

Be Holy!

The Legacy of John Paul The Great

A Q&A Guide to be a Saint Now!

— A “Living Eucharist”

Rev. George W. Kosicki, C.S.B.

Revised edition

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Endorsements

I am delighted to offer words of support for the book you have written, *A Q & A Guide to Holiness*.

The book is well organized and addresses many of the challenges that people face in their daily lives. It represents a nice blending of Scripture, the teaching of the Catholic Catechism, and the devotional life of the Church throughout the ages.

I trust that many people will find the book to be spiritually fruitful and inspiring.

Adam Cardinal Maida
Archbishop of Detroit

The Documents of the Second Vatican Council proclaim the universal call to holiness for all of God's children. Father Kosicki's work combines Sacred Scripture, the writings of Pope John Paul II, and especially the insights of Saint Faustina to provide practical guides for what holiness means to our world today. His message of Divine Mercy and the spiritual life resonate the urgent call for a growth in holiness in all members of the church.

Anthony Cardinal Belivacqua,
Emeritus

If Vatican II has not yet borne its fullest fruit in the Church, it is because we have not taken sufficiently to heart its essential teaching — the call to holiness for every member of the Church. Father Kosicki's book brings us the good news that, for those who have good will and a desire for holiness, intimate union with Christ is available and possible.

Francis Cardinal George, OMI
Archbishop of Chicago

Be Holy! is like your other books: upbeat, joyful, concise, Marian and radiant with insights from St. Faustina.

Rev. Msgr. Arthur B. Calkins
Pontificia Commissio “Ecclesia Dei”

John Paul II teaches that holiness is a *response* to Christ’s gift. Therefore, holiness is not first a matter of “doing,” but of “letting it be done.” Father Kosicki’s Q and A guide to holiness will help all who read it to give their *fiat* to God’s divine gift of holiness

Christopher West

Author, *Good News about Sex & Marriage*
and *Theology of the Body Explained*

Back Cover

Me a saint and a mystic? Why Not?

You must be kidding! I'm too miserable and too much of a sinner to be a saint.

Here is a straightforward guide to holiness. Over one hundred questions and objections answered to help you to rejoice and be glad and become a "Living Eucharist."

Dedication

To St. Faustina: model and teacher of holiness — “the great apostle of Divine Mercy in our time” (John Paul II, April 13, 1994) on her 100th birthday, August 25, 2005.

To Pope John Paul The Great: May 18, 1920 - April 2, 2005, Divine Mercy Sunday.

Pope John Paul II

on the Urgency of Holiness

The call to holiness is especially urgent in our times:

- John Paul II has described the sexual scandal to the cardinals of the U.S.A. as the purification of the Church: “So much pain, so much sorrow must lead to a holier priesthood, a holier episcopate, and a holier Church” (April 23, 2002).
- This year John Paul II reminded the 20 priests he ordained for the diocese of Rome that their vocation is to holiness: “Be holy ministers of Divine Mercy” (April 21, 2002).
- In his plan for the third millennium, John Paul II stressed holiness: “Holiness isn’t an optional extra for some, but is instrumental to Christian life” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, January 2, 2001).
- “The universal call to holiness” is one of the three main themes of John Paul II’s pontificate in implementing the Second Vatican Council (the other two being ecumenism and evangelization).
- “St. Faustina’s Diary appears as a particular [special] Gospel of Divine Mercy ... Christ, crucified and risen, just as he appeared to Sister Faustina [“The great Apostle of Divine Mercy time” (John Paul II Divine Mercy Sunday 1994)], is the supreme revelation of this truth” (*Memory and Identity* Chapter 10).

- “Sister Faustina’s Canonization has a particular eloquence. By this act I intend today to pass on his message to the new Millennium, I pass it on to all people, so that they will learn to know better the true face of God and the true face of their brethren” (Canonization of St. Faustina, Divine Mercy Sunday, April 30, 2000).
- At the Canonization of St. Faustina, Pope John Paul II quoted the Lord’s words to St. Faustina “Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to my mercy” (Diary 300). He went on to say:

It is not a new message but can be considered a gift of special enlightenment that helps us to relive the Gospel of Easter more intensely, to offer it as a ray of light to the men and women of our time (Divine Mercy Sunday, April 30, 2000).
- In his Apostolic Letter on the Year of the Eucharist (2004-2005) Pope John Paul encouraged all the faithful to deepen their Eucharistic devotion as a means to holiness:

May the year of the Eucharist be for all of us a valuable occasion to bring about a new awareness of this incomparable treasure which Christ entrusted to His Church. May it stimulate a livelier and strong felt celebration of this mystery and thus bring to birth a Christian transformation by love ((Mone Nobiscum Domino, Stay with us Lord, #29).

Preface

Fr. George Kosicki, CSB is known to hundreds of thousands of devout Catholics as a most fervent and enthusiastic promoter of the Divine Mercy devotion and of the spiritual legacy of St. Faustina. His writings also on the charismatic experience and its theology proved to be very spiritually valuable to many at the time they were written.

Fr. Kosicki's own personal zeal as well as his analytic mind, has never tired in the effort to make the Christian spiritual life relative and challenging to his readers. In this guide to holiness, arranged as a catechism, he makes practical application of the writings of St. Faustina available to many who have spiritually profited by the devotion to the Divine Mercy. No one should ever simply be satisfied by the devotional aspects of approved private revelation. We are challenged to go deeper and to apply the unique insights of a private revelation to our own spiritual journey. The basic steps of the spiritual life do not change, founded as they are on the Gospel, but the unique insights of a particular revelation need to be studied and emphasized. For example, the powerful motivation of reparation was emphasized by the Sacred Heart devotion.

Fr. Kosicki has identified the principal themes of the writings of St. Faustina as trust, thanksgiving, "being a living Eucharist", and, what she calls, "a bit of good will." Admittedly our humble little peasant nun understates the case when she calls it "a bit of good will." Nevertheless, this opens the door to a growth in the spiritual life and even to some mystical insights on the part of many.

It is important to point out that this is not a new approach to the spiritual life. Quite the contrary, it is the classical approach, but with a focus on Divine Mercy and the other insights of St. Faustina. If you are already much involved with the Divine Mercy devotion this will help you to make some real spiritual progress and get beyond simply the level of your own personal prayer.

Someone has said of the spiritual life, "Not as we pray but as we live, not what we say but

what we give.”

Fr. Kosicki’s book written in the simple catechetical style of questions and answers will be a significant help for many people who are disciples of St. Faustina but who might find a more technical book on the spiritual life intimidating. I hope that a great many people will read and profit from this book as they have from the other books of my dear friend, Fr. George Kosicki.

Benedict J. Groeschel, CFR

Author - The Journey Toward God

Acknowledgements

My very special thanks to Christine Kruszyna the “secretary of Divine Mercy” (as our Lord called St. Faustina, Diary #965) who typed the initial and the revised manuscript so beautifully - on her own personal time - over and above her work as executive secretary of the John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy, Stockbridge, MA.

My thanks to Kimberly Roelant who graciously worked through the text for grammar and spelling and for all the five points. She wrote to me a card of appreciation that she could work on the text: “I *thoroughly enjoyed* this wonderful work! God has bless us through you!”

My prayer is that you, the reader, also be blessed by this challenge to holiness.

My thanks to my brother, Fr. Bohdan Kosicki, and to Father Jack Fabian, pastor of the Companions of Christ the Lamb, for their encouragement to write *Be Holy*.

My thanks to Patricia Menatti who typed the revised edition of June 2005, with such devoted faithfulness.

Introduction

Part I — *The Holiness of John Paul II*

In the April 17, 2005 special issue of *Our Sunday Visitor* on the life and ministry of John Paul II, the statement of the pope on the front page is a summary of his holiness: “It is wonderful to be able to give oneself to the very end for the *sake of the kingdom of God*” (Letter to the elderly, October 1, 1999). It was John Paul II’s great desire to be totally given, to be holy and he also had a great desire that *we be holy*.

Another sign of John Paul II’s holiness was the way that he taught us to live and to die. As he grew older and more infirm his message became even stronger. The power of his life was beautifully described in *John Paul the Great: Maker of the post-conciliar Church*, edited by William Oddie (Ignatius Press, 2005): “The older John Paul becomes, the more clear it is that here is a man who lives wholly for God and for the people of God” (p24).

The sign of John Paul II’s total gift is seen in his availability to youth, to married couples, to the people, and to the nations. This total gift of self is strongly stated in his motto: *TOTUS TUUS* (I am all yours Mary).

But his desire was also *for us* to be totally given to the Lord, to be wholly holy. His desire was based on the documents of The Second Vatican Council that proclaimed that holiness is for everyone and that our holiness is the basis for evangelization and ecumenism. His desire for our holiness was based on his desire for the *truth* which he taught in his fourteen encyclical letters and numerous apostolic letters. In this way he gave a new and fresh interpretation of the documents of Vatican II.

His desire for our holiness can be seen in the number of holy men and women that he beati-

fied (1,345) and Canonized (483) which is more than those canonized in the last 500 years. His desire and challenge to us with all the variety of models of holiness is loud and clear! The number of young people who were challenged to holiness at the World Youth Days is in the millions around the world.

And then the signs “*SANTO SUBITO*” (Saint now) raised up at the funeral of John Paul II are an indication of the effectiveness of John Paul II’s desire and challenge to us to *Be Holy* — *Be a SAINT NOW!* — Be a “Living Eucharist!”

On the feast of Our Lady of Fatima (May 13, 2005, the anniversary of the attempted assassination of John Paul II) Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed that the process of canonization is to begin now and not wait the usual five years before beginning the study. The people of the world virtually canonized John Paul II by their response and the response of the media news commentations were out doing each other in honoring a holy and great man, concluding this with the largest funeral in human history.

Introduction

Part II — *The origins of this book on holiness.*

The topic of holiness and the desire to write on it grew out of writing my biography: *Journey to Mercy: God’s Mercy in My Life*. This format of questions and answers came from a challenge from David Came, editor at the Marian Helpers Center. It started out to be a booklet, but then grew like “topsy” into a book, as I asked more and more questions! One of the themes of the book developed from contemplating, “There is more. There is more. There is so much more!”

This book, “Be Holy!” is a call and a challenge to holiness based on the teachings of Sacred Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II and the life and writings of St.

Faustina. It also reflects the writings of various saints and mystics.

You might ask “Why do I focus on St. Faustina as well as John Paul II? It is well answered by a response of John Paul II to George Weigel, the biographer of the Pope; George Weigel asked the holy father why he wrote the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* (*Rich in Mercy*):

John Paul II, who said that he felt spiritually “very near” to Sister Faustina, had been “thinking about her for a long time” when he began writing *Dives in Misericordia* (George Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 1999).

Also I would refer you to the last book of John Paul II: *Memory over Identity* where he calls the Diary of St. Faustina “a particular [unique] gospel of Divine Mercy ” and he describes the apparition of Jesus to St. Faustina s “the supreme revelation of this truth: [that God’s merciful love itself] (p. 54-55). He also writes that “St. Faustina was chosen by God to be a particularly [uniquely] enlightened interpreter of the truth of Divine Mercy,” (p.5). “It was as if Christ had wanted to reveal the limit upon evil ... is ultimately Divine Mercy ... It is as if Christ wanted to say through her: “Evil does not have the last word” (p. 55).

Holiness is a gift from God that is available for the *asking*. It is a gift available to everyone! It is to be received with thanksgiving and shared with others. So we are not to deny the gift of God as though we don’t have it or that holiness is something we have earned. Rather in real humility and truth we acknowledge our misery and unworthiness and give thanks for the treasure given, for the pure gift of His holiness, His Holy Spirit:

... How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (Lk 11:13).

In the Diary of St. Faustina I found a text describing her desire, that is now my desire:

I desire that my whole life be but one act of thanksgiving to You, O God (*Diary*, 1285).

Lord I pray and desire that I, and all who read this text, become a living thanksgiving to you — a “Living Eucharist!”

The key to being a saint and a mystic according to St. Faustina is the *DESIRE*:

- to be in God’s will; to live in it and do God’s will always.
- to be faithful to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.
- to be present with your heart to the One who is present in your heart: Trusting, Rejoicing, and Giving Thanks.

I have also drawn from my own personal experience of years of Eucharistic Adoration and the desire to be a saint — a merciful, humble, holy presence of Jesus Christ — a “Living Eucharist.”

Over the years I’ve been aware of the need of millions and millions of saints to renew the face of the earth. But, this calls for a holiness that can only be achieved by saying “yes” to the grace of God. And holiness is available to all who say “yes” to God, “I want to be holy!”

Everybody is called to be holy. You and I are to be holy — not just the chosen ones or the super saints. It is God’s plan and desire to make you and me holy by His mercy. It is His gift, so there is nothing to be proud of, but rather we are to be thankful and rejoice that God wants us to be His children. He is in love with you! He is *in love* with all of us!

Rejoice and be glad, give thanks and receive His gift of love! Let Him love and possess you. Let Him transform you. You are created in His image; now let Him make you into His likeness. Trust Him. Allow Him to love you, to possess as His child, as a member of His family. Thank Him — always, everywhere, and for everything — because all is gift.

However, God so respects your freedom, that He will not act against it and so destroy it. He waits. He invites. He longs for us to say: “Yes, let it be done to me according to your word. Fill my heart with Your Holy Spirit.”

We need to know that our holiness is something that God passionately desires and that He will accomplish in us if only we would Trust in Him and invite Him with our “yes” of surrender to

Him.

This is the spiritual teaching of St. Faustina, the “great Apostle of Divine Mercy” (John Paul II, 1994). St. Faustina is both a model and teacher of how to be holy. She challenges all of us to be saints! Her teaching is simple and understandable; for this reason I present to you this book, “Be Holy!” It is the spirituality for the third millennium (see John Paul II, Homily for Canonization of St. Faustina).

The challenge to us all is to “Be Holy;” it is the challenge of the gospel, of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and of Pope John Paul II.

Be holy? Me, become a saint? A mystic? Why not?!! It is a matter of life and death! Say to God: “I want to be holy,” and then, watch Him work!

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Chapter One

The Plan of God

God's plan for the human race is to form a *family of saints*. If that is true, then all of us have lots of questions to ask that need practical and real answers.

This is the purpose of this book of questions and answers on holiness. If we are made by God to become saints, we need to know what holiness is about and how we can become holy. It is a matter of life and death.

So let us start with some fundamental questions.

Q. Did God make us with a plan?

A. Yes. "God created man in His own image and likeness, male and female He created them. He then blessed them saying: 'Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it' " (Genesis 1:25-28).

Q. But what happened to the plan?

A. Our first parents were put to the test in the garden of Eden but they failed. In His mercy, however, God promised a redeemer (see Genesis 3:15).

Our redeemer, Jesus Christ, has called us to the very holiness of God Himself (see 1Thess 4:2-8 and Mt 5:48 and 1 Peter 1:15-16).

Q. Why did God make us?

A. I learned from my grade school catechism that "God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him in Heaven." And this is still the teaching of the Church.

Q. What is God's plan for us?

A. God’s plan for us is “to have mercy on all!” (Romans 11:32) and so form a *family of saints!*

St. Paul then continues to describe God’s plan in an extraordinary canticle of praise:

How deep are the riches and wisdom of God? How inscrutable his judgments, how unsearchable his ways!... (Rom 11:33-36).

Q. What is this family of saints?

A. The family of saints is a way to describe the family God wants to have.

Father Paul Molinari, SJ, a professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, who teaches the postulators (those who promote holy people as candidates to beatification and canonization) said that in a certain sense Jesus was “frustrated” while on earth in Israel because it was not enough for Him to be in one place, at one time, to reveal the magnitude of the Father’s love for us. So, the plan was to give the Holy Spirit to all who said “yes!,” and so they would become children of God.

Q. What does this mean in a practical way?

A. It means that *all of us* are called to be saints. But each one of us is to be *unique, unrepeatable* and *precious* saints, like gems in the great family mosaic God is forming, a great family of saints. “How deep are the riches... of God!” (Rom 11:32).

Q. Does that mean all of us are called to be saints?

A. Yes! All of us are called to be saints — to be holy! This is the teaching of Sacred Scripture, of the Church, of the Second Vatican Council, and of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It is illustrated for us by the many saints who have gone before us as great examples and encouragers, such as St. Faustina, who has just been officially recognized as belonging to the great family.

Chapter Two

Holiness

Q. What does it mean to be holy?

A. On God's part, holiness means being who He is — He is the thrice Holy God, radiating His glory. He is Love and Mercy itself!

On our part, holiness is being *transparent* to God's presence within our hearts.

Transparency is the key to our being holy. We radiate His presence, His holiness to others.

Thus, holiness is:

- Transparency to God's presence,
- Radiating God's presence,
- Radiating the Holy Spirit,
- Radiating the presence of Jesus Christ.

Holiness is sharing in the same Holy Spirit that anointed Jesus Christ — this is what it means to be a Christian — one who is Christed.

The *effect of holiness* is that:

- we no longer live, but Christ lives in us (see Gal. 2:19-20).
- we become a living Eucharist, a radiating presence of Christ's mercy, humility, and holiness.
- we become a "morning star," transparent, transfigured, divinized, possessed in body, soul and spirit by the radiant presence of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (see 2 Peter 1:19; Phil 2:15).

- we radiate Love and Mercy itself (see *Diary*, 1074).
- we radiate the rays of mercy to the whole world (see *Diary*, 441).

God's plan for us all is to transform us into His family by making us holy as He is holy. It is all His gift and it is not earned. It is to be desired, expected, asked for, received, and allowed to radiate. It is to be acknowledged with thanksgiving and praise.

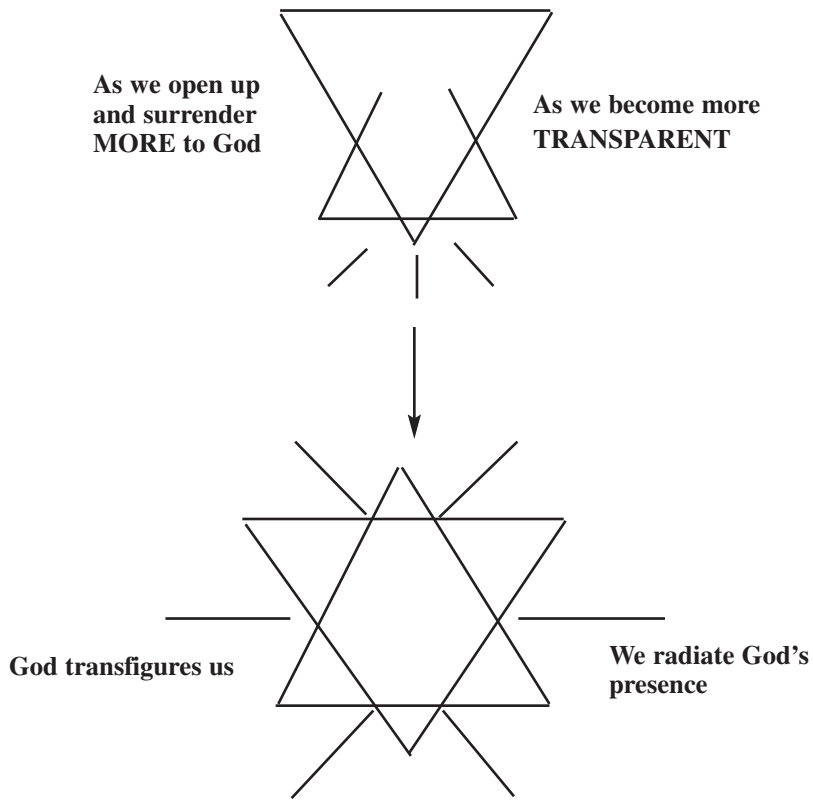
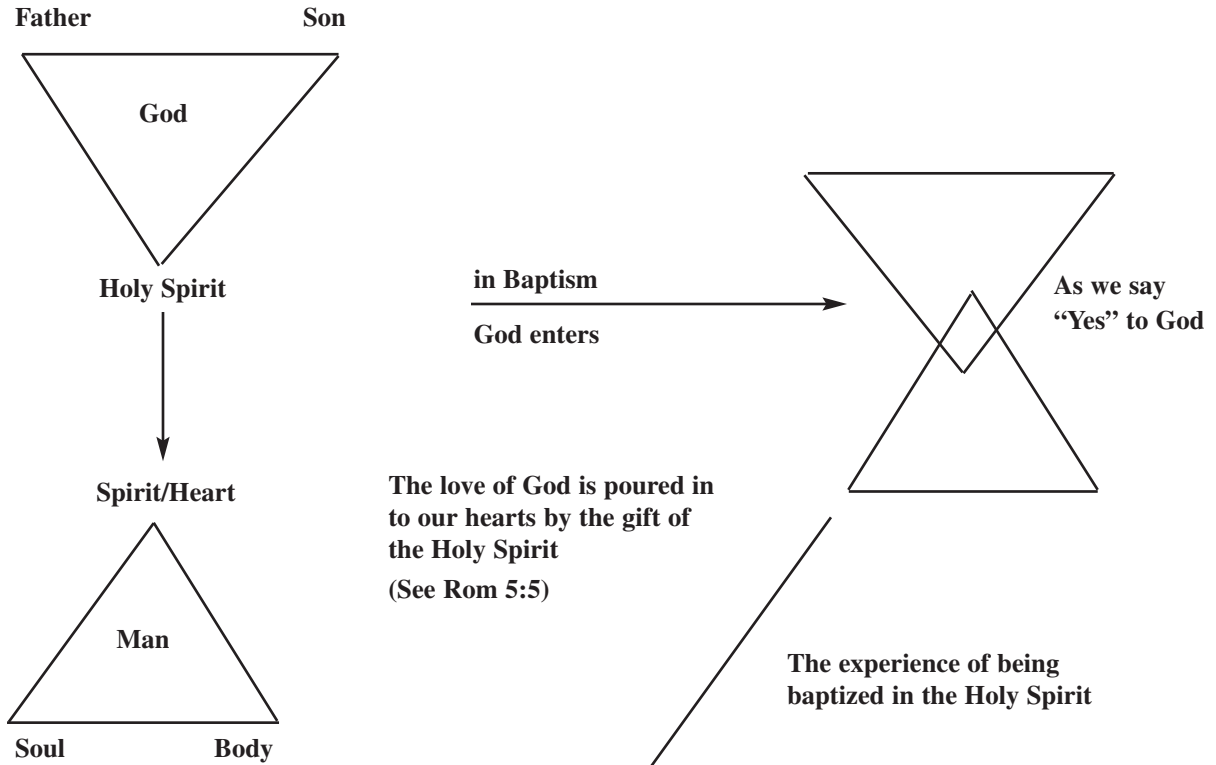
Q. Tell me more about being a “Morning Star.” How does that happen?

A. St. Peter tells us about his experience on Mount Tabor when he saw Jesus transfigured like the morning star, the shining sun of the dawn. This is the way St. Peter described the transfiguration of Jesus in his second letter:

It was not by way of cleverly concocted myths that we taught you about the coming in power of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we were eye witnesses of his sovereign majesty. He received glory and praise from God the Father when that unique declaration came to him out of the majestic splendor: “This is my Son, on whom my favor rests.” We ourselves heard this said from heaven as we were in his company on the holy mountain. Besides, we possess the prophetic word as something altogether reliable. Keep your attention closely fixed on it, as you would on a lamp shining in a dark place until the first streaks of dawn appear and the morning star rises in your hearts (2 Peter 1: 16-19).

