the end of the celebration of the Dedication of the Church of Divine Mercy*, Saturday August 17th 2002.

⁴ Saint John-Paul II, *Homily for the beatification of 3 priest and 2 sisters*, Sunday April 18th, 1993, Rome, n. 6. (translation from italian and polish version by us. There is no official english translation in the website www.vatican.va)

Between the beatification of Sister Faustina in 1993 and her canonization in 2000, there was another "meeting" of John Paul II with the "secretary of Divine Mercy" - as the Lord Jesus himself called her (cf. *Diary, 1693*). It took place in Łagiewniki, to which the Holy Father came on June 7th, 1997 as part of his VI Pilgrimage to Poland. In his speech, he said: *"The Message of Divine Mercy has always been near and dear to me. It is as if history had inscribed it in the tragic experience of the Second World War. In those difficult years it was a particular support and an inexhaustible source of hope, not only for the people of Krakow but for the entire nation. This was also my personal experience, which I took with me to the See of Peter and which in a sense forms the image of this Pontificate. I give thanks to Divine Providence that I have been enabled to contribute personally to the fulfilment of Christ's will, through the institution of the Feast of Divine Mercy (already in 1995, at the request of the Polish Episcopate, the Holy Father introduced this feast for all dioceses in Poland - editor's note). Here, near the relics of Blessed Faustina Kowalska, I give thanks also for the gift of her beatification. I pray unceasingly that God will have "mercy on us and the whole world."* ⁵

The act of entrustment in Łagiewniki

On August 17th, 2002, John Paul II consecrated the monumental church of Divine Mercy that had just been built. In his homily delivered at that time, he emphasized the uniqueness of this holy place for the whole world, saying: *"Yet even though time and the entire world may be considered his "temple", God has chosen certain times and places to enable people to experience in a special way his presence and his grace. Impelled by their sense of faith, people journey to these places, confident that there they will truly find themselves in the presence of God. In this same spirit of faith I have come to Łagiewniki to dedicate this new church. I am convinced that this is the special place chosen by God to sow the grace of his mercy. I pray that this church will always be a place where the message of God's merciful love is proclaimed; a place of conversion and repentance; a place for the celebration of the Eucharist; a fountain of mercy; a place of prayer and of constant appeals for mercy for ourselves and for the whole world."* ⁶

At the end of the homily, St. John Paul II the Great pronounced the solemn words of the Act of entrusting the world to the Divine Mercy. Affected by a serious illness and suffering, the Holy Father said with great fervor: *"Today, therefore, in this Shrine, I wish solemnly to entrust the world to Divine Mercy. I do so with the burning desire that the message of God's merciful love, proclaimed here through Saint Faustina, may be made known to all the peoples of the earth and fill their hearts with hope. May this message radiate from this place to our beloved homeland and throughout the world."* (...) ⁷

God, merciful Father,
in your Son, Jesus Christ, you have revealed your love
and poured it out upon us in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter,
We entrust to you today the destiny of the world and of every man and woman.

Bend down to us sinners,
heal our weakness,
conquer all evil,

⁵ Saint John-Paul II, *Address to the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy*, Shrine of Divine Mercy (Krakow), Saturday June 7th, 1997, n. 1.

⁶ St John Paul II, *Homily of the Dedication of the Shrine of Divine Mercy, Kraków-Łagiewniki*, Saturday August 17th 2002, n. 3.

⁷ *Idem*, n. 5.

and grant that all the peoples of the earth may experience your mercy.
In You, the Triune God, may they ever find the source of hope.

Eternal Father,
by the Passion and Resurrection of your Son,
have mercy on us and upon the whole world!

The Pope of Divine Mercy

According to many people, it is because to this *Act* of St. John Paul II the Great that he deserved to be called the "Pope of Divine Mercy". It seems, however, that the act of Entrusting the world to Divine Mercy is only a crowning of the path that Karol Wojtyła started as a worker in the "Solvay" factory, and then continued as Metropolitan Archbishop of Krakow, then as cardinal and finally as pope. His path, as milestones before the proclamation of the *Act*, included: the commencement of the information process at the diocesan level on October 1st, 1965 in Krakow regarding the life and virtues of sister Faustina, the end of this process on September 20th, 1967, the publication of the encyclica *Dives in misericordia* on November 30th, 1980, the beatification of Sister Faustina (1993), the visit of the sanctuary in Łagiewniki (1997), the canonization of Sister Faustina (2000) and the consecration of the church of Divine Mercy in Kraków Łagiewniki on August 17th, 2002. This, however, did not end his journey along the paths of Divine Mercy. It continued, also after the *Act* of entrusting the world to Divine Mercy. In order to emphasize the importance of this place for the whole world, the church of Divine Mercy consecrated by him, by the Apostolic Letter *Cum postremum* of March 6th, 2003, he raised it to the dignity of a Minor Basilica. Until the end of his days, John Paul II confirmed his deep faith in the mystery of God's Mercy. Everyone remembered how on Holy Friday 2005 he fervently cuddled up to the crucifix, when he was spiritually united from his papal chapel with the Way of the Cross, traditionally celebrated at the Roman Colosseum. And the day of his passing from this world to the Father's House also became truly symbolic - on Saturday evening, April 2nd, 2005, when the Church's liturgy was already celebrating the Feast of Divine Mercy.

To entrust again the world to Divine Mercy

Since the consecration of the church of Divine Mercy, every day, during each Holy Mass, the *Act of entrusting the world to Divine Mercy* is recited. To Our Merciful God is entrusted all sufferings, anxieties and threats of the modern world, as well as all its hopes. Therefore, people associated with the Łagiewniki church, who feel obliged and called to, in accordance with the words of St. John Paul II the Great to kindle the spark of God's grace and be witnesses of mercy, they cordially invite all the devotees of God's Mercy to meditate on the words contained in the *Act of entrusting the world to Divine Mercy* for the next months - until August 2022. Their greatest desire is that next year, on the twentieth anniversary of this *Act*, as many people around the world as possible, looking directly into the eyes of Merciful Christ, with the very depth of their hearts and minds, could say: "*Jesus, I trust in You!*"