Until the *morning star rises in your hearts!* The morning star, Jesus Christ, will rise in your heart if you say “yes” to His plan!

Consider a series of diagrams that help to illustrate God's plan to have the “morning star” rise in your heart:



The Morning Star radiates: (2 Peter 1:15-19)
"You shine like the stars in the sky" (Phil 2:15).

I love the answer a little boy gave to his teacher's question: "What is a saint?" The boy scratched his head and then responded: "Do you mean like the saint in the stained-glass windows in the Church?" "Yes, they are saints," the teacher encouraged him. The boy then with a radiant face said: "Then a saint is someone the light shines through!"

Yes, the presence of God is to shine through us — to radiate to others.

Q. If holiness is being transparent to God's presence, what makes us non-transparent?

A. In one word sin! Sin is our willful decision to turn away from the Holy God and not radiate His love and mercy.

Other ways in which we block transparency are by our self-concern, our over exaggerated self-importance, our self-seeking of pride, of power, and of pleasure.

God who created us with a free will and intelligence so respects our free will and unique identity that He will not violate our freedom and personhood. So He waits for us to say "yes" to Him and His plan for us to be saints. He waits patiently and at times impatiently. He will shake us to wake us up to His great plan for us.

Q. What can make me transparent to God's holiness?

- We can *invite* the Lord to come into our hearts to do His work of holiness. The Lord never refuses an invitation! He will make us transparent.
- We can say "yes" to God's plan of holiness for us.
- We can say "yes" to His will.
- We can express our *desires* to Him to be holy.
- We can *ask* with expectant faith for His Holy Spirit to come into our hearts ever more fully (Rom 5:5).
- We can *allow* the Lord to work in and through us and radiate His presence to others.
- We can live in His presence with loving attentiveness.

God's plan is to purge us clean and scrub us with the fire of His love. He doesn't want any sin

in the way that will make us opaque to His radiant presence. And more than that, in His great love for us, He wants to make more space for Himself within our hearts.

It means that we must acknowledge our sinfulness and repent and change, making regular use of His sacrament of Reconciliation to forgive our sins and to heal our wounds. The more we acknowledge our misery and unworthiness and plunge into the ocean of His mercy with ever greater trust in the Lord, the more the Lord's loving mercy will make us more transparent to His presence in our hearts.

He wants us to be like transparent crystals, like diamonds radiating His light. But we are more like lumps of coal than diamonds. But there is great hope! Even a lump of coal, consisting of black carbon, can be transformed into a diamond which is a crystal of carbon. Yes, for a lump of coal to be transformed into a diamond, it takes heat, pressure and time, and it will be crystallized into a transparent sparkling jewel. With a "yes" to God's loving mercy allowing Him to love us, He can transform us into a radiant transparency.

St. Faustina writes of God's plan of mercy to make us radiate:

Tell [all people], My daughter, that I am love and mercy itself. When a soul approaches Me with trust, I fill it with such an abundance of graces that it cannot contain them within itself, but radiates them to other souls (Diary, 1074).

Q. How can I respond more fully to the presence of the Lord in my heart?

- I can thank and praise Him.
- I can adore and worship Him.
- I can love Him with my whole heart, my whole mind and my whole strength.
- I can love and serve my neighbor as another self, loving the Lord present in him.
- I can do all that I do in order to please Him.

- I can smile at Him present in my heart.
- I can sing songs of praise and love to Him.
- I can ask Him questions and expect answers on how to love Him more.
- I can trust Him even more.
- In times of darkness, I can ask the favorite question of St. John of the Cross: “Where are you hidden now?” The Lord’s answer “In the depths of your heart!”
- I can “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing, and in all things give thanks, because this is the will of God in Christ Jesus regarding you all” (1 Thess 5:16- 19). This takes time and faithful perseverance.
- I can allow God’s glory, presence, love and mercy to radiate out to others.

Q. If transparency is the key to holiness, then what is the key to transparency?

A. The key to transparency is humility. Humility is the *truth* — the truth that *God is God* and *I am not*, acknowledged and lived. Humility is also *totality* — that all we have is all gift from God. And humility is also *transparency* — that seeing us, others can see the radiant presence of God.

I like to describe humility in a formula: HT₃. Humility is truth, totality, and transparency. In this sense humility describes God Himself. God is living truth. And in the words of Pope Paul VI, God is totality — total gift:

The Father continually and totally gives Himself in a gift of love to the Son in a burst of joyful generosity, and the Son returns that love in a burst of joyful thanksgiving in the Holy Spirit. (Gaudete in Domino, 1975).

This “Law of the gift” describes His totality in giving Himself. Jesus describes His transparency in His response to Philip to show us the Father:

Philip, after I have been with you all this time, you still do not know me?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. ... Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me (Jn 14:8-11).

Q. So then what is the key to humility?

A. The key to humility is to *be humble* in practical daily life. We live humbly by *trusting* in the Lord, by *thanking* Him for all that we have received, and by fulfilling our daily *tasks*. Again I express a formula: H¹T₃.

The key to *practicing* humility is *thanksgiving*. Giving thanks to God unceasingly is God's will for all of us (1 Thess 5:16-19) and is what the celebration of the Holy Eucharist is all about. (The word Eucharist means thanksgiving in Greek). By thanksgiving we acknowledge that God is the source of all good gifts and that to Him alone belongs all the glory:

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever! (acclamation after the Our Father prayer).

I find it amazing that humility is so strongly declared by Mary in her Magnificat; by St. Augustine who states that "Humility, humility and again humility" is the fundamental virtue of the spiritual life; by St. Faustina who records the words of her confessor, the Blessed Mother and our Lord to practice: "humility, humility and again humility."

How powerfully St. Faustina writes of humility and holiness:

O humility, strike deep roots in my whole being. O Virgin most pure, but also most humble, help me to attain deep humility. Now I understand why there are so few saints; it is because so few souls are deeply humble (Diary, 1306).

Q. If thanksgiving is so important to humility, tell me more about thanksgiving.

A. Jesus thanked and praised His Father in prayer as He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit (Lk 10:21). He thanked the Father in offering the bread and wine which He transformed into His Body and Blood as His gift of Himself to us.

St. Paul exhorts us to:

Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness... singing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms and inspired songs. Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God the Father through him (Col 3: 15-17).

St. Faustina dedicated herself to thankfulness throughout her life:

Jesus, I thank you for the daily crosses ... I thank you Jesus, for interior sufferings ... I thank you, Jesus, You who first drank the cup of bitterness before You gave it to me, in a much milder form ... Thank you, o Jesus, for everything! (Diary, 343)

In her last eight day retreat she was led to plunge herself into seven days and nights of continual thanksgiving for so many graces and blessings from God (see Diary 1367 to 1374).

I called upon all heaven and earth to join me in my act of thanksgiving (Diary, 1369). Coming out of this retreat, I feel thoroughly transformed by God's love (Diary, 1370).

Again I have a formula, this time a mnemonic to T.H.A.N.K.: “**T**otal, **H**abitual, **A**cknowledging, **N**ever-ending, **K**indness.

When St. Faustina joined her thanksgiving to her life of trust it was explosive — like dynamite (**T**rin**i**trotoluene) **T**'**N**T — **T**rust ‘**n** **T**hanks (**T**'**N**T).

I began this great act of thanksgiving by renewing my vows. My soul became thoroughly immersed in God, and there issued from my whole being but one single flame of gratitude and thanksgiving to God... (Diary, 1369).

Q. How can I be a saint? I'm so inadequate...

A. This is the question that Father Leo McCauley, S.J. would love to answer. Fr. Leo, God rest

his soul, was on our Bethany House of Intercession team for six years. He was former head of the Classics Department at Boston College and was a model for us all. He would love to respond to people who complained about their inadequacy to be a saint: “How can I be a saint with all my misery?” He would respond to them with a smile: “Oh, don’t worry, you *are* inadequate!”

And thanks be to God that all of us are inadequate to be a saint. Only God is adequate! In our inadequacy we are in the perfect condition to receive God’s mercy. Only two kinds of people receive God’s mercy: the miserable and the humble (and I say the humble for the sake of the Blessed Mother).

It is only by God’s mercy that anyone can be a saint. And what a marvel God’s mercy is — it makes *saints* of sinners and of the miserable and of the inadequate! So how can you be a saint? By God’s mercy! Desire it; expect it; ask for it; receive it; and give thanks for it as you share it with others.

St. Teresa of Avila describes God’s invitation to a holy life in terms of His mercy:

His mercy is so great that He hinders no one from drinking from the fountain of life. He calls loudly to do so (Jn 7:37). But He is so good that He will not force us to drink of it (*The Way of Perfection*, Chapter 20).

Chapter Three

Mysticism

Q. Do I have to be a mystic?

A. Yes! To give a short and blunt answer that is powerfully developed in Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *At the Beginning of the New Millennium*:

The great mystical tradition of the Church of both East and West has much to say on this regard. It shows how prayer can progress, as a genuine dialogue of love, to the point of rendering the person wholly possessed by the divine Beloved, *vibrating at the spirit's touch, resting fully withing the Father's heart. This is the lived experience of Christ's promise: "He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself in him" (Jn 14:21, emphasis added #33).*

What a marvelous description of the spiritual life! "Vibrating at the Spirit's touch! This truly is a lived experience!"

John Paul II continues to describe the mystical life as a journey to union with God — lived by the Saints of the Church as an example for us to follow:

It is a journey totally sustained by grace, which nonetheless demands an intense spiritual commitment and is no stranger to painful purification (the "dark night") But it leads, in various possible ways, to the ineffable joy experienced by the mystics as "nuptial union." How can he forget here, among the many shining examples, the teachings of St. John of the Cross and Sr. Teresa of Avila? (#33).
...and we might add St T  r  se of Lisieux, St. Faustina and many others.

Q. I'm no mystic! Isn't mysticism for the Super Saints?

A. There is a deception here. Being a mystic is not for the super saints alone, it is for every one of us; because we are all called to be holy as God is holy.

A *note* on the relationship of mysticism and holiness: Mysticism can not always be equated with holiness, but saints are always mystics.

But to correct the deception that mysticism is for the special saints, we need to define and describe what it means to be a mystic. I am drawing my information from one of the leading scholars on mysticism, Father Harvey D. Egan, S.J., who gathers the Church's teaching and tradition from the saints and theologians in his book, *Christian Mysticism: the future of a tradition*, (Pueblo Publishing Company, New York, 1984.)

To explain mysticism and how to become a mystic, I need to review some of the theology and tradition of the Church. So hold on, and be patient. You'll find the review helpful to your understanding and experience of mysticism. It is all a normal part of what it means to be a Christian and our call to holiness.

In his preface, Fr. Egan states the purpose of his book:

This book emphasizes Christian mysticism as the fullness of both Christian religious experience and authentic human living ... The mystics amplify and make visible what human life is ultimately about: being loved by a God of unconditional love. Their lives bring into focus the faith, hope, and love [in one word, trust] which haunt every human heart.

In Chapter One, Fr Egan stresses mysticism primarily as "a way of life in which one explicitly experiences God's purifying, illuminating and transforming love."

The classic definitions of mysticism equate mystical *Theology* with mystical *experience*. Father William Johnston, S.J., a contemporary writer on mysticism, defines mysticism as the "wisdom or knowledge that is found through love; it is loving knowledge." And Fr. Johnston further emphasizes that all religious experience has a mystical aspect.

Evelyn Underhill a major scholar of mysticism writes that “mysticism is no isolated vision ... but a *complete system of life* ... an ordered movement” by which a person is purified by, illumines by, and eventually fully united with the God of love. For the Christian mystic only God is holy.

Underhill gives *five characteristics* of authentic Christian mysticism:

1. It is a way of life — a battle, a pilgrimage, a quest, a search.
2. All the mystic really wants and needs is God and God alone.
3. Mysticism in theory and practice is love. The mystic is in love with God the self- giving- love.
4. Genuine mysticism is a vital union with the God of love. The mystic becomes a lens that concentrates and focuses the divine rays into a single point of burning, transforming love [a burning flame of love — see St. Faustina].
5. The authentic mystic is never selfish [it is a death to self] self-forgetting, self- transcending, self-surrendering to the all consuming mystery of LOVE [God Himself].

Father Augustine Poulain, SJ, (in *Graces of the Interior Prayer*) lists *two primary characteristics* of genuine Christian mysticism [as well as ten secondary characteristics]:

1. the first: *the experiential, felt presence of God.*
2. the second: (How the mystic feels God’s presence): by “spiritual senses” (first described by the early father of the Church Origin). The Christian mystical tradition attests to a spiritual form of touching, hearing, tasting, smelling, and seeing God.

Father Egan gathers together a description of Christian mysticism:

The Christian mystic claims to experience an immediate contact with God as *Beloved* that eventually dominates his entire life and being. Christian mysticism is the palpable loving union of the mystic with the God of truth and love. The felt presence of a loving union with God purifies, illuminates, and eventually transforms the mystic into truth and love themselves.

The descriptions of mystics about their experience of God is only one avenue of understanding mysticism. The main avenue of understanding and experiencing God is through the Holy Scriptures. We need to investigate what the Old and New Testaments tell us about knowing and loving God — so that we may more fully experience the presence of the loving God.

Q. What does the Lord teach us in Sacred Scripture about His call to holiness and about mysticism?

A. In the Old Testament the Lord made very clear His call to holiness:

The Lord said to Moses: “Speak to the whole Israelite community and tell them: *Be holy, for I the Lord your God, am holy* (Leviticus 19:1). ... Sanctify yourselves, then, and be holy; for I, the Lord, your God, am holy. Be careful, therefore, to observe what I, the Lord, who make you holy, have prescribed (Leviticus 20: 7-8).

According to Father Egan, S.J., in the Old Testament the prophets were essentially mystics in action. The patriarchs and prophets were models of those who experienced God as the Holy, as the tremendous and fascinating Mystery. They taught the Israelites to *expect* the same gift of faith as they themselves had received. Israel’s faithful people certainly experienced communion with God, His saving presence, His protecting hand, and His steadfast loving mercy, the felt presence of God which permeated Israel’s life in the blessings and praises found throughout the psalms. The Old Testament mysticism remains a preliminary stage to God’s New Covenant, which would “give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor 4:6).

In the New Testament the foundation of all Christian holiness and mysticism is *Jesus Christ!* “Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ” (Jn 17:3).

With the “spiritual senses” we come to understand that:

- *to see* Christ, is to see the Father (Jn 14:19);
- *to hear* Christ, is to hear the Father (Lk 10:16);
- *to know* Christ, is to know the Father (Jn 17:3);

- to *love* Christ, is to be loved by the Father (Jn 14:21).

Jesus was also conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit. He claimed to be possessed by Him and worked by the power of the Holy Spirit. He sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and transformed the disciples into the Mystical Body of Christ, a Church with a powerful missionary force.

The New Testament, Father Egan points out, contains not only a God-mysticism, but also a Christ-mysticism, and a Spirit-mysticism. St. John's gospel focuses more on Jesus as the way to a Father-centered mysticism. The Spirit is the power behind a Christ-mysticism for Christians throughout the ages. For John, there is a mystical hunger and thirst that only Jesus, the living bread and the giver of living water, can quench, by the Spirit.

Pauline mysticism, on the other hand, centers more upon Christ. Time and again, St. Paul spoke of being "in Christ." For him, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). Yet neither a Spirit mysticism nor a God-mysticism is lacking in Paul. Christ became a "life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor 15:45), and it is in Christ that the Father appears to us, reveals Himself to us, and unites us to Himself.

Father Egan summarizes his statements on mysticism: "Christian mystical life and consciousness must be emphatically trinitarian, ecclesial, sacramental, and inextricably bound to the crucified and risen Christ."

Q. Could you tell me again, in a short and clear way what mysticism is?

A. Mysticism is the way of life of a *mystic*:

- The mystic experiences the purifying, illuminating and transforming presence of the loving God.
- The mystic is in love with God who is love itself.
- The mystic searches for God who is even more in search of the mystic.
- The mystic lives in the presence of God.

- The mystic contemplates the awesome presence of God.

Q. What is contemplation?

A. Contemplation is the prayer that is characteristic of the mystic:

- It is the prayer of the heart.
- It is prayer without words, without images.
- It is a prayer of presence to the One who is present in your heart.
- It is prayer as described by St. Thérèse of Lisieux:

For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and love, embracing both trial and joy (quoted by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2558).

- It is a “loving attentiveness to God” (St. John of the Cross and St. Theresa of Avila).
- It is like an open, upward spiral of love that leads to knowledge which leads to still greater love — that leads to union with the ever-greater God who is love and truth itself.
- It is *being* with Jesus at the throne of the Father.

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta gave a description of contemplation then answers the question of what is contemplations. It is my favorite definition:

Contemplation is simply to realize God’s constant presence and his tender love for us (*Thirsty for God, A Yearbook of Prayers, Meditations, and anecdotes of Mother Teresa*, Servant Publications, Compiled by Fr. Angelo Scolozzi October 14).

Pope John Paul II gave us the prayer for the Third Millennium.

Contemplate the face of Jesus with Mary (at the *Beginning of the New Millennium* and the the document on the Rosary and the Encyclical on the

Eucharist).

Q. What does the Church teach about the call to holiness and mysticism?

A. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives a clear teaching on holiness and mysticism. The teaching is based on Sacred Scripture, the tradition of the Church, the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, the experience of the Fathers of the Church and saints of all ages.

In short the Catechism teaches: *that all are called to holiness and to an ever more intimate union with Christ* (called a “mystical union”; see #2014 below):

2013 All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity.” All are called to holiness: “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (*Mt 5:48*)

In order to reach this perfection the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ’s gift, so that ... doing the will of the Father in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor. Thus, the holiness of the People of God will grow in fruitful abundance, as is clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints. (*LG 40 § 2*)

2014 Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ. This union is called “mystical” because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments — “the holy mysteries” — and, in Him, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God calls us all to this intimate union with Him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all.

The Catechism further teaches about the *more*:

2015 The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness

without renunciation and spiritual battle. (Cf. 2 *Tim* 4) Spiritual progress entails the ascesis and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes: He who climbs never stops from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. In Cant.* 8: PG 44, 941C)

The Catechism also teaches us about the “blessed hope” that the mercy of God prepares for us:

2016 The children of our holy mother the Church rightly hope for *the grace of final perseverance and the recompense* of God their Father for the good works accomplished with his grace in communion with Jesus. (Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1576) Keeping the same rule of life, believers share the “blessed hope” of those whom the divine mercy gathers into the “holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (*Rev* 21:2)

All is a blessing:

1077 “Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us before him in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” (*Eph* 1:3-6)

1978 Blessing is a divine and life-giving action, the source of which is the Father; his blessing is both word and gift. (*eu-logia, bene-dictio*) When applied to man, the word “blessing” means adoration and surrender to his Creator in thanksgiving.

1079 From the beginning until the end of time the whole of God’s work is a

blessing. From the liturgical poem of the first creation to the canticles of the heavenly Jerusalem, the inspired authors proclaim the plan of salvation as one vast divine blessing.

The Church responds in two dimensions of the liturgy to all the blessings of the Father bestowed on us — in word and sacrament we 1). *Adore*, thank and praise Him and 2). *We offer* Him His own gifts and beg for more of the Holy Spirit.

1083 The dual dimension of the Christian liturgy as a response of faith and love to the spiritual blessings the Father bestows on us is thus evident. On the one hand, the Church, united with her Lord and “in the Holy Spirit,” (*Lk* 10:21) blesses the Father “for his inexpressible gift” (*2 Cor* 9:15) in her adoration, praise, and thanksgiving. On the other hand, until the consummation of God’s plan, the Church never ceases to present to the Father the offering of his own gifts and to beg him to send the Holy Spirit upon that offering, upon herself, upon the faithful, and upon the whole world, so that through communion in the death and resurrection of Christ the Priest, and by the power of the Spirit, these divine blessings will bring forth the fruits of life “to the praise of his glorious grace” (*Eph* 1:6).

Q. How does the liturgy of the Church pray for holiness and mysticism?

A. The liturgy of the Church prays for holiness of its members in the celebration of Holy Mass:

Grant that we, who are nourished by his body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ. (Eucharistic Prayer III)

Father, from the beginning of time you have always done what is good for man so that *we may be holy as you are holy*. (Eucharistic Prayer of Reconciliation I, emphasis added)

In the orations for various saints, the Church prays for our holiness, for example for the feast of St. Theresa of Avila:

- Father, by your Spirit you raised up St. Theresa of Jesus to show your Church the way to perfection. May her inspired teaching awaken in us a longing for true holiness. (Oration for the liturgy of St. Theresa of Avila, October 15th)
- In the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church prays for mercy and our holiness: The Lord sees all men as sinners, that he might have mercy on all (Week I, Tuesday Daytime Prayer, Antiphon 3).
- Lord, show us the radiance of your mercy (Week II, Monday Daytime Prayer, Antiphon 2).
- I have put all my trust in God's never-failing mercy (Week II, Office of Readings, Antiphon 3).
- Wherever you are, Lord, there is mercy, there is truth (Week III, Office of Readings, Antiphon 1).
- Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they will be satisfied (Week IV, Sunday, Evening Prayer II, Antiphon 2).
- If you hunger for holiness, God will satisfy your longing, good measure, and flowing over (Week IV, Thursday Evening Prayer, Antiphon of the Magnificat)
- Open to me the gates of holiness: I will enter and give thanks (Ps 118, used six times during the four week cycle).

Q. What are the key Sacred Scripture texts that CALL US to holiness and mysticism?

A. Here are a few examples:

- "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48; NAB).
- "Be holy for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16; NAB).

- “Remain in me as I remain in you” (Jn 15:4, RNAB) Note: Other English translations render this text as: “Live in me as I do in you” (NAB). “Make your home in me as I make mine in you” (JB). “Abide in me and I in you” (Douaj Rhemes RSV).
- “Love one another even as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34 RSV)
- “Be merciful even as your Father is merciful (Lk 6:36).
- “May the God of Peace make you perfect in holiness” (1 Thess 5:23, NAB).

Our call to holiness and mystical union with the Lord is amazing in that we are called to the very holiness of God Himself. To be perfect *as*, to love *as*, to be merciful *as*, and to abide in Him *as* he abides in us! The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has a strong and clear teaching on this little word “as.”

... as we forgive those who trespass against us

2842 This “as” is not unique in Jesus’ teaching: “You, therefore, must be perfect *as* your heavenly Father is perfect”; “Be merciful, even *as* your Father is merciful”: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even *as* I have loved you, that you also love one another” (*Mt* 5:48; *Lk* 6:36; *Jn* 13:34). It is impossible to keep the Lord’s commandment by imitating the divine model from outside; there has to be a vital participation, coming from the depths of the heart, in the holiness and the mercy and the love of our God. Only the Spirit by whom we live can make “ours” the same mind that was in Christ Jesus (Cf. *Gal* 5:25; *Phil* 2:1, 5). Then the unity of forgiveness becomes possible and we find ourselves “forgiving one another, *as* God in Christ forgave” us (*Eph* 4:32).

We are called to love God with our whole heart, our whole soul and our whole mind (*Mt* 22:37; *Lk* 10:27; *Mk* 12:30) and our neighbor as another self. This is holiness and mysticism in action! The measure of our love must reflect the measure of God’s love for us:

- “God so loved the world that he gave his only son” (Jn 3:16 NAB).
- “There is no greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13 NAB).

There are other texts that call us to holiness and mysticism, among them:

- “The mystery of Christ in you, your hope of glory” (Col 1:27 NAB).
- “This is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess 4:3 NAB).
- “May the God of peace make you perfect in holiness” (1 Thess 5:23 NAB).
- “Venerate the Lord, that is, Christ in your hearts” (1 Peter 3:15 NAB).

Q. What does Sacred Scripture say about the HOLY SPIRIT and holiness and mysticism?

A. A few examples illustrate the role of the Holy Spirit:

- “The Spirit of truth ... remains in you and will be within you” (Jn 14:17).
- “The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5).
- “The Spirit of God dwells in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he does not belong to Christ” (Rom 8:9).
- “... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5).
- “Be filled with the Spirit ...” (Eph 5:18).

Q. What are the key texts of the Sacred Scripture on the EXPERIENCE of God?

A. The key to the *experience* of God is the biblical language for *knowledge* of God: it is not merely the conclusion of an intellectual process but the fruit of an *experience*, a personal contact and relationship. When it matures it is love (see Jerusalem Bible note on Jn 10:14). So in the fol-

Following texts knowledge is used in the biblical sense:

- “Now Adam *knew* Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain” (Genesis 4:1).
- “I *know* my own and my own *know* me (Jn 10:14 NAB).
- “And eternal life is this: to *know* you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (Jn 17:3 NAB).

The biblical language for knowledge is one example of the “spiritual senses” that are the way in which we experience God. Another example is the use of the word *heart* — by which we experience God by seeing with the “eyes of the heart”:

St. Paul prays:

“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the *eyes of your heart* be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches in his inheritance among the holy ones” (Eph 1:17-18 RNAB).

[St. Paul prays further] “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have the strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and come to know [experience, NAB] the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:17-19 RNAB).

I love the text of King Solomon’s prayer for discernment. He is asking for a heart with an ear on it to listen to the needs of the people in order to govern them:

“Give your servant a *heart to understand* how to discern between good and evil, for who could govern this people of yours that is so great” (1 Kings 3:9, Jerusalem Bible).

Chapter Four

The Key to Growth

Q. What is the key to holiness and mysticism?

A. In one word: MORE! There is more, there is more, there is so much more! St. Paul writes about the more:

“What we utter is God’s wisdom: a mysterious, a hidden wisdom. God planned it before all ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age knew the mystery; if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory. Of this wisdom it is written:

‘Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him.’

“Yet God has revealed this wisdom to us through the Spirit” (1 Cor 2:7-10).

Q. What is the MORE of mysticism?

A. The *more* is not a “what,” but a “Who!” The Holy Spirit is the *more* of mysticism, Who in turn makes *Jesus* more present and radiant!

St. Paul continues in the text of his letter to the Corinthians to describe what the Holy Spirit does:

The Spirit scrutinizes all matters, even the deep things of God ... the Spirit we have received is not the world’s spirit but God’s Spirit, helping us to recognize the gifts he has given us (1 Cor 2:10- 12).

The Holy Spirit is the KEY to the MORE of mysticism!

Q. What do I do to receive more of the Holy Spirit?

A. Ask! Invoke the Holy Spirit! — repeatedly. We are cracked earthen vessels (2 Cor 4:7) so we need to be refilled. And so we pray: “Come Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of your faithful.”

We received the Holy Spirit in our baptism when the love of God was poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (see Rom 5:5). But St. Paul reminds us as he did his disciple Timothy “to stir into flame the gift of God” (2 Tim 1:6). So we pray, “enkindle in us the fire of your love.”

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, another paraclete, the Spirit of Truth to be with us always (Jn 14:14-17), to instruct and remind us (Jn 14:26) of the truth Jesus has revealed. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit’s presence was a new presence of Jesus. St. Basil the Great described the work of the Holy Spirit in terms of *presence*: as Jesus made the Father present, so the Holy Spirit makes Jesus present — in a new way — in our hearts.

St. John writes to show us how we are to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit: “This is how we can recognize God’s Spirit; every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God” (1 Jn 4:2).

St. Paul makes it very clear and strong that the Holy Spirit proclaims Jesus: “No one can say: ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). He encourages us: “Be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Eph 5:18).

The Holy Spirit is not only a presence of Jesus but He is the *glory* that Jesus receives from the Father and returns to the Father and now gives to us! Repeatedly Jesus spoke of the glory as recorded in His priestly prayer (some 8 times in John 17).

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus told us to ask, seek, and knock: “... how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” (Lk 11:10-13). But to receive more of the Holy Spirit we need to ask with an *expectant faith* for His presence and His gifts that build up the Church. We should ask Him for the release of His gifts given to us in the Sacraments of

Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist.

If you don't have the expectant faith to be open to and to receive all the gifts the holy Spirit wants to give you, then ask some members of the Church that do have the expectant faith to pray with you with the laying on of hands. Their faith builds your faith to receive.

There is more. There is more, so much more. So ask! "How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Lk 11:13).

Q. What is the MASTER KEY to more holiness and more mysticism?

A. Love! "God is Love" (1 Jn 4:8).

St. John writes: "Love, then, consists in this; not that we have loved God, but that he has loved us and sent his Son as an offering for our sins" (1 Jn 4:10). He also writes about what we are now and what we are to be in the future because of God's love for us: "Dearly beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall later be has not yet come to light. We know that when it comes to light we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2).

St. Faustina in one of many entries in her Diary writes of the infinite value and power of love:

And God has given me to understand that there is but one thing that is of infinite value in His eyes, and that is love of God; love, love and once again, love; and nothing can compare with a single act of pure love of God. Oh, with what inconceivable favors God gifts a soul that loves Him sincerely! Oh, how happy is the soul who already here on earth enjoys His special favors! And of such are the little and humble souls (Diary, 778).

O Love, O queen! Love knows no fear, It passes through all the choirs of angels that stand on guard before His throne. It will fear no one. It reaches God and is immersed in Him as in its sole treasure. The Cherubim who guards paradise with flaming sword, has no power over it. O pure love of God, how great and

unequaled you are! Oh, if souls only knew your power! (Diary, 781)

Q. What are we to be? What are we called to?

A. *Union with God!*

We are called to a union with the Father in Christ Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. The Sacred Scriptures speak of this union as a spousal union, as marriage (see Hosea 2:21-22, Revelation 21:9, and Eph 5:21-23). St. John of the Cross uses the spousal imagery of our union with God as the least inadequate analogy to describe what God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor 2:9). This union is a flame of love, the fire of divine love.

Jesus said that He is the *Way* and the *Truth* and the *Life* — all to bring us to union of love with the Father through the Holy Spirit — forming the grand family of God. We are to be the bride of Christ.

Q. What can I do to respond to God's love for me?

A. Since God is “in love” with you:

- *Allow* Him to love you!
- *Allow* Him to make space for grace, to make space for Himself, to live in you.
- *Allow* Him to reveal His plan, His desire, His love for you.
- *Invite* Him into your heart to act as He will.
- *Let* Him set your heart on fire.
- *Love* Him in return, with your whole heart, your whole mind and your whole strength, and your neighbor as yourself.
- *Let* Him fill your heart with one desire for Him.
- *Ask* that He draw you so that you may be drawn.

- *Ask* for a greater desire for Him.
- *Ask* for a greater love for Him.
- *Ask* for more of the Holy Spirit to set your heart on fire.
- *Ask* for His love and mercy for souls.
- *Ask* for more of His love to join your sufferings with Him so that you may find joy.
- *Abide* in Him as He abides in you.
- Do all to *please Him*.
- *Be present* to Him.
- *Seek* His will and do it.
- *Rejoice* and be glad that the Lord loves you and is present in you.
- *Rejoice* and be thankful for His love and His invitation to abide in Him.
- *Rejoice* and jubilate in the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus loves you and is present to you.
- *Rejoice!* The Lord is in love with you!
- “*Venerate* the Lord, that is, Christ in your hearts” (1 Peter 3:15).

Q. But how do I do all those wonderful things?

A. 1. *Die to self* and *live for Him!*

Die to self and live by your baptismal grace!

How? Rejoice in your misery - Christ is your life, He is mercy itself!

Rejoice in your humiliations as you die to your:

- sin
- exaggerated self-importance

- self-concern and fears
- self-pleasing pleasures
- self-righteousness
- self-satisfaction
- self-exaltation

2. *Forget your self-concern* and be concerned for God and souls. *Live for Him* - who died for you.

How?

- *Be present* to Him who is present to you in your heart and listen to Him.
- *Abide in Him*: Remain in Him, live in Him, dwell in Him (Jn 15:4).
- *Be Silent* and listen to the Lord who speaks loudly and clearly in His language we call “silence.”
- *Make God* your number one Priority.
- *Trust Him* even more!
- *Thank Him* always and for everything!
- *Entrust/offer* all your present suffering to the merciful Heart of Jesus

Q. Could you tell me once again what I can do to grown more in holiness and mysticism?

— so that I could grasp it and do it?

A. 1. *Desire* more of God:

- *Ask* for more!
- *Recognize* more.
- *Receive* more.
- *Thank* God more for what you receive.

- *Share* more of your gifts, your witness of life and your love with your neighbor. This is a MNEMONIC: **D. A. R. T. S.** for more of God.
- 2. Use your God-given gifts and talents for God’s glory and the salvation of souls.
- 3. Do all you do with faith, hope, and love — in one word, Trust — Trust in Jesus even more! All for the glory of God!
- 4. Use your “spiritual senses” for Jesus:
 - gaze on Him, keep your eyes fixed on Him
 - listen to Him
 - touch Him in others
 - love Him even more!

Q. What else can I do to receive more of Jesus?

A. You can *ask* in prayer for more of Jesus. You can ask to surrender more and more to the Holy Spirit. You can entrust yourself to our Blessed Mother to help you surrender to the Holy Spirit, ever more fully. This is her special and unique charism and gift. You can ask Mary to form your heart as she formed the Heart of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. In this way your heart will be the throne of Jesus in His glorious coming.

Receiving more of Jesus by receiving more of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, is the way to prepare for the glorious reign of Jesus. Christ in our hearts is the glorious reign of Jesus! We need to ask with all our hearts: Come, Lord Jesus!

For His Coming we need to prepare our hearts by more regular and intense prayer to the Holy Spirit and to Mary, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit and Mother of Mercy.

Q. How will I know that the Lord has come in glory?

A. You will know that the Lord has come in glory when you hear the words in your heart:

- I am here.
- I am always with you.
- I love you.
- Do not be afraid.
- Abide in me as I in you.
- Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks... (1Thess 5:16-18)

You will know He has come when you feel the presence of the fire of His Divine Love in your heart radiating out to others!

Chapter Five

Personal Witness

Q. How do you, yourself pray for more?

A. I pray throughout the day for the Holy Spirit, for the help of Mary, for the help of St. Faustina, the apostle of Divine Mercy, and for the help of my guardian angel.

Q. Would you please share your own prayer with me? - so that I too can receive MORE!

A. There are several ways I pray and various vocal prayers as well, which are really asking for MORE! - more of Jesus, more mercy, more of the Holy Spirit, more of Mary in my life - all of which prepare for the glorious reign of Christ in my heart and in the world.

I don't have a simple answer to the question "How do I pray?" because it varies and there are many ways that I pray. My prayer varies with the time and the situation. At times I don't know how to pray and I long to please the Lord and I may just "groan" (Rom 8:23 and 26) or I remain in a silent longing for the Lord.

The foundation of my prayer is *presence* - being present to the one who is present in my heart. It is without words or images; it is a strong longing and desire for the Lord; it is a love of the Lord who loves me. It is a desire to please the Lord and to be in union with Him and to live in and be in His will and do His will. By my presence to the One who is present, all my concerns and burdens for others are entrusted to Him. The power of this prayer of presence comes from union with the Lord.

For me, *to be present to the Lord who is present* is the foundation of *intercession*. The needs

of people recommended to me, especially bishops, priests, and deacons, consecrated souls, and families that come to mind, I *entrust* to the Heart of Jesus. I entrust them, and offer them to the Lord's merciful Heart as He offers Himself to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

Each day I entrust various "families" to God: my blood family, my Basilian family, the mercy family (those who promote Divine Mercy, especially at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy), Companions of Christ the Lamb, married couples and their children, and those who promote family life.

On arising from sleep I slowly pray the our Father and the Hail Mary. I touch the icons of Jesus, Mary & Joseph and the crucifix and kiss the relic of St. Faustina, my "sister" to dedicate the day. I often repeat the prayer our Lord gave to Sr. Consolata Bertrone: "Jesus, Mary and [Joseph] I love you, save souls."

Through the day I pray the full rosary. I'm not very good at it! My mind drifts from one language to another! I pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy repeatedly throughout the day: for the Holy Father, for bishops, for priests, for special needs. It's a marvelous prayer that unites my offering with that of Jesus to the Father.

I regularly sing hymns that are a prayer: "Come, Holy Spirit and fill my heart..." "Thank you Jesus for loving us," "Rejoice in the Lord Always," "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever..." (Ps 89:2), "Bless the Lord, oh my soul" (Ps 103), "Mercy Lord, have mercy on your people" (Joel: *Parce Domine*), and more recently, since the funeral of Father Harold Cohen, SJ, "Just a closer walk with Thee..." Father Hal's theme song (I've memorized all the verses).

There are also specific prayers that I do pray daily:

- The prayer to be transformed into His mercy (Diary of St. Faustina, #163)
- The prayer to St. Faustina to be a saint - not only for myself but also for others.

- Consecration to Mary - which is an entrustment of myself to her.
- Taking spiritual authority in the daily spiritual warfare.

Q. What prayers do you say daily?

A. My daily prayers include:

The *Liturgy of the Hours* - the official prayer of the Church. I try to be faithful to this daily “Office” and attentive to what I’m praying - often I’m not very successful at it, but anyway, I’m faithful to it. The “Holy Office” includes, Morning Prayer, Daytime Prayer, Evening Prayer, Night Prayer and Office of Readings and are composed of psalms and spiritual and scriptural readings.

The *Stations of the Cross* just recently has become daily, rather than occasional, at the encouragement of my brother. I pray a decade of the chaplet at each of the fourteen stations and at the fifteenth station of the Resurrection of Jesus. My intention is for priests in need - which is all of us!

“*Come, Holy Spirit*, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Father, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth...” The Church prays that our *hearts* be filled and set on fire! - so the world would be renewed.

At times I pray or sing the Sequence of the Pentecost Mass, *Come, Holy Spirit, come (Veni Sancto Spiritus)* or I’ll sing the *Veni Creator Spiritus* which in English we sing as *come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest*. On other occasions I’ll sing *Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me [us]*. Frequently throughout the day I’ll sing: *Come Holy Spirit and fill my heart...* I will sing or pray “Come Holy Spirit and fill my heart” until I sense His presence. Or I pray “Come Holy Spirit by means of the powerful intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, your well beloved spouse” (Marian Movement of Priests).

“*Our Father* who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...”

The will of the Father is His kingdom!

I'll usually conclude with the doxology that we use at Holy Mass following the Our Father:
"Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, now and forever."

I pray the Our Father, not only at Mass, but in the Morning and Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary, and in the Chaplet of The Divine Mercy. I also recite it each time I awake from sleep. This is the prayer that Jesus Himself lived, prayed in various ways at different times, and taught us at the request of His disciples. This is one of the main prayers of the Church.

Where the Holy Spirit is, there is the kingdom of God, where Jesus reigns as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Hail Mary full of grace ... pray for us *now!*

Besides the full rosary of the Blessed Mother and the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy throughout the day, I also pray the Hail Mary on arising from bed and each time I start the engine of the car, praying for safety for all on the road.

Consecration to Mary is my practice each time I expose the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration. I ask Mary, Mother of Mercy to lead me deeper into the mystery of the Cenacle, the Cross and the fullness of Church, to help me surrender more fully to the Holy Spirit, and to form my heart to be the throne of Jesus at His glorious coming.

The full text of my consecration to Mary echoes the text of John and Mary at the Cross of Jesus (Jn 19:25:27):

An Act of Consecration to Mary

Mary, Mother of Jesus

and Mother of Mercy,

since Jesus from the Cross

gave you to me,

I take you as my own.

And since Jesus gave me to you,
take me as your own.

Make me docile like Jesus on the Cross,
obedient to the Father,
trusting in humility and in love.

Mary, my Mother,
in imitation of the Father,
who gave His Son to you,
I, too, give my all to you;
to you I entrust all that I am,
all that I have and all that I do.

Help me to surrender
ever more fully to the Spirit.

Lead me deeper into the Mystery
of the Cross, the Cenacle
and the fullness of Church.

As you formed the Heart of Jesus
by the Spirit, form my heart
to be the throne of Jesus
in His glorious coming.

Spiritual Authority: At the beginning of the Holy Hour at night I take spiritual authority over Satan and his evil forces. It is important to know that we are in spiritual warfare, and who our enemy is, and that we have the victory in Christ Jesus. It is important to use the weapons the Lord has given us!

The following prayer developed from our ministry to priests at Bethany House of Intercession:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Thank you, Jesus, for your birth of Mary by the Spirit.

Thank you Jesus, for Your Eucharistic presence (here and) throughout the world.

Thank you for your presence in my heart.

Thank you for your passion, death and resurrection.

Thank you for your victory over sin, death and Satan.

Thank you for giving the victory to Mary.

Thank you for sharing the victory with us.

In the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of His Precious Blood, I take authority over you, Satan and your evil forces, and I order you to be gone from me, be gone from _____, be gone from _____, bound to Jesus, no more to interfere with our lives.

Jesus, fill us with your mercy and your Holy Spirit. Send your holy angels to guard us.

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our defense against the wickedness and

snarcs of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do Thou, O Prince of the heavenly host; by the power of God, thrust into Hell Satan and the other evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us (3x).

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

The Chaplet of The Divine Mercy: I pray the Chaplet after praying the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary. Moreover, at three o'clock, the Hour of Great Mercy, I pray the Chaplet for Bishops, and another for Priests. It is a powerful Eucharistic prayer of intercession for God's mercy on the whole world.

Prayer to St. Faustina: For a number of years I've prayed daily the prayer to St. Faustina that I (and others) may be saints:

Saint Maria Faustina, you told us that your mission would continue after your death and that you would not forget us (*Diary*, 281, 1582).

Our Lord also granted you a great privilege, telling you to "distribute graces as you will, to whom you will, and when you will" (31).

Relying on this, I ask your intercession for the graces I need, especially - that I may be a "living Eucharist" and a saint!

Help me above all, to trust in Jesus as you did and thus to glorify His mercy every moment of my life.

Amen.

Prayer to my Guardian Angel: As part of my daily devotions, I ask my guardian angel to help me in three things that I think are essential to holiness:

O Coraggio, my dearest guardian angel, help me (Diary, 170):

- To live in and do God's will today;
- To be *faithful to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit* (Diary, 291, 1556, 1557);
- To *please the Lord* (Diary, 140) by my presence to Him with my heart, in the Heart of Mary, trusting, rejoicing and giving thanks.

Prayer of St. Paul: I regularly repeat St. Paul's exhortation to the Church of Thessalonica. It is a summary of the spiritual life:

Rejoice always.

Pray without ceasing.

In all things *give thanks*,

for this is the will of God

in Christ Jesus, regarding *you all* (1 Thess 5:16-18; Confraternity translation).

Prayer of St. John the Evangelist: While blessing with the Blessed Sacrament, I pray: Come, Lord Jesus! Maranatha! (Rev 22:20).

Songs of Trust, of Mercy, of Thanks: Throughout the day I love to sing songs of praise, for example:

- I will sing the mercies of the Lord forever (Psalm 89:2)
- Rejoice in the Lord always (Phil 4:4)

- Bless the Lord oh my soul (Ps 103)
- Jesus I trust in you
- Thank you Lord for loving us
- Come Holy Spirit and fill our hearts
- Praise Him/ Trust Him/ Love Him/ Jesus in the morning/ in the noontime/ Praise Him when the sun goes down
- Just a closer walk with Thee

Eucharistic Adoration: As a hermit with the Companions of Christ the Lamb, I intercede for mercy on the Church and world. My main prayer is the daily offering of Holy Mass for the Blessed Mother's intentions.

I expose the Blessed Sacrament for three Holy Hours: one at night, a second in the morning, and the third around three o'clock, the Hour of Great Mercy. My main adoration is *presence* to the *One* who is present.

Throughout the day I try to offer or entrust my fatigue, my burdens, and the pain and sufferings of others to the Merciful Heart of Jesus. We all experience some form of misery and we all need God's mercy - plenty of it and continually. Our earthen vessels (see 2 Cor 4:7) are cracked and we leak! So over and over again we need to pray: Have mercy Lord! Come, Holy Spirit and fill our hearts!

Q. Would you tell me more about your daily consecration to Mary?

A. Consecration to Mary is the desire of Jesus. In His dying breaths on the Cross Jesus expressed His "last will and testament" to Mary, to the beloved disciple, John, and to us: "Woman, behold your son!" then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" (Jn 19:25-27). By this "last will and testament" Jesus wants all of His beloved disciples to be blood members of His family - with Mary as our mother. By consecration to Jesus through Mary we fulfill the dying desire of

Jesus.

To Jesus through Mary

Consecration to Mary is a short-hand way of expressing our consecration to *Jesus* through Mary. By this consecration, by this giving of ourselves totally as gift to Mary, we fulfill the desire Jesus expressed in proclaiming Mary as our mother. By this consecration, we also follow the way Jesus, Himself, came when He was totally entrusted to the woman, Mary, and to her nurturing. By this consecration to Mary, we share in the consecration of Christ Himself. This means we enter into both the family of God and the mission of Christ.

Pope John Paul II is clear in his teaching that our consecration to Mary is a participation in the very consecration of Christ (John Paul II, Fatima Consecration, 1982). In the words of St. Paul, we are “given the ministry of reconciliation ... this makes us ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor 5:18-21). Our consecration is also a renewal of our baptismal consecration by which we are made children of God, members of His family. And this is the express desire and mandate of Jesus: that we all be baptized (see Mt 28:19).

Consecration to Mary is Eucharistic

The gospel of John does not record the words of Eucharistic consecration (transubstantiation) as do the gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John does, however, develop the promise of the Eucharist (Jn 6) and the effect of the Eucharist (Jn 13-15). And, in his mystical way, he describes a “transubstantiation” at the cross.

At the cross, the words “Woman, behold your son” and “Son, behold your mother” produce a “mystical transubstantiation.” Through these words of the dying Jesus, the beloved disciple, and us with him, becomes the son of the mother of God! (John Paul II, homily, Fatima, May 13, 1982).

What Jesus is saying to Mary in this mystical way is “This is My Body. This is My Blood.” Through the dying words of Jesus, we who are represented by the beloved disciple *become* the mystical Body and Blood of Christ. We become blood members of the family of God.

This is a bold interpretation of both the meaning of consecration and the desire of Jesus, but it echoes the very bold words of Pope John Paul II in his reflection on the words of Jesus:

The solemnity of that act of entrustment (“Woman, behold your son!”), its situation at the very heart of the drama of the cross, the sobriety and pithiness of the words ... could be described as proper to *an almost sacramental formula* ... (John Paul II, Nov. 23, 1988).

By our consecration to Mary, we give her permission to do what she does best - that is, by the Holy Spirit, to form us into the Body of her Son, to form us into a living Eucharist. So, then, consecration to Mary is a Eucharistic Consecration. How beautifully the Church prays in the Third Eucharistic prayer that we may all experience this transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit: “Grant that we who are nourished by His body and blood, may be filled with His Holy Spirit and become one body, one spirit in Christ.” This prayer reflects the desire of Jesus that we will freely accept His entrustment of us to Mary (“Behold your Mother”) and then permit the Holy Spirit to form us into the Body of Christ.

As Fr. Arthur Calkins writes in *Totus Tuus*: “To go to Jesus, then, through Mary, is not to take a roundabout route, but the one that He has ordained. To consecrate ourselves to her is to consecrate ourselves to Him by the means which He has designated.”

It has been an amazing revelation to me that “Consecration to Mary is Eucharistic.” Another way of expressing it is that we are transformed into a living presence of Jesus - a “living Eucharist,” becoming sons and daughters of the Mother of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus by our consecration to “Jesus through Mary.” This consecration is initiated in our baptism and brought to maturity in confirmation and to full fruitfulness in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

Q. How do you pray when you don’t know how to pray?

A. When I don’t know how to pray I follow the teaching of St. Paul:

The Spirit, too, helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we

ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groaning that cannot be expressed in speech. He who searches hearts knows what the Spirit means, for the Spirit intercedes for the saints as God himself wills (Rom 8:26-27).

I pray and sing in tongues and let the Holy Spirit pray as God wills. The gift of tongues is a gift of the Holy Spirit for prayer, for discernment, and for prophecy (followed by an interpretation of the tongue). St. Paul writes to the Church of Corinth: "I speak in tongues more than any of you..." (1 Cor 14:18).

I use the gift often and freely for situations that confront me and I have no idea what I should do about them. I pray in tongues for a while and a sense of what I should do comes to mind and I try to act upon it. It is a valuable prayer for the preparation of talks and homilies and for spiritual direction in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This prayer of the Spirit is a way to surrender my thoughts and my will in various situations and to pray as the Spirit wills.

I find that praying in tongues is a way to live the exhortation of St. Jude:

Beloved, grow strong in your holy faith through prayer in the Holy Spirit.

Persevere in God's love and welcome the mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ which leads to eternal life (Jude 20-21).

Q. But how do you pray when you cannot pray?

A. There are various reasons for the inability to pray. There are various types of darkness that overshadow us. For example:

1. Darkness from *exhaustion* of the mind and body. What may be needed is rest, sleep, proper food, and exercise. We are body-persons and our bodies must be listened to and cared for.
2. Darkness from *sickness*. We all need some form of healing. The attack of viruses and bacteria and allergies is real and need to be responded to.
3. Darkness from *sin*. This darkness calls for repentance, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and

forgiveness that allows us to pray the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

4. Darkness from the *attack of Satan* and his angels. They are powerful in darkening our minds. This darkness calls for taking authority over the evil spirits and casting them off. Invoke Mary and St. Michael, the Archangel.
5. Darkness from *God's purification* of our spirit, soul and body. This darkness calls for waiting on the Lord. I continue to use the three "P's" we used in our ministry to priests: peace, patience, and perseverance. *Peace* that is a deep-seated trust in the Lord. *Patience* of long-suffering with God's work. *Perseverance* of faithfulness to the Lord and the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.
6. Darkness from the *burdens* of others. The experience of this darkness is a plea for mercy for those suffering from the darkness we are experiencing. It is like a knocking on the door of our heart for intercession. It calls for a response of mercy: "Lord have mercy on us and on the whole world." The darkness we experience is a cry of "HELP" from those in need. Entrust the burden of the darkness to the Merciful Heart of Jesus.

I invoke the Holy Spirit to discern the type of response needed to the darkness that comes upon me.

When prayer is a struggle, I find I need to be patient with myself, striving to be faithful to God - and at the same time taking an aggressive action to break out of the "downer" - to break out of the black bag that seems to have captured my spirit, my mind and my body. At times I have to tear back the veil that hides the presence of God in my heart. How do I do that? ... In a number of ways.

- I make a confession in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- I take spiritual authority over the spirit of darkness and confusion, using the *Authority Prayer*. Or I may simply ask Mary, my mother, to "squash the bug!" - with a smile!
- *Smiling* at the Lord is a powerful way to acknowledge His presence and His power and love

for me - often it breaks out in Holy Laughter!

- Singing in tongues allows the Holy Spirit to deal with the situation - whether a concern for someone's need, or a temptation that will not disappear by ordinary means.
- Singing my favorite short songs like, *Rejoice in the Lord always* or *Jesus I trust in You* is a marvelous way to break out of the oppression of depression. Try it, you'll like it!
- Enjoying the struggle and the fight! This past night's Holy Hour I wrote a note in my journal because I had to break through to God's presence in my heart and be present to Him who is present:

The Lord has created us free - in order to struggle, to stand firm and break through to Him - to break through the paper sack that over shadows us. So we praise Him until we enter into worship and then stand in His glory (Ruth W. Heflin, *Glory: Experiencing the Atmosphere of Heaven*, 1990). This struggle to break through the veil that separates us from God's presence is the struggle to break through to be faithful to Him.

Today's Q & A: What is your word for me today?

Be faithful to Me! Stand firm. Smile at me. The victory is yours.

Q. What do you mean by “Squash the Bug”?

A. Some years ago I wrote an article called “Squash the Bug: Call upon Mary for victory in spiritual warfare.”

The victory has been given to the woman and her offspring:

Then the Lord said to the serpent... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; They will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel
(Gen 3:14-1).

We have the victory over the serpent; that is to say, over Satan and his army of evil spirits in their attacks upon us.

We experience these attacks by the evil one even as described in the Book of Revelations, because we are the offspring of our Mother Mary:

Enraged at her escape, the dragon went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep God's commandments and give witness to Jesus (Rev 12:17).

It is war, and we are in the midst of it. We need all the armor God gives us: truth, justice, zeal, faith, salvation, the word of God, and prayer (see Eph 6:5-20). As our model, we have Jesus, Himself who experienced the attack of Satan in the form of temptations in the desert (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13) and used the weapons of prayer, fasting, and the truth of the word of God. His final battle and victory was on the Cross of Calvary (see Jn 14:30), when He was lifted up in order to draw all to Himself (see Jn 12:32).

This spiritual warfare is real, and we need to know how to be victorious in the various attacks upon us. The victory can be ours if we identify the attack of the evil one.

When you start to examine Satan and attacks upon you, you will find that there are relatively few different types of attacks that He uses on you, but they are repeated over and over again. It is as though Satan has only one knapsack full of tricks for you, and he uses them over and over again, year after year. He keeps pulling out the same old temptations, weaknesses, and patterns. He knows our Achilles' heel. But we, too, know where his head is — because he is biting us!

The first step is to identify the tricks of Satan, even number them. It may be a sad mood, a fear, a jealous reaction, or an impure desire. Name the attack and the attacker, and then label him and the trick that he is tempting you with. You can easily recognize it: it is the same one he has been taking out of his knapsack for years! He only has a limited set of tricks, and he keeps repeating himself. Label it, and even say it out loud. For example, "It's anger again."

You can do this by turning to Mary, our Mother and Queen. She is the one who crushes the

head of the serpent with the heel of her offspring. As the heel, the humblest, lowest part of the Body of Christ, we, the children of Mary, experience the bite of Satan. But we can turn to our Mother to show us how to crush the head of Satan.

How do we do it? With a laugh. With the joy of the victory that has been given to the Woman. We can turn to Mary with a laugh and say: “Mary, look at the old boy. He’s using the same old trick of anger. He’s at it again, Mary. Step on his head. *Squash the bug!* Crush that serpent with your heel. Mary, the victory is yours and is given to us, your offspring”. You can help her out by squashing the bug with your foot and a laugh!

In this way, we can respond to St. Paul’s encouragement to stand strong in the mighty power of God in the midst of the warfare:

Draw your strength from the Lord and his mighty power. Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil... (Eph 6:10-20).

As Mary’s offspring, obeying God’s commandments and witnessing to Jesus, we can stand strong in our faith and enjoy the fight! We have the victory! (Adapted from: *The 13th of the Month Club*, Marian Helpers, Stockbridge, MA 01263.)

Q. What do you do besides pray? Do you do anything more?

A. Yes, I try to let the presence of the Lord in my heart radiate out to others:

- by my presence to others;
- by my words of blessing and encouragement;
- by my ministry of offering Holy Mass, preaching, teaching, the sacrament of reconciliation and spiritual direction;
- by my rejoicing, praying, thanking always and everywhere;
- by my writing on the Divine Mercy message and devotion and on St. Faustina (an hour or two a day at most);

- by my handing out Divine Mercy leaflets;
- by my mailing of Divine Mercy materials, especially books;
- by my greeting: “Praised be the Lord Jesus Christ!”
- by preparing daily meals;
- by splitting firewood for heat;
- by pumping water to drink and wash;
- by clearing trails - for better snowshoeing in the winter.

Q. When is the Lord coming in Glory?

A. One time, I asked the Lord that question, “When are you coming in glory?” He answered: “I am here, in your heart!”

The important issue is not *when* He is coming but *that* He is coming.

No one knows the time of His coming but only the Father. But the Lord Jesus taught us to be prepared for His coming at anytime. Many get caught up with the *when* of His coming rather than being prepared for the fact *that* He is coming. Do not get caught unprepared, with no oil in the lamps like the foolish virgins awaiting the coming of the Lord. You do not know the day nor the hour (Mt. 25:1).

Now it is up to me to allow His presence to mature and to radiate out to others more and more. The Lord waits for my invitation to allow Him to work more deeply and thoroughly, making more space for His grace and presence; making me more and more transparent to his radiant presence; more and more transparent to His glory! — and be prepared for His coming whenever He comes.

Come, Lord Jesus and please hurry up!

Q. What is key to your spiritual life?

A. Recently (Pentecost, 2001), I asked the Lord what His spirituality was for me. I asked this

knowing that each person is called to a unique, unrepeatable, and precious holiness. In God's providential plan, each of us is to form a gem in His great family mosaic. I asked the Lord with a desire to do His will in His way.

What came to my heart was the word I received over fifteen years ago on hermitage with the Camaldolese in Bloomingdale, Ohio. This word has been with me and has grown in depth with my understanding of it:

To please me, be present to me with your heart, in the Heart of Mary, trusting, rejoicing and [added at a later retreat] giving thanks.

I entered into that time of hermitage because of burn-out and a longing to hear the word of the Lord for me in order that I may do it. Figuratively, I signed a blank check addressed to the Lord - I wanted to do what He wanted me to do. But I did ask for one thing: "Lord, what does it mean to *listen* to your word?" The word came to my heart: "Be present to me with your heart." "To listen" is not so much to hear words as it is to *be present* fully to another. So that silence becomes loud and clear.

Over the years the word "*Be present to me with your heart*" has become a central word in my spirituality. And on Pentecost Vigil, 2001, before the exposed Blessed Sacrament, Our Lord's response to my question about my spirituality developed further the way to practice this presence to the Lord with my heart:

Be present to Me with your heart - this is the way I have for you. In this way you please Me. Be present with your heart in the Heart of Mary, trusting/ entrusting, rejoicing, giving thanks. This is what I want you to do and to be - and to teach others to be faithful to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Each person you teach is a unique expression of my plan. *Presence* is the *key* for you. Be present to me in your Heart and in my Word. Be present to me in the Eucharist. Be present to me at the throne of the Father. Be present with me and to me in others. *Smile* at My presence. Smile when you are aware of My presence. Smile when you are

not aware of my presence. Smile at Me in order to know My presence.

The word received on Pentecost confirmed the way I've tried to live my spiritual life over the years. I've tried to live out the Sacred Scripture text:

Rejoice always.

Pray without ceasing.

In all things give thanks for this is the will of God

in Christ Jesus regarding you all (1 Thess 5:16-19, Confraternity edition).

For me, to *rejoice* is to acknowledge the *presence of Christ* within my heart - I can smile at Him. To *pray* is to trust in Jesus and to entrust situations and others to His Heart. To *give thanks* is to acknowledge with gratitude and praise that everything is His providential gift. And to rejoice, to pray, and to thank is *His will for all* of us always and everywhere. It is my way of loving the Lord who loves me and is "in-love" with me - and "in-love" with you!

I have found support in this response to God's presence in the writings of St. Faustina, Bl. Dina Belanger, Venerable Conchita (Concepcion Caberera de Armida) of Mexico and in the words of Father Gaston Courtois (*When the Lord Speaks to the Heart*), available from the Daughters of St. Paul.

As a reminder of this way of spirituality I have put up 3 x 5 index cards around the house reminding me to:

Trust in Jesus even more!

Rejoice and be glad with all your heart! (Zeph 3:14).

And I often sing and teach others the simple songs:

Rejoice in the Lord always (Phil 4:4).

Jesus, I trust in You (Diary of St. Faustina).

I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever (Ps 89:2).

Come Holy Spirit and fill my heart
That I may praise the living God
Thank you Jesus for loving us
Right where we are!

I've used a "triple play" on the word *presence* to encourage the frequent and regular practice of spiritual communion:

- I). Be *present to the one who is present* - in your heart, in the Eucharist, in your neighbor, in the word of God proclaimed.
- II). Be *present to the present moment* - not the past, which is gone; and not the future, which is not in our control.
- III). Be *present to the presents* - all and everything is a gift of God - so give thanks.

An *now*, I would like to add further insight into the meaning of "presence to the One who is present." The Lord is gradually and clearly teaching me that being present to Him who is present in me is to be a "living Eucharist." I will share more on this in Chapter Eight when I describe the influence of St. Faustina in my life. The Lord called St. Faustina a "living Host" (Diary, 1826).

Q. Please tell me more about your experience of God's presence.

A. Let me begin to describe the importance of being present to the ONE who is present by quoting part of a letter I wrote to Father Benedict J. Groeschel, C.F.R.:

August 28, 2004, St. Augustine

Dear Benedict Joseph,

Praised be the Lord Jesus Christ!

May the Merciful Lord continue to bless you with His peace, joy, love — and

health.

This morning I offered Holy Mass of St. Augustine for you — in thanksgiving for your life and improving health. In an earlier Holy Hour I was led to re-read your book, *Augustine*, on Chapters 9 and 10 of *Confessions* of St. Augustine. I read it as though I never read it before. I was reminded of two special graces I had received some years ago and a new insight.

At the post-Communion time of a Mass led by Abp. George Pearce, S.M. at Bethany House of Intercession, Hudson-on Huron, NY, the Archbishop asked us to ask the Lord what is the obstacle in us that prevents His greater action in us. So I asked and immediately heard within me: “You don’t allow me to love you!” (-1982). Then during my hermitage time with the Camaldolese in the diocese of Steubenville, a work kept coming to my heart: “To please me, be present to me with your heart, in the Heart of Mary, trusting, rejoicing and giving thanks” (-1985).

Today during the homily time, stirred by the suggested reading of St. Augustine’s feast (1 John 4:7-16) I realized that the way the Lord wants me to love Him is by letting Him love me and I can do this by *pleasing Him*, by *being present to Him in with my heart*... The Lord is pleased and loved by my being *present to the One who is present!*

The next grace and insight of experiencing and understanding the more of the presence of God came in response to a question I asked the Lord during a midnight prayer time before the exposed Blessed Sacrament, here in my Divine Mercy Hermitage (1:15 am Holy Hour, 9-11! 2004):

Q. Lord, what is it that I need most now? What is it that I should be doing or not be doing:

A. [The following words came to my heart:]

- Just BE! BE present to me with your heart.

- BE with me at the throne of the Father (a word I heard when I first moved into my hermitage, November 21, 1999).
- BE present: Be lovingly attentive to My Being, My presence.
- BE and do not try to figure it all out with your head.
- BE quiet with your mind: Stop thinking and love!
- Be like Me; just BE. It is not a “quietism” but just being quiet and lovingly aware of ME being present. I am BEING Itself. I am Who AM! And Who IS. I AM the “ISING” ONE.
[A new form of the verb “to be” which is not in our English dictionaries!]

So — shut off your mind and just:

- BE! BE present. BE loving. BE AWARE. BE believing. BE in the HEART of MARY. Just BE! Just BE a child [piccolo bambino in Italian] in the arms of Mary.

Then a new focus to the insight developed, a new grace:

BE FREE to BE:

- A child in the arms of Mary
- PRESENT to Me
- Lovingly aware of Me
- Rejoicing, trusting, thanking
- A Son of the Father
- Co-heir with Me and suffer with me (Rom. 8:17)

Then more insights and graces came as I tried to sleep:

BE FREE to:

- Play, sing, dance, laugh, smile
- Play and listen
- Suffer and offer
- Work and write

- Love and be patient
- BE Present to Me!

BE FILLED with:

- My Holy Spirit
- My Presence
- My Grace, like Mary,

Then reflecting on the words of insights and graces of the 9/11 prayer time, I realized that the presence of God is not so much a question of being emptied out but a question of being filled with the *presence of God* that displaces my own self-will, self-love, self-centeredness, my selfishness and my sins. “It is no longer I that live but Christ is living in me” (Galatians 2:20). This is the work of Jesus who loved me and was crucified for me. My life is a life of faith in the Son of God (see Galatians 2:19-20).

And finally, the invitation of Jesus to be with Him present at the throne of God (Nov. 21, 1999) is an invitation to intercede for Mercy on the Church and on the whole world (see Hebr. 7:25).

Q. How can I experience the presence of God?

A. Pope John Paul II describes the experience of the presence of God in his Apostolic Letter of January 6, 2001, *At the Beginning of the New Millennium* and how it can be experienced by prayer:

The great mystical tradition of the Church of both East and West has much to say in this regard. It shows how prayer can progress, as a genuine dialogue of love, to the rendering of the person wholly possessed by the divine Beloved, vibrating at the Spirit’s touch, resting filially within the Father’s heart. This is the lived experience of Christ’s promise: “He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” (Jn 14:21) — (#33).

I especially love the pope’s phrase: “vibrating at the Spirit’s touch” to describe the experience

of God's presence.

The presence of God within you experienced and felt is a *gift* of God. But most people do not know that there is such a gift and that God desires to give it to all of us. The Lord wants all of His children to know, to experience, and to feel His presence. Ask someone or ask a community with the experience of the presence of the Lord to pray over you for the experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, that you too may experience the “vibrating at the Spirit’s touch.”

Listen to the desires of the Lord to be present in our lives and in our hearts, as described in Sacred Scripture:

“Abide in me and I in you” (Jn 15:4 RSV) [other translations for *abide* in me are live in, dwell in, remain in].

“God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him (1 Jn 4:16).

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me...” (Gal 2:20). “Examine yourselves to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you fail to meet the test” (2 Cor 13:5).

The mystery: “Christ is in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).

“I am with you always” (Mt 28:20).

The felt experience of God's presence is an important gift of God that needs to be desired, asked for in prayer, received and recognized with thanks, and shared with others, because this is at the heart of being holy. A memory aid to recognize and receive this gift which the Lord has for each of us, I have put in the form of a mnemonic:

Desire Ask Recognize and Receive Thank Share

D. A. R. T. S. are a powerful way to pray for gifts and to overcome vices as well. St. Augustine in his commentary on the Lords Prayer written to Proba describes the early desert fathers praying with sharp, short javelin prayers, what I call “DARTS.”

Not only should you ask for the gift of the experience of God's presence, you should ask Him questions and expect answers, for example:

Do you love me, Lord?

Lord, where are you hiding now? (A favorite question that St. John of the Cross would ask when things were dark and heavy. He would receive the response: I am in the depth of your heart! Where are you?)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church begins its final section *Christian Prayer* with the description of prayer by St. Therese of Lisieux, Doctor of the Church:

What is Prayer?

For me, prayer is a surge of the heart...

A "surge of the heart" is a felt experience of the presence of God. It could also be described as a "jolt," a "moment," a "felt experience" of the heart, an "anointing," and what John Paul II calls "vibrating at the touch of the Spirit" St. Therese continues to describe what prayer is for her.

For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love embracing both trial and joy (CCC#2558).

You can practice the presence of God in a variety of ways: by turning to Him with a loving attentiveness, by simply smiling at Him with joy, praising Him, thanking Him, loving Him, listening to Him in silence. These various ways of responding to His presence are forms of *spiritual communion*.

Spiritual communion continues our being in Eucharistic communion and renews and makes present the grace of sacramental communion. By our spiritual communion we feed on the presence of the Lord and are progressively transformed into a living Eucharist, into a radiant presence of Jesus, and transfigured into an icon of Jesus, as Jesus was transfigured on Mount Tabor to be a visible icon of the invisible God (Col 1:15).

The presence of the Lord in you is God's gift to you — it is not earned, nor is it merited. The presence of the Lord in you is what it means to be a *Christian*! A Christian is one who is

“Christed,” anointed with the same Holy Spirit by which Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary. It is the same Holy Spirit that came upon Jesus at His Baptism. It is the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. It is this same Holy Spirit that we receive in our Baptism and are confirmed with His gifts. It is the same Holy Spirit that makes us holy, and makes us Christians. We are Christian not because we follow Christ but because we are “Christed” with the Spirit of Jesus.

So pray, desire and ask for the gift of His presence.

The presence of the Lord in you is not an option *but an obligation*. So too, our holiness is not an option for the elite but an obligation for all! Because holiness is simply the radiant presence of the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit in you. “Christ in you is the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).

So we are not to be ashamed of talking and sharing about the presence of Jesus in our hearts. We are not to be ashamed of being called holy or referring to our holiness — this is what it is to be a Christian! If Christ is not in you — or you do not acknowledge His gift of His presence — you are living a lie! See again 2 Cor 13:5.

If you do not experience and feel the presence of the Lord Jesus within you, then Desire, Ask, Recognize and Receive, Thank and Share the Gift of the Lord.

Q. How can I be an Icon of Jesus? — that you mentioned in your last answer on the experience of God’s presence?

A. By the Transfiguration of Jesus we are to be transfigured.

Jesus is transfigured! The radiant Jesus is described in the Gospels of Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-10, and Luke 9:28-36. The gospel of the transfiguration is celebrated twice a year: on the second Sunday of Lent and on the Feast of the Transfiguration, August 6th.

Jesus radiates! Jesus is transfigured so that the three apostles see Jesus as the IMAGE (ICON in Greek) or the invisible God (Col. 1:15).

The apostles are awe struck. This is the way Saint Peter describes that event on Mount Tabor:

BELOVED: We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to

you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the unique declaration came to him from the majestic glory, “This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain. Moreover, we possess the prophetic message that is altogether reliable. You will do well to be attentive to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts (2 Peter 1:16-19 NAB).

The meaning of the transfiguration of Jesus is a foreshadowing, like a “sneak preview,” of the resurrection. The *purpose* of the transfiguration is a preparation and strengthening of the apostles for the coming passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. And more than that it is a foreshadowing of our transfiguration!

Saint Peter writes about the meaning of the transfiguration to us. He tells us that the “Morning Star,” Jesus Christ, will rise in our hearts if we say “yes” to the Lord’s plan!

Consider a series of diagrams that help to illustrate God’s plan to have the “Morning Star” rise in our hearts:

NOTE: Please see Q/A on the Morning Star, P21-23 for the diagrams.

The ICON of the transfiguration

The religious (liturgical) icon is the visible image of the invisible divinity. The Icon of Transfiguration, along with the resurrection, portrays the very meaning of icons and their ultimate purpose, namely, *our* transfiguration, our divinization. We are to be transfigured, transformed, undergo metamorphosis (the Greek word for change of form) — to be members of the Body of Christ, His Bride.

The transformation of a Monarch butterfly is an example of the foreshadowing of our own transfiguration in our resurrection:

Monarch butterfly lays her fertilized egg. In a series of stages the egg is trans-

formed (transfigured) into a Monarch butterfly! It is different, changed, brilliantly colored and it flies:

Egg → larva → pupa (cocoon) → butterfly!

We are to be Icons of Jesus

Jesus Christ is described by Saint Paul as the Icon (image) of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). Jesus Christ by His incarnation makes the Father visible: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9).

Saint Paul tells us further that we are to be Icons of Jesus. Icons of the ICON of the Father!:

All of us, gazing on the Lord’s glory with unveiled faces are being transformed from glory to glory, into His very image [icon] by the Lord who is the spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18 NAB).

We are to be icons of the icon: Transfigured, divinized, deified, sanctified.

We are to be transformed by the Cross of Christ.

We are to be holy; transparent to the presence of Jesus.

We are to radiate the presence of Jesus and so evangelize by our very presence and love.

We are to be light to the world.

We are to be a living Eucharist: a visible presence of the invisible God.

We have an obligation to be transfigured: it is not an option!

A diamond and a piece of coal can serve as an illustration of our transfiguration to a radiant presence:

The light of a flashlight does not shine through a lump of coal but it does shine brilliantly through a diamond. What is the difference between a lump of coal and a diamond? They are both only carbon! The carbon atoms in the coal are randomly distributed but in the diamond the atoms are arranged in a specific order that reflect the light in a brilliant radiance from its many facets. The coal atoms

can be rearranged into a diamond under great pressure and heat over a long period of time. It souls like the transformation in the spiritual life!

Q. How are Religious Icons Made?

A. Religious icons are made in a process that follows the long tradition that dates back to apostolic times. They are “written,” as the process is called, so that they can be “read” by contemplating them in prayer. They teach us of the process of transfiguration from materials of wood, clay and ground minerals in a progression of colors and figures that symbolize our spiritual transformation from our darkness to light.

The religious icon teach us how we are transfigured, not by words but by way of symbols, colors and shapes that are like windows into heaven. We learn from religious icons as we read them by gazing upon them, seeing the lesson of our transformation. To read them by gazing upon them in prayer is to contemplate them and let the grace of God flow through them to us.

Religious icons are not paintings or photographs, rather they are visible sacred images that reveal the invisible presence of God. They convey the same word of God as the sacred scriptures but by way of our eyes gazing on them in contemplation. They teach us that the light of God is to shine in our darkness as a light to the world.

Blessed Mother Teresa described contemplation in a simply way: “Contemplation is simply to realize the constant presence of God and His tender love for us.”

Q. How are we to be Transfigured into Living Icons of Jesus Christ?

A. The following different suggestions are different ways of saying the same thing: live our “yes” to God each and every day:

By **TRUST** in God. Trust is hope based on faith, expressed in love. It is a **Total Reliance Upon Saving Truth, Jesus Christ.**

Saint Faustina records in her Diary some powerful words of our Lord about trust:

When a soul approaches me with trust, I will fill it with such an abundance

of graces that it cannot contain them within itself but radiates them to other souls. (Diary, #1074).

Chosen souls are, in My hand, lights which I cast into the darkness of the world and illuminate it. As stars illumine the night, so chosen souls illumine the earth... (Diary, #1601).

By **Baptism** we become children of God; “Born of water and the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:5).

By **Holy Eucharist** we enter into communion with the Lord Jesus, which is renewed by our spiritual communion. By our communion we become icons of Jesus, a living Eucharist, a transfigured and transparent presence of Jesus. By our communion with Jesus we radiate His presence.

By **our surrender** to the Lord, freely choosing God out of love, not out of fear or need. Surrender is expressed by our repeated {yes” to the will of God and living in and by His will. It is a daily dying to our selfish self-will; it is a form of martyrdom. It is living the teaching of Saint Paul:

I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I live now is not my own: Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loves me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:19-20 NAB).

By our **daily prayer** by which we express our **Desires, Asking, Receiving, Thanksgiving, Sharing** — which spell our “DARTS,” a form of powerful prayer the desert fathers used according to Saint Augustine.

By our **gazing** upon the glorious face of the Lord in contemplation:

All of us, gazing on the Lord’s glory with unveiled faces, are being transformed from glory into His very image by the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). ... For God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts, that we may make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6 NAB).

By living the ABC's of Divine Mercy:

Ask for His Mercy

Be merciful as your heavenly Father.

Completely trust in Jesus.

By living the ABC's of love:

Note: Please reflect on and live the Ten Commandments of love by Cardinal Wyszyński as a way to love one another as Jesus loves us.

The ABC's of the Crusade for Love

1. **Respect everyone** — Christ lives in everyone. Be sensitive to others — they are your brothers and sisters.
2. **Think well of everyone** — think ill of no one. Try to find something good in even the worst circumstances.
3. **Always speak well of others** — do not cast a slur on anyone. Repair any harm resulting from an uttered word. Do not provoke strife between people.
4. **Speak to everyone in the language of love.** Do not raise your voice. Do not swear. Do not vex others. Do not provoke tears. Reassure others. Show a kind heart.
5. **Forgive everyone everything.** Do not hold grudges. Always be the first to extend your hand as a sign of reconciliation.
6. **Act always to your neighbor's advantage.** Do good things to others, as you would like them done to you. Never give a thought to what others owe you, but always to what you owe them.
7. **Be actively compassionate in time of suffering.** Be quick to offer consolation, council, assistance, kindness.
8. **Work Conscientiously** — others benefit from the fruits of your labor, just as

you benefit from the labor of others.

9. **Be active in your community.** Be open to the poor and the sick. Share your goods. Try to see the needs of those around you.

10. , even your enemies.

Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński (1900-1981)

Love one Another

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Q. How do you converse with God? Could you tell me again so that I, too, may learn to converse with the Lord?

A. Several years ago, Vinny Flynn, my editorial advisor, asked me to write on “How I converse with the Lord,” “How do I talk to Him and respond to Him.” Just today, as I was looking for some information in my files, I came across my outline that I wrote out on November 11, 1998. It was not just a coincidence; it was a God-incidence! On reading the outline I am amazed by Our Lord’s inspiration at that time. I share the outline with you as my answer to your question...

My conversing with the Lord is a communion with the Lord who is present in my heart. Primarily my conversing with God is *being present* to the one who is present. It is a heart to Heart presence. No words are needed. It is expressed in various ways and at different times:

- At times of quiet of heart and mind I ask questions (written questions are better for me). I need to be ready to hear with the ears of my heart the quiet answer that comes even before I finish asking the question. God speaks loudly in His favorite language called “silence.”
- At times of weeping and lamenting for the condition of the Church and world.
- At times of laughter at the marvelous ways of God and my misery.

- At times of spiritual communion.
- At times of singing praise and worship songs.
- At times of spiritual reading, especially of Sacred Scripture, the Liturgy of the Hours, the Diary of St. Faustina.
- At times of daily Holy Mass, especially at the Consecration and Communion, especially in the silence of my heart.
- At times when I am asked to write, or need to write an article, or an outline of a homily or talk. I take up my pen and the inspiration flows.
- At times of “body worship” by gestures and postures of praise and by dancing in the Spirit!
- At times of longing and desire for the Lord - by a silent surge of the heart for the Lord.
- At times when I remember the text of 1 Thess 5:16-18: “Rejoice, pray and give thanks, always and everywhere in everything, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus regarding us all.”
- At times of expressing the battle cries in this spiritual warfare: “Jesus is Lord!”; “The kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours!”
- At times of noticing the 3 x 5 cards around my house: “Trust in Jesus even more!”
- At times of singing in the Spirit (in the prayer of tongues, Rom 8:26-27), giving voice to what I should pray at times; of confusion, of discernment, of ministry, of preparation for teaching and preaching, of spiritual direction, of prayer for healing, of prayer for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- At times of chanting the Liturgy of the Hours.
- At times of sudden and unexpected anointed presence of the Lord in my heart and body.
- At times of extended expressions of thanksgiving to God, like a litany of thanks.
- At time of the feasts and solemnities of the Church.
- At times of a rapid sequence of events that have the ear-marks of God-incidents; e.g., spe-

cial phone calls, timing of events and encounters, etc.

- At times of seeing the overwhelming beauty of creation, such as sunsets, the ocean, the mountains, the stars and the moon.
- At times at the very end of a Holy Hour, like St. Faustina wrote, the grace of the moment comes.
- At times of actually writing. (Even as I was writing the first bullet points for this response: “How do I converse with the Lord?”)

Overall: Conversing with the Lord is a two-way communication. God talks in the language He loves: silence! I talk by a longing of my heart: I listen to Him. *To listen to the Lord is to be present to Him with my heart and mind with “loving attentiveness”.* God loves me and I allow Him to love me.

Q. What is Contemplation? How do you Contemplate?

A. Contemplation is prayer of the heart that is simple according to Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. I especially like her description:

Contemplation is simply to realize God’s constant personal and his tender love for us” (October 14 Thirsty for God, compiled by Angelo Scolozzi, Servant Publications, now St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1999).

St. Thérèse of Lisieux writes personally of “What is prayer?”

For me prayer is a surge of the heart, it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy (Catechism of the Catholic Church # 2558).

My contemplative prayer I would describe as a smiling silent stillness to the presence of the Lord — either in the Eucharist or in my heart. I express it in various ways:

- a presence to the ONE who is present.
- An awesome awareness of His presence.

- A loving attentiveness to His presence.
- “A Eucharistic amazement at His presence” (John Paul II encyclical on the Eucharist, 5 and 6).
- A presence to the Lord with my heart in the Heart of Mary, trusting, rejoicing, and giving thanks.
- a gazing upon the face of the Lord in the Eucharist or before an icon (see 2 Cor. 3:18).

Q. *But what do you do when there are other times: times of struggle, anxiety, dryness, desolation, darkness, and fatigue?*

A. Again, I need to invoke the Holy Spirit to discern the response the Lord wants. I may need to repent, take spiritual authority, and go to the Sacrament. Or I may need to go for a walk with the Lord, or take a rest, or do some physical work. I need to entrust the situation to the Lord, offering to Him for the welfare of souls, interceding for mercy: “Jesus have mercy!”

I have come to experience the necessity of waiting and watching with peace, patience, and perseverance, until the Lord acts in other ways. How do I “tribulate” in such situations? (See Rev 1:9). I try to “percolate” in the Holy Spirit.

I am coming to appreciate more and more the power of the three-step conversation with the Lord:

- 1). I *desire*, I want, I need,
- 2). *But* I cannot do it! - which is the truth and an expression of humility.
- 3). Therefore I *ASK*: “How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who *ASK* Him” (Lk 11:13).

I try to act immediately on the gentle inspirations of the Holy Spirit, without analyzing and arguing about them. I try to do them right then and there, or I jot down the point on my 3 x 5 card that I carry with me. I find that inspirations of the Holy Spirit that are not responded to evaporate immediately.

I try to respond often to the 3 x 5 cards placed around my living quarters: “Trust in Jesus even more.” I will sing “Jesus I trust in You!” I use the short javelin-like prayers recommended by St. Augustine (Letter to Proba or the Our Father) like: Come, Lord Jesus, Come Holy Spirit, Jesus Mercy, Mary, my Mother, Help! And, I sing the short songs of praise whose words are adaptable: Praise Him ..., 8-fold alleluia, I will sing of the mercies of the Lord (Ps 89), Rejoice in the Lord always.

Q. What do you do when your world falls apart?

A. I try a number of things:

I try to live my life-long sacred scripture text:

Rejoice always.

Pray without ceasing

In all things give Thanks

For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus regarding you all! (1 Thess 5:16-18).

This text I used at a Senior Retreat of high school and it has been with me ever since. I’m not very good at it — but I try the best I can because everything is in God’s will.

- I try to offer my misery, ailments, sufferings, fatigue, zombie head, my arthritis and the attacks of “sleepies” to the Lord through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to offer them to the Sacred and Merciful Heart of Jesus — for the sake of souls.
- I try to be faithful to the Lord and please Him by being present to Him who is present in me.
- I try to get help — especially I call on “cor-aggeo” my guardian angel to ask for an honor guard of angels and saints to help me.
- I try to remember the word of St. Faustina which she expressed in her Act of Oblation:

Act of total abandonment to the will of God, which is for me, love and mercy itself. ... Lead me, O God, along whatever roads you please; I have placed all

my trust in your will, which is for me love and mercy itself... (D#1264).

- I try to wait in silent stillness before the Blessed Sacrament — trying my best to shut off my spinning mind and just be present to the Lord with my heart.
- I try to get to confession soon and often, the power of confession and absolution is amazing!
- I try to take spiritual authority over any and all the spirits of darkness hanging on to me. I ask the Lord, through the intercession of St. Faustina, the great apostle of Divine Mercy, to plunge me into the depth of the ocean of mercy, which is the very precious Blood of Jesus. Any spirits that are opposing me will experience the heat of the fire of God's merciful love and go back to hell to cool off!!
- I am strengthened by the thought and presence of the Saints like Maximilian Kolbe, Faustina, Padre Pio and those saints yet to be declared like Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Fr. Walter Crszek SJ, and Pope John Paul the Great. What an army of saints surround us to respond to our call for help?
- I sing in tongues, singing new and old songs that lift my spirit. At times it is hard to start singing — but once started they lift me out of oppression.
- I try to wait until the next wave of grace comes along, remembering Psalm 37; "Commit your life to the Lord, trust in Him and He will act ... Be still before the Lord and wait in patience."
- I cry out in my misery, pain, frustration, anxiety and fatigue: "Mercy, Jesus Mercy!"
- I cry like a child in pain and misery and run to the arms of Jesus, Mary and Joseph — That they may bring me to the arms of my heavenly Father.
- I try to smile at the Lord and break out into holy laughter at my brokenness and declare: "You are God. You are in charge! *I am nothing!* I need to know your merciful love. I need your grace to trust in you.
- I re-read once more my favorite book of all that I've written: *Rejoice in the Lord*

Always — because I need to hear the message of rejoicing always once again!

Q. What do you do when you are depressed?

A. When I am depressed, and I am at this moment, I try some of the things I do when my world falls apart and also focus on other things to be done:

- I go for a presence walk with the Lord and become aware of God's creation around me.
- I try to sit in silent stillness and just *be* — before the Blessed Sacrament.
- I do some routine physical work and exercise. I clean house and cook a meal — even make up a new recipe.
- I offer my misery and current situation to the Lord for souls — and then wait and watch to see how He works things out.
- I try to thank the Lord that I have something to offer HIM for souls.
- I try to thank the Lord for my misery and humiliations by which He is purifying me.
- I pray and sing in tongues.
- I try to sing songs of praise.
- I pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.
- I call on the litany of Saints and friends in heaven for their presence and help.
- I call on my guardian angel Cor-aggio to help me.

Chapter Six

Objections and the Lord's Questions, Promises and Challenges to Holiness

Thirty-two Objections to being holy that I've heard and know of:

- *I never thought of it. It never entered my mind.*

It is high time to think about it, while there is time before the final judgment.

- It think that sanctity is for those God has chosen as special.

It's ironic that so many say this, but the saints say holiness is for everyone - as does the Lord and His Church (1 Thess 4:3).

- I believe in Jesus. What more does He want?

He wants all! He wants more for us. There is no real believing without living with a complete "yes" to His will and plan for us.

- I've accepted the Lord Jesus as my Savior. Jesus did it all for me.

Because you have a piece of the pie does not mean that you have the whole pie! There is more; there is more, so much more!

- I'm a good man. I follow the law. What more does God want?

Holiness is more than goodness; it is taking on "Goodness" itself; His very Life.

- I'm no sinner!

"If we say: 'we are free of the guilt of sin,' we deceive ourselves; the truth is not to be found in us. But if we acknowledge our sins, he who is just can be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrong..." (1 Jn 1:9-10). If you have no sin, you don't need a Savior!

- *I'm enjoying life. I'm satisfied. I have more than I need.*

“You fool! This very night your life shall be required of you. To whom will all this piled-up wealth of yours go?” (Lk 12:20).

A children’s poem speaks poignantly to this objection:

Saint Anthony said, now listen to me,

Here or here after poor you must be.

Either in heaven or on earth you may be rich,

But not in both, so now choose which.

Perfectly ridiculous some people said,

Who wants to be rich after they are dead.

Make money now, never mind then.

This is the plan for sensible men.

Perfectly splendid some other folk cried,

And came out strong on Anthony’s side.

Poverty now and riches then,

This is the plan for sensible men.

Which were right quite plain appears,

They all have been dead for six hundred years.

Joan Windham, *Children’s Stories*, ~1945

- *I think that mysticism is not Christian. It’s an oriental religion.*

True Christian mysticism is “trinitarian, ecclesial, sacramental, and inextricably bound to the crucified and risen Christ” (H. Egan, S.J., p. 28, *Christian Mysticism: The future of a tradition*, Pueblo Publishing Co., NY, 1984). Christian mysticism is “a way of life in which one experiences God’s purifying, illuminating, and transforming love - the full flowering of biblical mysticism” (ibid p. XVI).

It is being on fire with God's love for you!

- *I think all that saint stuff is for children. I've got my life to live. I've got my job to do. Saints are a fairy tale.*

"I assure you, unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of God" (Mt 18:3).

Don't wait until you die to discover the truth and love of God.

- *I can't take all that faith stuff. I have my studies and career to think of. I'm a rational man. How can I believe all that holiness stuff?*

"What profit does he show who gains the whole world and destroys himself in the process?" (Lk 9:25).

To Jesus Christ's teaching on the Eucharist, some objected: "This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously?" ... Jesus asked: "Does it shake your faith?" (Jn 6:60-61). He did not water down His teaching to satisfy the skeptics.

- *I'm satisfied. I go to Mass on Sundays and I keep the commandments. What else does God want? How much do I need to do to get to heaven?*

This is minimalism - it doesn't work in marriage, in sports, or on the job. Besides that, purgatory will be a long, long time.

Jesus looked with love at the rich young man who came up to him with that question and told him to sell his possessions, give the profit to the poor and follow Him. The young man went away sad because he had many riches. Jesus then remarked: "It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mk 10:25).

- *I'm faithful to my family and career! What more does God ask of me?*

Jesus told his first disciples: "Put out into the deep water and lower your nets for a catch" (Lk 5:4). Put out into the deep! God wants more for us!

- *I want to be holy, but not yet!*

St. Augustine echoed this objection centuries ago. God wants you *now*.

- *I don't see any God. I'm not going to kid myself with these fables.*

The yearning of the heart is answered only by the eternal love. Psalm 42 speaks clearly of the yearning of the soul for God:

As the hind longs for the running waters, so my soul longs for you, O God.

A thirst is my soul for God, the living God

When shall I go and behold the face of God? (Ps 42:1).

- *I'm so far gone that nothing can save me! I'm so depressed!*

St. Faustina records a conversation of the Merciful God with a despairing soul. In part it reads:

Soul: Is it possible that there is yet mercy for me?

Jesus: There is, my child. You have a special claim on my mercy. (Diary, 1486).

There are a lot of people praying for souls just like you. Call on their prayers for help. Call on St. Faustina.

- *I don't have time for all that stuff. I'm too busy.*

Yes, that is true. *You are too busy!* You need to stop and take time for silence and prayerful presence to God who is present to you. B.U.S.Y. reads: "Bound Under Satan's Yoke!"

- *I'm so miserable: How can I be a saint?*

By God's mercy! There are two kinds of people who receive God's mercy: the humble (I say that for the sake of the Blessed Mother) and the miserable. Our Lord spoke to St. Faustina about His great mercy to the miserable:

Your misery does not hinder My mercy. ... The greater the misery of a soul, the greater right to My mercy; [urge] all souls to trust in the unfathomable abyss of My mercy, because I want to save them all (Diary, 1182).

- *I'm a sinner. I'm no saint.*

Again, St. Faustina records the words of the Lord:

I perform works of mercy in every soul. The greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to My mercy (Diary, 723).

The greatest sinners would achieve great sanctity, if only they would trust in My mercy (Diary, 1784).

- *I'm so inadequate.*

So, again, I repeat...

I love the response of Fr. Leo McCauley, SJ, who was on our Bethany House of Intercession Team for six years. When people would come to him and say: "I'm too inadequate to be a saint, with all my misery!" Fr. Leo would respond with a smile, "Oh don't worry, you *are* inadequate!"

Praised be the Lord Jesus Christ that we realize that we are inadequate, because holiness is a *gift* given to the humble and the miserable. All we need to do is to ask for His gift of the Holy Spirit and His mercy. It is not our doing. It's His doing. He gives us the Holy Spirit to make us holy - receive, surrender, yield - and receive more - and share it with others.

- *How can I be sure about all this holiness business?*

Look to the multitude of saints who have gone before us - "we for our part are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1) - we have a multitude of models.

Pope John Paul II in his 26 years of his pontificate declared 1,345 men and women as "blessed" and 483 as "saints" and there are many, many more who are not declared saints.

- *I'm afraid of the suffering that saints have experienced.*

"Fear is useless, what is needed is trust" (Mk 5:36). "Perfect love casts out all fear" (1 Jn 4:18).

Yes, Jesus told us that persecution, tribulation and suffering are part of our earthly life. But the secret of the saints is that they asked for and received God's *love* which transformed suffering into joy!

Suffering + Love = Joy.

Jesus so loved us that he laid down His life for us in the greatest possible act of love for us (Jn 15:13).

For the sake of the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God (Heb 12:2, RNAB).

In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood... So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees (Heb 12:4 to 13, RNAB).

- *I'm angry at God / at the Church / at the Pastor - too angry to be a saint!*

There is always something to be angry at, but the real question is salvation of my soul. God is waiting for you to be merciful and forgiving as He is. How can you pray the Our Father without forgiving?

- *I know that Holiness is a full time job. I'm too busy. I don't have time for that prayer.*

You don't understand that it is not a question of saying more prayers - but of praying from the heart without ceasing. The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes St. Thérèse of Lisieux as the first description of prayer:

For me, prayer is a surge of the heart, a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and love, embracing both trial and joy (CCC #2558).

- *I don't want to be a religious fanatic.*

It is not a question of being a religious fanatic but of being in love with the Lord. St. John records the Lord's response to the lukewarm:

I know your deeds. I know you are neither hot nor cold. How I wish you were one or the other - hot or cold! But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth! (Rev 3:15, NAB)

And yet, the Lord is merciful and pursues us:

Here I stand, knocking at the door. If anyone hears me calling and opens the door, I will enter his house and have supper with him and he with me. I will give the victor the right to sit with me on my throne ... (Rev 3:20-21, NAB).

- *I tried it. It's too hard! It's martyrdom.*

Yes, that is true. It really is very hard when we try on our own! It is only by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit that we can walk this journey - so we need to ask for the Holy Spirit unceasingly and be faithful to His inspirations (Diary, 291).

- *I'll get to heaven on my wife's coat tail!*

You may well, like my non-church going father who said this to my mother. He made it, but if I were you, I wouldn't count on it! His conversion began with a spiritual bouquet card marked "one Holy Communion, at the time of my ordination to priesthood in 1954." After that he became a daily communicant and went to monthly confession.

- *How can I be a saint? I don't have any of those visions or apparitions or locutions I've read about.*

The extraordinary manifestations of God are not what holiness is about. Holiness is about the presence and priority of God in our daily life and faithfulness to His Holy will and the Holy Spirit. St. Faustina writes of the ordinary days of her life:

O humdrum days, filled with darkness, I look upon you with a solemn and festive eye. How great and solemn is the time that gives us the chance to gather merits for eternal heaven! I understand how the saints made use of it (Diary, 1373).

- *But my life is full of struggles. How can I be a saint?*

Wonderful! The lives of saints were filled with struggles. So join the human race and enjoy the fight! St. Faustina writes of her daily struggle. Some seventy times she writes in her Diary of the daily struggle:

In spite of the profound peace my soul is enjoying, I am struggling continuously,

and it is often a hard-fought battle for me to walk faithfully along my path; that is, the path which the Lord Jesus wants me to follow. And my path is to be faithful to the will of God in all things and at all times, especially by being faithful to inner inspirations in order to be a receptive instrument in God's hands for the carrying out of the work of His fathomless mercy (Diary, 1173).

... the day starts with a struggle and ends with a struggle. When I go to take my rest, I feel like a soldier returning from the battlefield. You alone, my Lord and Master, know what this day has contained (Diary, 1310).

This life of mine is a ceaseless struggle, a constant effort to do Your holy will; but may everything that is in me, both my misery and my strength, give praise to You, O Lord (Diary, 1740).

Our Lord spoke to a soul striving for perfection:

My child, life on earth is a struggle indeed; a great struggle for My kingdom. But fear not, because you are not alone. I am always supporting you, so lean on Me as you struggle, fearing nothing. Take the vessel of trust and draw from the fountain of life... (Diary, 1488).

- *But what can I do in this daily struggle?*

Be strengthened by the Daily Bread, by daily Holy Communion, if possible, and frequent spiritual communion. St. Faustina writes:

Every morning during meditation, I prepare myself for the whole day's struggle. Holy Communion assures me that I will win the victory; and so it is. I fear the day when I do not receive Holy Communion. This Bread of the Strong gives me all the strength I need to carry on my mission and the courage to do whatever the Lord asks of me. The courage and strength that are in me are not of me, but of Him who lives in me — it is the Eucharist (Diary, 91).

Do battle with the weapon of "T³":

Try harder to be merciful in practical and little ways.

Trust in Jesus even more!

Thank the Lord for everything! And always! Especially for the daily struggle.

- *I'm not into this holiness and mysticism stuff! I'm into the option for the poor and social action. Something must be done about the third world.*

The Church is very aware of her preferential option for the poor: - especially in modern society where there are many forms of poverty, not only economic but cultural and spiritual as well. ... The human person is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission ... the way traced out by Christ himself (John Paul II on the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, #53, quoting *Redeemer of Man*, 14).

At the homily of the final session of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI stressed:

The Church receives the meaning of the person from Divine Revelation. In order to know man, authentic man, man in his fullness, one must know God (ibid #55).

The Church's social teaching is itself a valid instrument of evangelization. As such, it proclaims God and his mystery of salvation in Christ to every human being, and for that very reason reveals man to himself. In this light, and only in this light, does it concern itself with everything else: the human rights of the individual, and in particular of the "working class," the family and education, and the duties of the State, the ordering of national and international society, economic life, culture, war and peace, and respect for life from the moment of conception until death (ibid #54).

Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ (John 17:3).

Be holy as I am holy (1 Peter 1:16).

Knowing Jesus, you will recognize Him in your neighbor (Mother Teresa of

Calcutta, March 1993 letter to her Missionaries of Charity).

The Overall Answer to the Objections against holiness and mysticism is the understanding and experience of our goal as a spousal union with the Lord. He is in love with you and wants you to be in love with Him. It is a question of daily hearing the Lord saying: “I love you!” and our responding with our whole hearts: “I love you!”

It is not enough to say “I love you” once on your wedding day. Can you imagine a spouse saying: “Why do I need to tell you again. I said it once at our wedding. Do I need to tell you again and again?” So also, we must daily renew our love for the Lord who loves us. The Lord loves to hear of our love for Him.

Questions, Challenges and Promises to you, the reader...

Our Lord questioned, challenged and promised in a way that changed lives and made saints throughout the ages, even to this very day!

Q Questions from Jesus to you (NAB texts):

- “Who do you say that I am?” (Mt 16:15).
- “What profit would a man show if he were to gain the whole world and destroy himself in the process? What can a man offer in exchange for his very self? (Mt 16:26).
- “What are you looking for?” (Jn 1:38).
- “Do you want to leave me, too?” (Jn 6:67).
- “Do you believe [that] I am the resurrection and the life?” (Jn 11:24-26).
- “Do you love me?” (Jn 21:15-17).

Q Challenges of Jesus to you:

- “Come after me and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt 4:19).
- “Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome...” (Mt 11:28-29).
- “Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is brother and sister and mother to me” (Mt 12:50).

- “If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross and begin to follow in my footsteps” (Mt 16:24).
- “Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt 16:25).
- “I assure you, unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of God” (Mt 18:3).
- “Jesus looked at the rich young man with love and told him: ‘There is one thing more you must do. Go sell what you have and give it to the poor; you will then have treasure in heaven. After that come and follow me’” (Mk 10:21).
- “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act upon it” (Lk 8:21).
- “Come and see” (Jn 1:39).
- “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).
- “This is the work of God: have faith in the One whom he sent” (Jn 6:29).
- “If anyone thirsts let him come to me; let him drink who believes in me...” (Jn 7:37-38).
- “Have faith in God and faith in me” (Jn 14:1).
- “Live on in me, as I do in you” (Jn 15:4).
- «“Live on in my love. You will live in my love if you keep my commandments even as I have kept my Father’s commandments” (Jn 15:9-10).
- “This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12).

Q Promises of Jesus to you:

- Jesus begins His sermon on the mount with promises of the kingdom and blessings, and concludes with a promise and blessing in our tribulations and persecutions: “Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is great in heaven; they persecuted the prophets before you in the

very same way” (Mt 5:1-12).

- To the rich young man Jesus promised: “... you will have treasure in heaven” (Mk 10:21).
- To Peter’s concern about leaving all to follow Jesus, Jesus replied: “I give you my word there is no one who has given up home, brothers or sisters, mother or father, children or property, for me and for the gospel who will not receive in this present age a hundred times as many homes, brothers and sisters, mothers and children and property - and persecution besides - and in the age to come, everlasting life (Mk 10:28-31).
- “... whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).
- “He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day” (Jn 6:54).
- “Whoever is alive and believes in me will never die” (Jn 11:26).
- “I am indeed going to prepare a place for you, and I shall come back to take you with me, that where I am you also may be” (Jn 14:3).
- Five times Jesus promises to send His Holy Spirit to be with us (Jn 14:16-17), to instruct and remind us (Jn 14:26), to bear witness to Jesus (Jn 15:26), to convict the world of sin (Jn 16:7-11), to guide us to all truth and announce things to come (Jn 16:13-16).
- At the end of Luke’s gospel Jesus promises: “I send down upon you the promise of my Father. Remain in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:48).
- Then in the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles Jesus repeats His promise: “Wait ... for the fulfillment of my Father’s promise of which you heard Me speak. John baptized with water, but within a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit ... You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down upon you; then you will be My witnesses ... even to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:4-8).
- St. Paul, in writing to the Church at Corinth, describes the mysterious wisdom of God’s promise to us: “... of this wisdom it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him.’ Yet God has

revealed this wisdom to us through the Spirit..." (1 Cor 2:1-16)).

Jesus promises you and me a share in His life by the gift of His Holy Spirit. He challenges us to accept His invitation to become members of God's family! He calls us to trust in His Merciful love and accept the Father's will and be a living presence of Jesus, now and be with Him in eternity.

St. John writes in his first letter: "What we have seen and heard we proclaim in turn to you so that you may share life with us, this fellowship of ours is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 1:3). "Dearly beloved, we are God's children, now; what we shall later be has not yet come to light. We know that when it comes to light we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 Jn 3:2).

What an amazing love God has bestowed on us in letting us be called children of God! (See 1 Jn 3:1). - And there is more, so much more to come! - to those who say and live "yes" to God's love and will.

Chapter Seven

The Master Plan

Q. What is God's master plan for our holiness?

A. Getting into this question of God's master plan for the holiness of millions of saints is like entering into the dialogue of God and Job (Job 38-42). "Who is this that obscures divine plans with words of ignorance?" (Job 38:2).

I'll try at least to give the key issues of God's plan, even though I am aware of the problem. The problem I'm referring to is our *cranium* that sits on the top of our shoulders. It is filled with fatty material we call the brain. The problem is that we think that we can grasp the whole universe and God, put things into our "fat heads" like we put information into a computer and out comes an answer. We are dealing with mysteries beyond our capability of grasping. We are dealing with the very nature of the Most Holy Trinity and their great plan of sharing their love and life, forming the great family of God.

I would venture to point out that the key issues of God's plan for our holiness would involve: the Law of the Gift which exercises itself in creating, redeeming and sanctifying us. The Holy Spirit is a key agent in this plan. The other protagonist is the antagonist of the "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess 2:7, K.J.), the evil spirit who wants the kingdom, the power and the glory for himself. God's key issue is love and freedom.

In broad strokes, as a bottom line, our response to God's plan involves: trust, humility, and faithfulness to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Or stated in another way our response to God's plan for holiness is humble obedience to the will of God. (More on this will be described in the example of St. Faustina, Chapter 8).

St. Paul describes that the plan of God for our holiness is to "have mercy on all" (Rom 11:32).

Then he continues with a hymn of this merciful plan of providence:

How deep are the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God? How inscrutable his judgments, how unsearchable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has given him anything so as to deserve return? For from him and through him and for him all things are. To him be glory forever, Amen. (Rom 11:35-36).

St. Paul immediately applies God's plan of having "mercy on all" by exhorting us to respond:

And now... I beg you *through the mercy of God to offer your bodies* [your whole self as created and redeemed] as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what in God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect (Rom 12:1-2, NAB).

St. Paul exhorts us to give our all to God and so be in God's will, pleasing Him with our perfect response. He exhorts us to go all the way - 100% for God.

Q. Can you help me to better understand God's plan for our holiness?

A. We know that our holiness is God's will (see 1 Thess 4:3) and that He calls us to "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Pt 2:16 and Lv 19:2). In order to better understand God's plan for our holiness, we need to understand the Law of the Gift and the role of the Holy Spirit and the "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess 2:7).

To help you to understand more of this mysterious plan for our holiness I need to reflect on the Law of the Gift and its expression in Creation, Redemption and Sanctification, as well as the role of the evil one - so please hold on and stay with me. If you are familiar with this material or, on the other hand, find it too much, then move on to the next question. You asked for it, so here we go.

The Law of the Gift

The Law of the Gift is the very nature of God. He is love and totally gives Himself in love and

so gives life. It is both love-giving life and life-giving love. Pope Paul VI described this gift of love-giving life to the Son as the secret of the joy of the Blessed Trinity:

Here there is an incommunicable relationship of love which is identified with his [Jesus'] existence as the Son and which is the secret of the life of the Trinity: the Father is seen here as the One Who gives Himself to the Son, without reserve and without ceasing, in a *burst of joyful generosity*, and the Son is seen as He Who gives Himself in the same way as the Father, in a *burst of joyful gratitude in the Holy Spirit*. And the disciples and all those who believe in Christ are called to share this joy. Jesus wishes them to have in themselves his joy in its fullness (see Jn 17:13). "I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them" (Jn 17:26). This joy of living in God's love begins here below. It is the joy of the Kingdom of God (Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *On Christian Joy*, Pentecost Sunday, May 9 1975).

This is Christian joy! This is the joy of the Holy Spirit. This is the new presence of the Risen Christ. This is holiness. It is all a gift of love and life. It is all an expression of the Law of the Gift.

The "Law of the Gift" is also seen in the three-fold work of the Blessed Trinity: *Creation*, *Redemption*, and *Sanctification*. It is all total gift.

CREATION OF THE SPIRITS

God created spirits in order to share His gift of love and life and power. Each spirit was created unique, unrepeatably, precious *but* each one was put to the test. Lucifer responded with "who is like to me?" - a rebellious act of pride and disobedience, claiming "Mine is the kingdom and the power and the glory!" and became the father of lies and the initiator. Michael responded with "who is like to God?" - an act of humble obedience to the truth.

War broke out in the heavens and Lucifer (Satan) and his followers were cast down to the earth (see Rev 12).

CREATION OF THE WORLD AND MANKIND

God created the world for man. God created man, in His own image and likeness, male and female He created them (see Genesis 1:26-27) to share in the Law of the Gift. They too could share God's love and give life: God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply: fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28).

But Adam and Eve were put to the test. They were tempted "you'll be like gods" - and they failed. So entered sin, death, and Satan into the life of mankind.

REDEMPTION: THE RE-CREATION OF MAN

Jesus, in the great act of humble obedience to the Father, followed the Law of the Gift, in a total gift of love giving new and eternal life.

Jesus, born of Mary by the Holy Spirit, became Incarnate:

Incarnate love and mercy.

Incarnate humility.

Incarnate holiness.

Incarnate obedience.

Jesus revealed, and made present and visible, the Father.

Jesus, baptized in the Jordan and anointed by the Holy Spirit, said "yes" to His mission as Messiah (Christ) and the Suffering Servant. Driven by the Holy Spirit, He too was put to the test: tempted by Satan to take the easy road by giving Satan "the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory." But Jesus passed the test and began His public ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus cast out Satan and his fellow spirits. He called for repentance and forgave sinners. He called for faith and trust in Himself. He taught the truth. He proclaimed the kingdom, the power and the glory of the Father. Jesus won the victory over sin, death and Satan by His passion, death and resurrection in humble obedience to the will of the Father.

The turning point of the mission of Jesus to the leaders of Israel, was when they accused Jesus of working by the power of Satan. But Jesus worked by the power of the Holy Spirit to cast out the evil spirit. From then on, He spoke to them in parables.

Jesus was baptized and anointed by the Holy Spirit. He worked by the power of the Holy Spirit, raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit and then sent the Holy Spirit upon His disciples to do ever greater works. Jesus commissioned His apostles to “make disciples of all the nations” (Mt 28:19).

SANCTIFICATION

Making us holy, sanctifying us, is the third expression of the Law of the Gift:

- It is the Holy Spirit of the Father and Son who sanctifies us.
- The Holy Spirit makes Jesus present in a new way.
- The Holy Spirit unites us into the family of God.
- The Holy Spirit is the giver of eternal life by His love.
- The Holy Spirit is holy, humble and merciful and makes us into “Living Eucharist.”

During a Holy Hour at a Retreat for priests of the New York Archdiocese I spontaneously prayed: “You are the Holy One, the Humble One, the Merciful One.” After the benediction I asked Fr. Benedict Groeschel, CFR, about the meaning of this invocation. He said that he was just talking the Mother Teresa of Calcutta as he drove her to her convent in the Bronx and asked her why God uses ordinary people for his work. She immediately answered, “Because God is so humble!”

I am coming to realize new ways to describe the Holy Spirit:

- The Holy Spirit is the mercy, humility and holiness of God, that transubstantiates the bread and wine into the Eucharist, the merciful, humble, holy presence of Jesus Christ.
- The Holy Spirit is the kingdom, the power, and the glory of the Father and Son.

- The Holy Spirit is the gift of love giving life.
- The Holy Spirit is the sanctifier and the living truth.
- The Holy Spirit is the uncreated eternal immaculate conception of the Holy Trinity and the spouse of Mary.
- The Holy Spirit makes us holy, uniting us in love to be the family of God.

With this description of the Holy Spirit, we can glimpse the importance of the Holy Spirit in our spiritual life. And we can come to appreciate the emphasis on the Holy Spirit in the lives of the saints and mystics like St. Faustina and Venerable Conchita. And at the same time we can be aware of the antagonist, the evil spirit, in the great plan of God.

Q. Why does it seem so hard to be holy? Is there something or someone hindering our desire to be holy?

A. Yes, there is someone hindering our striving for holiness — the “mystery of iniquity” (see 2 Thess 2:7 KJ). We are in spiritual warfare and Satan tries to keep us from the victory of holiness in Christ Jesus. Peter Kreeft put it well:

To win any war, the three most necessary things to know are:

1. That we *are* at war,
2. Who your enemy is, and
3. What weapons or strategies can defeat him” (*Crisis*, June 1988).

Msgr. Ronald Knox described the situation in a strong statement: “It is so stupid of modern civilization to have given up believing in the Devil ... he is the only explanation of it” (*Crisis*, November 1997).

Our enemy is not our fellow men — they are created in the image and likeness of God — they are to be saved. Yes, we are and will be hassled and tempted like Jesus was, but we have the victory.

St. Faustina was a warrior in this spiritual warfare. Like Jesus she resisted a three-fold temptation against her mission:

1. Against promoting the Feast of Mercy,
2. Against her offering her sufferings,
3. Against her proclaiming trust in God's mercy (Diary, 1496-1497).

She responded with silent prayer and submission to God's will. At that moment, Jesus appeared and expressed His pleasure:

I am pleased with what you are doing. And you can continue to be at peace if you always do the best you can in respect to this work of mercy. Be absolutely as frank as possible with your confessor.

Satan gained nothing by tempting you, because you did not enter into conversation with him. Continue to act in this way. You gave Me great glory today by fighting so faithfully. Let it be confirmed and engraved on your heart that I am always with you, even if you don't feel My presence at the time of battle. (Diary, 1499)

Jesus gave St. Faustina a conference on spiritual warfare which she recorded in her Diary:

... Do not bargain with any temptation; lock yourself immediately in My Heart ... Do not be unduly fearful, because you are not alone. (Diary, 1760)

Throughout her Diary she wrote of Satan's hate for Divine Mercy. At the end of her Diary she wrote:

In spite of Satan's anger, the Divine Mercy will triumph over the whole world and will be worshiped by all souls. (Diary, 1789)

Q. What is the role of the evil spirit in our spiritual life?

A. The evil spirit is the antitheses of the Holy Spirit. He is the “anti-spirit” of the Antichrist. He claims the kingdom and the power and the glory for himself as seen in the temptations of Jesus in the desert. He is the opposite to truth, light, humility and holiness. He is deceit, darkness, pride and evil. The Lord allows Satan to test us even as Jesus was tempted in the desert. And Jesus taught us His own prayer to help us in our time of testing and temptation.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has a marvelous explanation of the final petitions of the Lord’s Prayer:

“And lead us not into temptation”

It is difficult to translate the Greek verb used (“lead”) by a single English word: the Greek means “do not allow us to enter into temptation” and “do not allow us to yield to temptation.” ... We ask [God] not to allow us to take the way that leads to sin. We are engaged in the battle “between flesh and spirit;” this petition implores the Spirit of discernment and strength (#2846-2847).

“But deliver us from evil”

It touches each one of us personally, but it is always “we” who pray, in communion with the whole Church, for the deliverance of the whole human family ... Therefore the Spirit and the Church pray: “Come, Lord Jesus,” since his coming will deliver us from the evil one (2850-2855).

And so let us pray:

Lead us to be vigilant of heart and watch, so that we will be able to discern what is good and not consent to evil when we are tempted. Give us final perseverance.

And the Church prays at the end of the Lord’s prayer at Mass:

Deliver us, Lord from every evil, and grant peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the

coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

And we respond:

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Q. What can I do in temptation?

A. Again I would encourage you to pray the Our Father slowly, meaningfully, from the heart, praying not to be lead into temptation, that is, not yielding to it (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2846) and concluding with the doxology: “For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever” (C.C.C. #2855).

Invoke our Blessed Mother who crushes the head of Satan, praying the Hail Mary ... emphasizing “pray for us *now...*” And above all, turn away from the occasion of sin and repent of your sin. If the temptation persists ask Mary to “squash the serpent.” Take spiritual authority over the evil one and his forces. Pray to St. Michael the Archangel to defend you in battle.

Make regular use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is a marvel of grace!

Q. What can I do with my suffering?

A. We can do what Jesus did with His suffering. Offer it to the Father. Unite your suffering with Jesus as He offers His great sacrifice to the Father for the salvation of souls.

St. Paul teaches us what to do with our suffering:

It is your special privilege to take Christ’s part — not only to believe in him but also to *suffer for him* (Phil 1:29, NAB emphasis added).

The Spirit himself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God. But if we are children, we are heirs as well; heirs of God, heirs with Christ, *if only we suffer with him* so as to be glorified with him (Rom 8:16- 17, NAB emphasis added).

Even now *I find my joy in the suffering I endure for you*. In my flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of the body, the Church (Col 1:24, NAB, emphasis added).

Christ continues to suffer in you and me, His body, for the salvation of souls. Therefore: “Rejoice... in the measure you share Christ’s sufferings” (1 Peter 4:13, NAB).

We *console* Jesus in His sufferings now — by offering our sufferings with love to Him for the sake of souls. We *console* Jesus in His suffering in a number of ways:

- By offering our sufferings, uniting ours with His.
- By giving thanks for the graces we receive: “Where are the other nine?” Jesus asked with hurt when only one out of ten lepers cured returned to give thanks (Lk 17: 17, NAB).
- By our prayer and watching with Jesus in His agony. As He said to Peter: “So you could not stay awake with me for an hour?” (Mt 26:40).
- By doing all we do to please the Lord.

Don’t waste your present suffering. It is precious for your sanctification and for the souls. Offer it to Jesus to be transformed by His love into joy: Suffering + love = joy. We all have suffering. We all want joy. So, ask for the missing love — God’s love for you to transform your suffering into the joy of salvation.

Chapter Eight

How Can I be a Saint and a Mystic?

Q. The grand plan of God for holiness sounds so complicated! What can I do to be holy? Can you tell me in a simple way?

A. Let us look at three key words in Sacred Scripture: Desire, Ask, and Pray:

Desire to be a saint. Long for holiness. Thirst for God.

Jesus stood up and cried out: “If anyone thirsts [desires], let him come to me; let him drink who believes in me. Scripture has it: ‘From within him rivers of living water shall flow.’” Here he was referring to the Spirit whom those who came to believe in him were to receive. (Jn 7:37-39)

Consider the action verbs that Jesus uses — it is a lesson on how to be holy: thirst?, come, drink, believe, flow.

Ask to be a saint. Jesus waits for our invitation. St. Luke records the words of Jesus to us:

I say to you, “Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. ... how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” (Lk 11:9-13).

It’s so simple to receive the Holy Spirit: Ask, seek and knock and you will be given the Holy Spirit. Receive Him and give Him thanks.

Pray the *Lord’s Prayer* that Jesus Himself lived and taught us. In a short summary we are to praise the Father, surrender to His will and trust in His mercy, and in this way, live the Lord’s

Prayer.

Again the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives a magnificent teaching on this fundamental Christian prayer as the conclusion of the whole Catechism (# 2759-2865).

Someone complained to St. Theresa of Avila that they didn't know how to pray. She responded: "Say the Lord's Prayer, but take an hour to say it!" If we live the Lord's Prayer we will be holy!

St. Paul gives another simple three-step formula for holiness that is one of my favorites:

Rejoice always.

Pray without ceasing.

In all things give thanks

For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus regarding you all (1 Thess 5:16-19, Confraternity Edition).

This is God's will for everyone, always and everywhere. Try it. You'll love it!

The *focus* on our trying to be holy is not so much on what *I do* — but rather, on what *I allow God to do!* Step aside and let Him act. Allow God to love you. Let Him transform you and sanctify you. Trust the Lord even more!

Q. How can I live the message to be holy each day?

A. I would recommend as a beginning an eight-fold daily practice:

1. *A time of prayer* — set up a prayer corner with your favorite holy images where you go to be with the Lord, away from the distractions of daily life.
2. *Invite* the Holy Spirit to fill your heart and enkindle it with the fire of His love. *Invite* Jesus to come into your heart and life. *Accept* the invitation of the Lord: "Come to me all you who labor and are heavily burdened..." (Mt 11:28-29), and "If anyone thirst, let him come to me..." (Jn 7:37-39).

3. *Love God* and your neighbor. *Let God love you.*
4. *Trust in Jesus.* Repeat often the prayer of St. Faustina: “Jesus, I trust in You!”
5. *Practice Presence.* Be present to the One who is present in your heart.
6. *Ask the Lord* for a sacred scripture text to guide you. Ask the Lord for His word for you each day.
7. *Ask Mary,* our Blessed Mother to form and guide you.
8. *Be merciful* by deed, word, and prayer. Always be kind, compassionate, and gentle.

Q. How can I grow in holiness?

A. By living the life of MORE:

- *Desire* more of God.
- *Expect* more from God.
- *Accept* more grace from God.
- *Give* more mercy.
- *Surrender* more to God’s will.
- *Allow* God to act more deeply.

By living a life of “yes” in all languages:

- Yes, Yes, Yes to God’s will.
- Fiat, Fiat, Fiat to God’s plan for you.
- Si, Si, Si to God’s ways.
- Oui, Oui, Oui to God’s timing.
- Yah, Yah, Yah to God in everything and always.
- Tak, Tak, Tak to the praise of God’s Glory.
- Dah, Dah, Dah in thanksgiving for creation, for redemption, for sanctification.

Q. What practical exercises can I do to grow more?

A. I would recommend the following practices:

1. *A Daily Hour of Prayer.*
2. *Live in the Lord's presence* — whether felt or unfelt.
3. *Eucharist:* daily Mass and Communion if possible, and adoration.
4. *Sacrament of Reconciliation:* frequently and regularly for mercy, for forgiveness, and for healing.
5. *Spiritual Reading* of Sacred Scripture and the lives of the Saints.
6. *Avoid* television and secular reading.
7. *Works of Mercy* by deed, word and prayer.
8. *Spiritual direction* through a friend, a guide, a director.

Q. Is there still more that I can do?

A. Yes, there is still more — so much more — you can do to grow in holiness.

- *Expect* more, *desire* more, *ask* for more of: His will, His love, His presence, His Holy Spirit. Ask and then allow the Lord to love you.
- *Take up your cross* daily with joy and thanks.
- *Offer your sufferings* and misery to the Lord — entrusting all to His merciful Heart.
- *Trust* in Jesus even more and *Entrust* your concerns, your burdens and sufferings to the merciful Heart of Jesus.
- *Rejoice* and *give thanks* for everything! — which is humility in action.
- Be even more *merciful* in deed, word and prayer.
- *Thirst for souls* — for their salvation and sanctification — for the grand family of God.
- *Glorify* the mercy of God — it is *all* gift.

Q. What is essential to the spiritual life? Could you tell me in a simple way?

A. Three things are essential to the spiritual life: *Love, Trust, and Humility*:

Love: Let God love you! Love God with your whole heart, mind and strength, and your neighbor as God loves you. Be merciful — the second name of love (John Paul II, *Rich in Mercy*).

Trust: Trust in Jesus. He is the *Way* to the Father. He is the *Truth* and the *Life*. T.R.U.S.T. is Total Reliance Upon Saving Truth.

Humility: Be humble: God is God: You and I are not. God is mercy and you and I are misery. So, give *thanks* and serve others with mercy. Humility is the foundation on which the spiritual life is built.

Q. Who will teach and guide me to stay on the way to holiness?

A. We have a host of guides for our pilgrim way to heaven:

- The *Holy Spirit* is our principle guide and the spouse of Mary. They work together to make Jesus present — and Jesus is *the way* to the Father. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart and teach you.
- The *Sacred Scriptures* are the words of the Lord, like a road map, pointing to Jesus (e.g. 2 Tim 3:15-17). Read them (e.g. 1 Tim 4:13) and live by them.
- The *Saints and Angels* are concerned about our salvation and sanctification — ask for their help.
- A *Spiritual Director*, a guide or friend who will point out the workings of the Holy Spirit.
- The *Church's teaching* and sacraments are clear guides — see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and study the lives of the saints who have gone before us.

Q. How do I start on my pilgrimage to be a saint?

A. Start by desiring, asking, and inviting:

Desire to be a saint!

Ask for the Holy Spirit to fill your heart and set it on fire with love.

Invite Jesus into your life and heart to reveal the Father to you. Jesus never refuses an invitation!

Q. What can I do if I have obstacles in my life to becoming holy? I am so inadequate and weak and sinful.

A. Again, return to *desire* and *asking* but add a step in between. If you really want to grow in virtue or overcome a vice, try the following three step approach. It really does work.

For example:

1. *I Desire:* Lord, I really and truly want to love you and be a saint. May this not be wishful thinking, but a firm desire of my whole heart, and a firm decision.

But:

2. *I Confess:* Lord, that I am a weak sinner, inadequate and miserable, and I just can't do it! I desperately need your help! No way can I do it without you!

3. *So I Ask:* Lord, help me to overcome my obstacles and my sins with your grace, your gift of the Holy Spirit. I invite you into my life. Do what needs to be done.

The confessing of our inability is the essential act of humility, which is an act of *truth* that God is God and I am not. The confessing of our sin and misery with trust in God's mercy opens the door to God's Heart. When we turn to Him with trust He will respond to our three-steps with His three steps:

1. I *want* to make you holy.

2. I *can* make you holy.

3. I *will* make you holy.

Continue to repeat the three steps of *desire*, *confessing*, and *asking* until the Lord accomplishes what He desires for you — your sanctification. It is God's will for you. (See 1 Thess 4:3)

Chapter Nine

St. Faustina: Model and Teacher of Holiness

Q. There are so many great saints. Could you help me to get started on my pilgrimage? Give me an example to follow!

A. I would recommend turning to St. Faustina for help. She had a desire to be a great saint and was concerned about teaching others to be saints. Here are some powerful examples from her Diary:

O my Jesus, how very easy it is to become holy; all that is needed is a bit of good will. If Jesus sees this little bit of good will in the soul, He hurries to give himself to the soul, and nothing can stop Him, neither shortcomings nor falls — absolutely nothing. Jesus is anxious to help that soul, and if it is faithful to this grace from God, it can very soon attain the highest holiness possible for a creature here on earth. God is very generous and does not deny His grace to anyone. Indeed He gives more than what we ask of Him. Faithfulness to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit — that is the shortest route. (*Diary*, 291)

Now that is a clear and powerful statement from a saint who is concerned about your desire to be a saint! This statement is so powerful that it deserves to be read once again!

Just a little bit of good will and faithfulness to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. This is advice that will get us started and keep us going on our pilgrimage.

But there is more in her Diary about God's mercy in making us holy:

All grace flows from mercy, and the last hour abounds with mercy for us. Let no

one doubt concerning the goodness of God; even if a person's sins were as dark as night, God's mercy is stronger than our misery. One thing alone is necessary: that the sinner set ajar the door of his heart, be it ever so little, to let in a ray of God's merciful grace, and then God will do the rest. (*Diary*, 1507)

In the conversation of the merciful God with a Despairing Soul, St. Faustina comments on the final grace given to the despairing soul:

This [final] grace emerges from the merciful Heart of Jesus and gives the soul a special light by means of which the soul begins to understand God's effort; but conversion depends on its own will. The soul knows that this, for her, is final grace and, should it show *even a flicker of good will*, the mercy of God will accomplish the rest. (*Diary*, 1486)

Our Lord spoke to St. Faustina toward the end of her life about His great desire to sanctify us, "if only...":

How very much I desire the salvation of souls! My dearest secretary, write that I want to pour out My divine life into human souls and sanctify them, if only they were willing to accept My grace. The greatest sinners would achieve great sanctity, if only they would trust in My mercy. The very inner depths of My being are filled to overflowing with mercy, and it is being poured out upon all I have created. My delight is to act in a human soul and to fill it with My mercy and to justify it. My kingdom on earth is My life in the human soul. Write, My secretary, that I Myself am the spiritual guide of souls — and I guide them indirectly through the priest, and lead each one to sanctity by a road known to Me alone. (*Diary*, 1784).

These texts are clear and strong instructions to start and continue on the journey to holiness. They answer so many of our questions! Desire and ask for His holiness.

Q. Tell me more about the desire of St. Faustina to be a saint.

A. I'll tell you about her *great desire* to be a saint from her own words. She expressed this desire to be a saint in the boldest terms during the last eight-day retreat of her life (Diary 1325 to 1374):

- May Your Spirit guide me... *I desire to come out of this retreat a saint...* (Diary, 1326, emphasis added).
- I want to become a saint, and I *trust that God's mercy can make a saint even out of such misery as I am ...* I want to live and die like a holy soul, with my eyes fixed on Jesus, stretched out on the Cross, as the model for my actions (Diary, 1333, emphasis added).
- I have come to a knowledge of my destiny; that is, an inward *certainty that I will attain sanctity*. This conviction has filled my soul with gratitude to God, and I have given back all the glory to God, because *I know very well what I am of myself* (Diary, 1362, emphasis added).
- I am coming out of this retreat thoroughly *transformed by God's love ...* pure love ... mercy is its fruit ...(Diary, 1363, emphasis added).
- Now I can be wholly *useful to the Church by my personal sanctity*, which throbs with life in the whole Church, for we all make up one organism in Jesus (Diary, 1364, emphasis added).
- My Jesus, You know that from my earliest years *I have wanted to become a great saint*; that is to say, I have wanted to love You with a love so great that there would be no soul who has hitherto loved you so (Diary, 1372, emphasis added).

Now that is a bold desire! Each of us are called to a unique and precious sanctity like St. Faustina, the great teacher and model of sanctity for us all.

St. Faustina challenges you and me, all of us, to great sanctity:

Let no soul, even the most miserable, fall prey to doubt; for, as long as one is alive, *each one can become a great saint*, so great is the power of God's grace. It remains only for us not to oppose God's action (*Diary*, 283, emphasis added).

The treasures of God's mercy are opened for us to draw on the graces we need to be saints. St. Faustina writes:

You do not reject sinners; but in Your boundless mercy You have opened for them also Your treasures, treasures from which they can draw abundantly, not only justification, but also all the sanctity that a soul can attain (*Diary*, 1122).

St. Faustina prays for great sanctity by being faithful to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit:

O Jesus, keep me in holy fear, so that I may not waste graces. Help me to be faithful to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Grant that my heart may burst for love of You, rather than I should neglect even one act of love for You (*Diary*, 1557).

Q. Tell me more about Holiness for the sake of the whole Church. How did St. Faustina reach out to the world by her sanctity?

A. St. Faustina writes:

I strive for the greatest perfection possible in order to be useful to the Church. Greater by far is my bond to the Church. The sanctity or the fall of each individual soul has an effect upon the whole Church. Observing myself and those who are close to me, I have come to understand how great an influence I have on other souls, not by any heroic deeds, as these are striking in themselves, but by small actions like a movement of the hand, a look, and many other things too numerous to mention, which have an effect on and reflect in the souls of others, as I myself have noticed (*Diary*, 1475).

Her words reflect the “little way” of St. Thérèse of Lisieux — what a “Dream Team” they make!

St. Faustina says more about seeking holiness and her usefulness to the Church by practicing virtues:

I am striving for sanctity, because in this way I shall be useful to the Church. I make constant efforts in practicing virtue. I try faithfully to follow Jesus. And I deposit this whole series of daily virtues — silent, hidden, almost imperceptible, but made with great love — in the treasury of God’s Church for the common benefit of souls. I feel interiorly as if I were responsible for all souls. I know very well that I do not live for myself alone, but for the entire Church...(Diary, 1505).

St. Faustina was always aware of her misery but always trusted in God’s mercy:

And despite my misery, with Your help, I can become a saint (Diary, 1718, emphasis added).

Our Lord taught St. Faustina that her sanctity will influence many souls:

Know this, My daughter: if you strive for perfection you will sanctify many souls; and if you do not strive for sanctity, by the same token, many souls will remain imperfect. Know that their perfection will depend on your perfection, and the greater part of the responsibility for these souls will fall on you (Diary, 1165).

But Our Lord went on to encourage her to a great sanctity and she became a special model and teacher to you and me:

Do not fear, my child; but remain faithful to My grace (Diary, 1166).

Q. What does sanctity consist of according to St. Faustina?

A. St. Faustina gave a clear description of what sanctity is and what it is not. It is the intimate union of the soul with God; a close union of our will with His will:

Today during meditation, God gave me inner light and the understanding as to what sanctity is and of what it consists. Although I have heard these things many times in conferences, the soul understands them in a different way when it comes to know of them through the light of God which illumines it.

Neither graces, nor revelations, nor raptures, nor gifts granted to a soul make it perfect, but rather the intimate union of the soul with God. These gifts are merely ornaments of the soul, but constitute neither its essence nor its perfection. My sanctity and perfection consist in the close union of my will with the will of God. God never violates our free will. It is up to us whether we want to receive God's grace or not. It is up to us whether we will cooperate with it or waste it (*Diary*, 1107).

Q. But tell me about her spiritual life. What was unique and special about her way of living the spiritual life?

A. St. Faustina lived *the merciful way*. The merciful way was expressed in the life of St. Faustina in a number of ways:

- *Trust in Jesus*: Her prayer "Jesus, I trust in You," that was taught to her by Jesus, says it all. Trust is a living faith-hope-love in Jesus, who is mercy itself and mercy incarnate.
- *In your misery plunge into the ocean of God's mercy with complete trust*. From the beginning to the end of her *Diary* she speaks of her misery and her still greater trust in God (in over 120 entries).

My favorite entry on her misery and total trust in God is the following:

... Jesus said to me with kindness, ***Daughter, give Me your misery, because it is your exclusive property.*** At that moment, a ray of light illumined my soul, and I

saw the whole abyss of my misery. In that same moment I nestled close to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus with so much trust that even if I had the sins of all the damned weighing on my conscience, I would not have doubted God's mercy but, with a heart crushed to dust, I would have thrown myself into the abyss of Your mercy ... (*Diary*, 1318, emphasis added).

Another revealing text that encourages me speaks of her faithfulness to God's will:

In spite of the profound peace my soul is enjoying, I am struggling continuously, and it is often a hard-fought battle for me to walk faithfully along my path; that is, the path which the Lord Jesus wants me to follow. And my path is to be faithful to the will of God in all things and at all times, especially by being faithful to inner inspirations in order to be a receptive instrument in God's hands for the carrying out of the work of His fathomless mercy (*Diary*, 1173).

- *Live the ABC's of Divine Mercy* — another expression of the merciful way:
 - A. Ask for *His* mercy — to be merciful as our heavenly Father.
 - B. Be merciful — by deed, word and prayer.
 - C. Completely trust in Jesus — “Jesus I trust in you!” I confide in you!

Q. What does St. Faustina teach us about trust and sanctity?

A. In a marvelous entry in her *Diary*, St. Faustina quotes our Lord's teaching on sanctity. For those seeking perfection, He calls for *boundless trust* and *adoration of His mercy*. He promises extraordinary help. “I Myself will attend to the sanctification of such souls! I will provide them with everything they need to attain sanctity.” With promises like that how can we not trust in His mercy. The whole text of the *Diary* entry is quoted here because of its significance in teaching us *to trust in order to grow in sanctity*:

**Let souls who are striving for perfection particularly adore My mercy,
because the abundance of graces which I grant them flows from My mercy.**

I desire that these souls distinguish themselves by boundless trust in My mercy. I myself will attend to the sanctification of such souls. I will provide them with everything they will need to attain sanctity. The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is — trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive. Souls that trust boundlessly are a great comfort to Me, because I pour all the treasures of My graces into them. I rejoice that they ask for much, because it is My desire to give much, very much. On the other hand, I am sad when souls ask for little, when they narrow their hearts (*Diary*, 1578).

So if you want to make the Lord rejoice — trust even more!

Other entries also record the key role of trust in growth in sanctity:

When a soul approaches Me with trust, I fill it with such an abundance of graces that it cannot contain them within itself, but radiates them to other souls (*Diary*, 1074).

The greatest sinners would achieve great sanctity, if only they would trust in my mercy (*Diary*, 1784).

Trust is the *key* that opens the fount of mercy. Our Lord teaches more about trust in His mercy:

- Trust is the only vessel to draw the mercy of God (see *Diary*, 1485, 1488, 1578).
- The greater the trust the more one receives (see *Diary*, 1578).
- The Lord grants inconceivable graces to those who trust (see *Diary*, 687).
- The Lord desires great trust from His creatures (see *Diary*, 1059).
- Most dear to the Lord is the soul that has complete trust in Him (see *Diary* 453).
- Trust gives the greatest glory to God (*Diary*, 930), on the other hand *distrust* hurts (731)

wounds (1074) and displeases Jesus (595).

Jesus makes some fantastic *promises to those who trust in His mercy*:

- *Grace* for conversion of sinners (*Diary*, 723, 1146) and a prayer for sinners (84, 187, 309).
- Trust is the only *source of peace* for mankind (300).
- Trust *opens doors* to an immensity of graces (*Diary*, 1074).
- Peace at death for a trusting soul (1520).
- Mercy always embraces a trusting soul (1777).

Since we all need God's mercy, then we all need to *trust in His mercy* (*Diary*, 1577, 1777):

Jesus I Trust in You!

Our Lord assigned St. Faustina's *mission of trust*:

- To *encourage souls* to trust in His mercy (see *Diary*, 294, 1059, 1146, 1182, 1452, 1567, 1637).
- Her trust forced God to give graces (*Diary*, 718).

St. Faustina lived a life of trust:

- She placed all her trust in God (*Diary*, 317, 681, 1679).

St. Faustina was transformed into trust:

...beyond all abandonment I trust, and in spite of my own feeling I trust, and I am being completely transformed into trust — often in spite of what I feel (*Diary*, 1489).

Again, the mnemonic for trust gives a description: **Total Reliance Upon Saving Truth** — Jesus Christ (Jn 8).

This mnemonic is supported by the description that John Paul II gives of believing [trusting] in explaining St. Elizabeth's word to Mary:

Blessed is she who believed [trusted] that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord (RSV, Lk 1:45).

To believe [to trust, NAB] means “to abandon oneself” to the truth of the word of the living God (John Paul II, *Mother of the Redeemer*, #14).

Q. St. Faustina tells us that trust is essential to sanctity. Tell me more about trust. What does it mean?

A. “*Jesus, I Trust in You!*” is the prayer our Lord taught St. Faustina. It is to be the signature on the Image of Divine Mercy. It is a summary of the Divine Mercy message and devotion: Trust in God’s mercy. The very saying of this prayer is an act of trust in Jesus. *God’s part* is to be merciful. He is mercy itself; Jesus is mercy incarnate; the Holy Spirit is mercy in person. Mercy is “the second name of love” (John Paul II in *Rich in Mercy*). *Our part* is to trust in Him.

Trust is an action verb that expresses faith, hope and love in one act. It is reliance on God — an act of our will placing all of our needs, concerns, love and desires into His care and merciful love.

Father Ignatius Rozyczki the Theologian analyzed the Diary of St. Faustina at the request of the Archbishop of Krakow Karol Wojtyla defined trust. In my translation: Trust is hope, based on faith and expressed in love. Fr. Rozyczki described *Trust* in God’s Mercy as the summary of the *Diary of St. Faustina* and the *foundation* of the *Divine Mercy Message* and *devotion*.

Q. How am I to trust in practical ways?

A. *TRUST IN JESUS EVEN MORE!* is written in bold print on 3 x 5 index cards and placed around my house as a visual reminder to me. I also give them out to visitors as a reminder to trust in Jesus still more! “Trust in Jesus even more” makes a great book mark and screen saver!

This phrase I first heard in my heart as I passed the tomb of Sister Faustina on one of my pilgrimages to the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Poland. I was anxiously searching for two missing pilgrims. As I passed her tomb, I heard the words in my heart: “I’m your sister. Trust even more!” This word stayed with me for weeks following the pilgrimage so I wrote them out on the index cards to remind me to trust in Jesus even more!

G. K. Chesterton was asked how to walk in trust. He answered with a couplet:

One foot up, one foot down,
All the way to London Town.

We trust in God one step at a time. I love to sing the couplet to a nursery rhyme melody and take one step at a time.

The present moment is the only time we have; the past is gone; we have no control over the future (see *Diary*, 2).

The very repetition of the prayer of abandonment that our Lord taught St. Faustina is an act of trust: “Jesus, I Trust in You!” The simple act of the will, placing our concerns and needs into the merciful Heart of Jesus is an act of trust. Expressing our gratitude to God for everything — because all is gift — is an act of trust. Expressing our submission to God’s will, especially in the Lord’s Prayer, is trust in action. Being present with our heart to the One who is present in heart is trust. In conclusion, praying “Lord I do believe! Help my lack of trust (Mk 10:24 NAB) is trusting in the Lord.

Q. What did Jesus teach us about trust and faith?

A. Jesus admired it, called for it, and depended upon faith and trust:

- In proclaiming the good news of God, He called for faith: “The reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15).
- In the sermon on the mount four times He called us to trust and not to worry about the food we eat and clothes we wear — but, not once does he say, “Do not work!” (See Mt 6:25-35).
- Twice Jesus honored His mother Mary for being a woman of trust; hearing the word of God she acted upon it (see Lk 8:21 and Lk 12:28).
- Jesus chided Peter for his little faith when called to walk on water (Mt 14:31).
- Jesus honors the Canaanite woman’s request because of her great faith (Mt 15:28).

- Jesus heals the woman with a hemorrhage because she reached out in faith and touched His garment (Lk 8:48).
- Jesus was distressed at the lack of faith in his home town of Nazareth and could work no miracles there except by the laying on of hands (Mk 6:5-6).
- Jesus was amazed at the faith of the Centurion who asked that Jesus only say the word and his servant would be healed: “I assure you, I have never found this much faith in Israel (Mt 8:10).
- Jesus questioned Martha about her faith and trust in Jesus as the Resurrection and Life: “Do you believe this? ‘Yes, Lord,’ she replied” (Jn 11:27).
- On the Sunday after Easter, Mercy Sunday, Jesus blessed those who believe/trust without seeing (Jn 20:29).
- St. John records that there are many signs performed by Jesus and that the ones that have been recorded are: “To help you *believe* that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this *faith [trust]* you may have life in his name (Jn 20:31).

Q. In addition trust in Jesus, the Divine Mercy, What was the foundation of the spiritual life and mission of St. Faustina? What was essential?

A. Fundamental and essential to the spiritual life of St. Faustina (and to all the saints) was:

Humble obedience to the will of God.

1. *Humility*: humility was demanded of her by her confessor, Fr. Andrasz, SJ: Humility, humility, and ever humility, as we can do nothing of ourselves, all is purely and simply God’s grace (*Diary*, 55).

The desire of Our Blessed Mother was that St. Faustina practice three virtues that were dearest to her and pleasing to the Lord:

The first is humility, humility, and once again humility... (*Diary*, 1415, see also 1563 and 1779).

The second virtue was purity and the third love of God (*Diary # 1415*).

St. Faustina was aware of the importance and need of humility to be a saint:

O humility, strike deep roots in my whole being. O Virgin most pure, but also most humble, help me to attain deep humility. Now I understand why there are so few saints; it is because so few souls are deeply humble (*Diary*, 1306, emphasis added).

2. *Obedience*: St. Faustina lived obedience by *faithfulness* to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit; to the commandments of God; to the guidance of her spiritual director; and to the orders of her superiors:

Lord, You know that since my youth I have always sought Your will and, recognizing it, have always tried to carry it out. My heart has been accustomed to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, to whom I am faithful. In the midst of the greatest din I have heard the voice of God. I always know what is going on in my interior... (*Diary*, 1504).

3. *Doing the Will of God*: For St. Faustina the will of God was her way of life! At the direction of the Lord she crossed out her own will with a big X covering the whole page, through the words:

From today on, my own will does not exist (*Diary*, 374).

And on the next empty page she wrote:

From today on, I do the will of God everywhere, always, and in everything (*Diary*, 374).

Later in her *Diary* she wrote in her final oblation of herself:

From today onward, Your will, Lord, is my food. ... Lead me, O God, along whatever roads You please; I have placed all my trust in Your will which is, for me, love and mercy itself (*Diary*, 1264).

I firmly trust and commit myself entirely to *your holy will, which is mercy itself*

(*Diary*, 1574, emphasis added).

Rooted in “humble obedience to the will of God,” St. Faustina grew to a fruitful maturity of *pure love* and a unique *radical trust* in God’s mercy.

In this growth to great sanctity St. Faustina was nurtured by the Holy Eucharist, by the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a Spiritual Director, by the Blessed Mother’s special teaching, by her suffering in union with Jesus, and her faithful intercession for souls. Each of these special helpers to sanctity is a topic in itself!

All of her spiritual life prepared her for her *mission of*:

- *proclaiming* Divine Mercy to the world as an apostle and secretary of the Lord.
- *glorifying* His mercy — by writing, by praise, by her daily life.
- *cooperating* in Saving Souls by Suffering and intercession.
- *teaching* the key elements of holiness and mysticism.
- *interceding* on earth and now, in heaven.

Q. Could you give me a short summary of the factors you mentioned that nurtured the spiritual life of St. Faustina?

A. The spiritual life of St. Faustina relied upon:

1. *Holy Eucharist*: The full name of St. Faustina was Sr. Maria Faustina of the Most Blessed Sacrament. She records some 500 entries in her Diary on the Holy Eucharist. It was her source of strength in the sufferings of each day (*Diary*, 1037, 1509, 1620). She took advantage of each free moment to visit the Blessed Sacrament (*Diary*, 82, 1404). She recorded her preparations of receiving Holy Communion (*Diary*, 1804 to 1828) — “the most solemn moment of my life” (*Diary*, 1804). Holy Communion was the secret of her sanctity (*Diary*, 1489).

She wanted to be a living Eucharist — a “living host:” She asked for this special grace (*Diary*, 483, 641, 832, 908, 1564, 1622) and she received it: “*You are a living host, pleasing to the heavenly Father...*” (*Diary*, 1826).

2. *Sacrament of Reconciliation:* The Lord taught St. Faustina that it was in the Sacrament of Reconciliation that our misery meets God's mercy. It is the fountain of mercy:

Today the Lord said to me, **Daughter, when you go to confession, to this fountain of My mercy, the Blood and Water which came forth from My Heart always flows down upon your soul and ennobles it. Every time you go to confession, immerse yourself entirely in My mercy, with great trust, so that I may pour the bounty of My grace upon your soul. When you approach the confessional, know this, that I Myself am waiting there for you. I am only hidden by the priest, but I myself act in your soul. Here the misery of the soul meets the God of mercy. Tell souls that from this fount of mercy souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great, there is no limit to My generosity. The torrents of grace inundate humble souls. The proud remain always in poverty and misery, because My grace turns away from them to humble souls** (*Diary*, 1602).

The Lord calls this sacrament a "Tribunal of Mercy." Here, we receive a judgment of mercy, not condemnation; we receive miracles of mercy, as we reveal our *misery* not just our sins:

Write, speak of My mercy. Tell souls where they are to look for solace; that is, in the Tribunal of Mercy [the Sacrament of Reconciliation] There the greatest miracles take place [and] are incessantly repeated. To avail oneself of this miracle, it is not necessary to go on a great pilgrimage or to carry out some external ceremony; it suffices to come with faith to the feet of My representative and to reveal to him one's misery, and the miracle of Divine Mercy will be fully demonstrated. Were a soul like a decaying corpse so that from a human standpoint, there would be no [hope of] restoration and everything would already be lost, it is not so with God. The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full. Oh, how miserable are those who do not take advantage of the miracle of God's mercy! You will call out in vain,

but it will be too late (*Diary*, 1448).

The Sacrament of Reconciliation became a regular and important part of her life, and she grew in her understanding of it. She learned that Confession is much more than just asking and receiving forgiveness. “We should derive two kinds of profit from Holy Confession,” she explained:

- a. We come to confession to be healed;
- b. We come to be educated — like a small child, our soul has constant need of education.

She realized that this need of our souls for education — through the grace of God and through the guidance of the Confessor — is vital to our spiritual growth. We cannot simply rely on ourselves:

... on its own strength, the soul will not go far; it will exert itself greatly and will do nothing for the glory of God; it will err continually, because our mind is darkened and does not know how to discern its own affairs (*Diary*, 377).

3. *Spiritual Direction*: Over and over again Our Lord called St. Faustina to openness and obedience to her Confessor (Fr. J. Andrasz, SJ) and to her Spiritual Director (Fr. M. Sopocko):

- **I, Myself, am your director** (*Diary*, 362).
- **Be obedient to your director** (*Diary*, 979).
- **I am replacing Myself with your spiritual director** [Father Andrasz and Fr. M. Sopocko]. **He is taking care of you according to My will. Respect his every word as My own. He is the veil behind which I am hiding. Your director and I are one; his words are My words** (*Diary*, 1308).

St. Faustina described the great gift of a spiritual director:

Oh, how great a grace it is to have a spiritual director! One makes more rapid progress in virtue, sees the will of God more clearly, fulfills it more faithfully,

and follows a road that is sure and free of dangers (*Diary*, 331).

4. *Blessed Mother of God*: St. Faustina was in a *special* relationship with Mary, the Mother of God. On the day of the perpetual profession of her religious vows, she asked Mary to be her mother in a *special* way:

Mother of God, Most Holy Mary, my Mother, You are my Mother in a special way now because Your beloved Son is my Bridegroom, and thus we are both Your children. For Your Son's sake, You have to love me. O Mary, my dearest Mother, guide my spiritual life in such a way that it will please Your Son (*Diary*, 240).

Later, the Blessed Mother appeared to St. Faustina and said that she was to be “by God's command” her *special daughter*:

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Before Holy Communion I saw the Blessed Mother inconceivably beautiful. Smiling at me She said to me, *My daughter, at God's command I am to be, in a special and exclusive way your Mother; but I desire that you, too, in a special way, be My child* (*Diary*, 1414).

Very significant in St. Faustina's life was the special role of the Mother of God in teaching her how to be a saint. Mary taught her to be faithful to the will of God:

... the Most Holy Mother ... instructed me about the will of God and how to apply it to my life, submitting completely to His most holy decrees. It is impossible for one to please God without obeying His holy will. *My daughter, I strongly recommend that you faithfully fulfill all God's wishes, for that is most pleasing in His holy eyes. I very much desire that you distinguish yourself in this faithfulness in accomplishing God's will. Put the will of God before all sacrifices and holocausts.* While the heavenly Mother was talking to me, a deep understanding of this will of God was entering my soul (*Diary*, 1244).

Mary, in teaching St. Faustina about the spiritual life, also stressed humility, purity, and love, as well as prayer, silence and suffering (see *Diary*, 1415, 423, 429).

5. *Suffering and intercession*: St. Faustina was called by our Lord to cooperate with Him in His thirst for souls by her sufferings and her intercession united with Him:

During Holy Mass, I saw the Lord Jesus nailed upon the cross amidst great torments. A soft moan issued from His Heart. After some time, He said, **I thirst. I thirst for the salvation of souls. Help Me, My daughter, to save souls. Join your sufferings to My Passion and offer them to the heavenly Father for sinners** (*Diary*, 1032).

She had a very practical way to respond to suffering — she ran to the Heart of Jesus like a child and loved Him. She wrote:

When I see that the burden is beyond my strength, I do not consider or analyze it or probe into it, but I run like a child to the Heart of Jesus and say only one word to Him: “You can do all things.” And then I keep silent, because I know that Jesus himself will intervene in the matter, and as for me, instead of tormenting myself, I use that time to love Him (*Diary*, 1033).

She described the transforming power of love that transforms suffering into joy:

Great love can change small things into great ones, and it is only love which lends value to our actions. And the purer our love becomes, the less there will be within us for the flames of suffering to feed upon, and the suffering will cease to be a suffering for us; it will become a delight! By the grace of God, I have received such a disposition of heart that I am never so happy as when I suffer for Jesus, whom I love with every beat of my heart (*Diary*, 303).

Oh, if only the suffering soul knew how it is loved by God, it would die of joy

and excess of happiness! Some day, we will know the value of suffering, but then we will no longer be able to suffer. The present moment is ours (*Diary*, 963).

St. Faustina interceded for the salvation of souls and for the whole world by her union with the Lord of Lords.

Q. Could you summarize for me the ways St. Faustina prayed, so that I may learn from her?

A. St. Faustina prayed in various ways that are a model and example for us. I list the ways she records in her Diary, giving only one or two examples of the many times that she refers to her way of praying:

- Intimate dialogue with the Lord (*Diary*, 411, 1318)
- Meditation on the Passion of Jesus (267) and making the Stations of the Cross (1309)
- Visits to the Blessed Sacrament at every free moment (82) and frequent times of adoration.
- Preparation for Holy Communion (1804-1828).
- Daily offering of herself for sinners(309)
- Daily attendance at Holy Mass
- Offering her sufferings for souls (596) for priests (823).
- Offering her severe suffering because of the abortions taking place. — in reparation (1276).
- Recitation of the Rosary of our Blessed Mother (412, 489).
- Praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy unceasingly (687).
- Interceding for mercy for many (202)
- Praying for the dying and souls in purgatory (1738)
- Praying for her country (1188)
- Resting her head on the Merciful Heart of Jesus (411, 888)
- Talking to God. (She asked questions and expected and received answers) (560)

- Responding faithfully to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit (291, 1556, 1557)
- Thanking God for everything (343, 1367)
- Praying to be transformed into mercy (163)
- Praying prostrate (9, 1058)

Chapter Ten

A Call to Become a Living Eucharist

Q. What practical lessons have you personally gleaned from the spirituality of St. Faustina?

A. Each of us is called to a unique and precious holiness. However, each of us can glean from the Saints who have gone before us, various gems which we incorporate into our own spiritual life. The jewels that I have found in the life of St. Faustina have filled my treasure chest to overflowing. I will just list them to share with you the influence of St. Faustina in my life:

- *Eucharistic Adoration*, visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the pre-eminence of Holy Mass and Holy Communion.
- *The presence of Jesus*, in the Eucharist and in my heart.
- *The Merciful Way*: in my misery, I plunge into the ocean of God's mercy with trust: Jesus I trust in You! (e.g. *Diary*, 1775, 1318).
- The *Three-step dance* with the Lord: Trust/Entrust — rejoice — give thanks.
- *Trust even more!* — the word I received from Sister Faustina.
- *T'NT* — dynamite! **T**rust **a**nd **t**hanks — (**T'nT**) is an explosive combination.
- *Desire* to be a Saint! — my daily prayer.
- *Presence to the presence* of the Lord — my form of spiritual communion.
- *Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Mary as teachers* of trust in the Lord's mercy.
- *Asking the Lord questions* — for guidance in doing His will each day.
- *A growing thirst for souls*: expressed in frequently praying the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy,

the Novena to the Divine Mercy, and in St. Faustina's motto: "God and Souls."

- *Souls, souls, souls*, is a growing awareness of God's great plan for His family: "one more soul for Jesus!"
- *The Image of the Merciful Savior* is a reminder to me to trust in Jesus and to be merciful.
- *The Three O'clock Great Hour of Mercy* is a time to plead for mercy on the whole world, and especially for those in great need of mercy. I especially pray for bishops and priests at that hour.
- An awareness that we are in *spiritual war* — Satan hates God's mercy (*Diary*, 764, 812):

In spite of Satan's anger, The Divine Mercy will triumph over the whole world and will be worshiped by all souls (*Diary*, 1789).

• *Asking my guardian angel daily* at the encouragement of St. Faustina, to help me:

1. To live in and do God's will (*Diary*, 170)
2. To be faithful to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit (*Diary*, 291)
3. To please Him (*Diary*, 140, 1493) to be present to Him with my heart, in the Heart of Mary, trusting, rejoicing, and giving thanks.

- *The confirmation of 1 Thess 5:16-19*:

"Rejoice always.

Pray without ceasing.

In all things give thanks,

for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus regarding you all."

- *The desire to be a "Living Eucharist"* — a radiant presence of the holy, humble, merciful Lord Jesus.

Q. How do you personally try to be a "Living Eucharist?"

A. I try, with God's grace:

1. to live in God's will and desire it!
2. to be faithful to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit with a yes, yes, yes, and do it now.
3. to be present to the one who is present in my heart: "Venerate the Lord, that is, Christ in your heart" (1 Peter 3:15).

In this way I try to radiate the presence of the Lord as I trust, rejoice and give thanks.

Daily, I pray asking for St. Faustina's help to be a saint — a "Living Eucharist:" Saint Maria Faustina, you told us that your mission would continue after your death and that you would not forget us (*Diary*, 281, 1582). Our Lord also granted you a great privilege, telling you to "distribute graces as you will, to whom you will, and when you will" (31). Relying on this, I ask your intercession for the graces I need, especially - to be a saint - a "Living Eucharist!" Help me above all, to trust in Jesus as you did and thus to glorify His mercy every moment of my life. Amen. (Marians of the Immaculate Conception)

Q. What does it mean to be a "Living Eucharist?"

A. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives a description of the many fruits of Holy Communion. The following is a beautiful description of a "Living Eucharist:"

The principle fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an *intimate union with Christ Jesus*. Indeed, the Lord said: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him (CCC, #1391, emphasis added).

The Catechism continues with a wonderful biochemical illustration:

What material food produces in our bodily life, Holy Communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life. Communion with the flesh of the Risen Christ, a flesh "given life and giving life through the Holy Spirit," preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism (ibid # 1392).

St. Ignatius, successor to St. Peter as the second bishop of Antioch, wrote to the Romans of

his pending martyrdom, that of being fed to the wild beasts (107 A.D.):

I am God's wheat and shall be ground by their teeth so that I may become Christ's pure bread. Pray to Christ for me that the animals will be the means of making me a sacrificial victim to God (see the feast of St. Ignatius, Liturgy of the Hours, Oct 17).

His great desire was to be a "Living Eucharist."

Q. What does Sacred Scripture teach about being a "Living Eucharist?"

A. A number of Sacred Scripture texts are clear and strong about the presence of Christ Jesus in us. I understand these texts as a description of a "Living Eucharist" (NAB):

- You must know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within - the Spirit you have received from God. You are not your own (1 Cor 4:19).
- The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me (Gal 2:20).
- ... The mystery of Christ in you, your hope of glory (Col 1:27).
- Test yourselves to see whether you are living in faith; examine yourselves. Perhaps you yourselves do not realize that Christ Jesus is in you - unless of course, you have failed the challenge (1 Cor 13:5).
- Venerate the Lord - that is, Christ in you (1 Pt 3:15).

A powerful description of our transformation into a "Living Eucharist" is in the dying mandate of Jesus to His Mother, Mary Magdalene and to His beloved disciple. Each of us as beloved disciples represented by the apostle John are consecrated to be sons and daughters of the Mother of God. We become brothers to Jesus, a presence of Jesus, a "Living Eucharist:"

Jesus said to his [Greeks "the"] mother: "Woman, there is your son." In turn he said to the disciple, "there is your mother" (Jn 19:26-27).

I hear an echo of these words in the response of St. Faustina to her total oblation to God. She wrote in her Diary:

At that moment *I felt transconsecrated*. My earthly body was the same, but my soul was different; God was now living in it with the totality of His delight. This is not a feeling, but a conscious reality that nothing can obscure (*Diary*, 137, emphasis added).

St. Faustina writes more of her experience of being a living host.

I am a white host before You, O Divine Priest. Consecrate me Yourself, and may my *transubstantiation* [a mystic's way of expressing her transformation] be known only to You. I stand before You each day as a sacrificial host and implore Your mercy upon the world (*Diary*, 1564, emphasis added).

Q. What does it mean to you to be a “Living Eucharist?”

A. I hear the meaning expressed every time I pray the words of the second invocation of the Holy Spirit in the Third Eucharistic Prayer following the consecration of Mass:

Grant that we, who are nourished by his body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become *one body, one spirit in Christ*.

These are words of our consecration — our “transconsecration” to be a living presence of Christ.

To be a “Living Eucharist” is to be a living presence of Jesus Christ. By Holy Communion we enter into a “common-union-in-Christ” so that His presence radiates out to others.

The bottom line of why Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist is not just to be present under the appearance (accidents) of bread and wine as a remembrance of Him, but also in order that He may *transform us by His presence into His living presence*, into temples of the Holy Spirit radiating His merciful love.

In offering a votive Mass, #7 “For Religious,” I found the Prayer over the Gifts especially meaningful:

God of all mercy, you transformed [St. Faustina] and made her a new creature in

your image. Renew us in the same way by making our gifts of peace acceptable to you. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lord.

The Lord is waiting for our freely given “yes” to His will in order the He may transform us into a “Living Eucharist” — Note that: the bread and wine never say “no!”

Recently I gained a new insight into what it means to be a “Living Eucharist.” In prayer before the Blessed Sacrament I realized that Jesus *The Living Eucharist* is at the throne of the Father eternally *thanking Him* for His total and continual gift of love in “a burst of joyful gratitude in the Holy Spirit” (Pope Paul VI in *Christian Joy*, III). Jesus is jubilating in the Holy Spirit, exulting in joy as He thanks and praises the Father for revealing His mysteries to the merest children (see Luke 10:21). Thus, to be a “Living Eucharist” is to do what Jesus is doing: thanking the Father for His love, jubilating, rejoicing — even in holy laughter! — at the wondrous love of God for us, that He should give us His only son out of love for the world (see Jn 3:16). Now that calls for a joyful celebration! Jesus is radiant with God’s love! So, we too, should radiate His love! — as a “Living Eucharist.”

Q. What does it mean to you as a priest to be a “Living Eucharist?”

A. The *Rite of the Ordination of a Priest* describes in a powerful way what the priest is and what he is to be. After the laying on of hands on the candidate, the bishop continues with his hands extended and prays the consecration:

Almighty Father, grant to this servant of yours the dignity of the priesthood.
Renew within him the Spirit of holiness. As a co-worker with the order of bishops, may he be faithful to the ministry that he receives from you, Lord God, and be to others a model of right conduct. (From the Prayer of Consecration of the Priest)

In this ordaining prayer I find three dimensions to the priesthood: *Holiness*, *Ministry*, and *Hierarchy*.

Holiness: The Holy Spirit is called down upon the candidate that he may be holy with the

Holy Spirit and may be a model to others of right conduct. His hands are then anointed with Holy Chrism in order “to sanctify the Christian people.” As the presentation of the gifts for Holy Mass that follows, the bishop says to the new priest:

Accept from the holy people of God the gifts to be offered to him. Know what you are doing and imitate the mystery you celebrate: model your life on the mystery of the Lord’s Cross.

By these words, the bishop exhorts the priest to *be holy!*

Ministry: The priest is called to be a *minister of mercy*, faithful to the ministry he receives from the Lord, God. He is a minister of salvation and sanctification by the sacraments, especially by Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, and by teaching and preaching the word of God. The priest is ordained for the ministry of mercy.

Hierarchy: The priest vows humble obedience to his bishop and superiors as a “conscientious [co-worker] fellow worker with the bishop in caring for the Lord’s “flock” (Examination of the Candidate).

The following three dimensions of priesthood reflect the three-fold dimensions of Christ, the Eternal High Priest:

Christ is Holy: Anointed by the Holy Spirit, He is the Holy One of God.

Christ is Merciful: He came to reveal God, rich in mercy, as Father bringing us salvation: forgiveness of sin and a new life and relationship to the merciful Father. He is the Merciful One.

Christ is humble and obedient to the will of the Father. He is in a hierarchy of humble service: He washed the feet of His disciples. And more, He humbled Himself to be with us as Eucharist. “He humbled Himself obediently accepting even death on a cross!” (Phil 2:8). He is the Humble One.

The priest is ordained to share in the priesthood of Christ, who is the Holy One, the Merciful One, the Humble One. Christ calls the priest to be a presence of Himself.

Be holy because I am Holy.

Be merciful because I am Merciful.

Be humble because I am Humble.

These three dimensions of Jesus describe the Holy Eucharist: The Holy, Merciful, Humble Presence of Jesus.

So, what does it mean to be a priest? It means to be a presence of Jesus: Holy, Merciful, and Humble.

This is what it means to be a “Living Eucharist!”: The ordained priest is an “alter Christus” (another Christ). The Second Vatican Council described the sacrament of Holy Orders:

By the anointing of the Holy Spirit [Priests] are marked with a special character and are so configured to Christ the Priest that they can *act in the person of Christ the Head* (#2, emphasis added).

Q. What are the effects of a “Living Eucharist” in your own life?

A. I find in my life:

- an ever greater *desire* to be a living presence of Jesus.
- a growing awareness of the continuous *presence* of Jesus in my heart — both in trial and in joy, in darkness or in light.
- an awareness of His *inspirations* in offering Holy Mass, in ministering the Sacraments, and in preaching His word.
- a growing *sensitivity* to His presence in others.
- a growing *experience* of His presence in the Eucharist.
- a growing awareness of His “*touches*” as I turn to His presence in Spiritual Communion: “vibrating at the Spirit’s touch” (*At the Beginning of the New Millennium* #33).
- an awareness of His *inspirations* as I write on Divine Mercy and St. Faustina.

The Eucharist is the humble, holy, and merciful presence of Jesus. Our call to holiness is to be

a humble, holy, and merciful presence of Jesus — a call to become a “Living Eucharist.”

Therefore, as the Eucharist radiates, so we as a “Living Eucharist” will also radiate!

Q. Does the Eucharist Radiate?

A. Yes! To the spiritual eye, to the eye of faith the Eucharist radiates.

It has been a desire of my heart for a number of years to have the Lord reign among us in resplendent glory. The radiant presence of the Lord in the Eucharist would be a marvelous sign of God’s presence among us and an effective sign of God to evangelize. Could you imagine the surprise of a non-believer or a doubting Thomas entering into the Eucharistic presence and seeing the Lord’s radiance, and being floored by His power like Saul on the road to Damascus? This happens at the Duquesne weekend February 1967 that sparked the beginning of the Catholic Charismatic renewal.

At the present time, the Eucharist does radiate: seen and felt by faith. The Lord, hidden in His humility, calls forth our trust and faith. As we spend the eyes of time before the Eucharistic presence, our trust and faith are enlightened and our hearts are enflamed with the fire of His divine love. It is something like sun-bathing, only we are “Son-bathing.” It really is “radiation therapy!”

Over the years I have taken more and more time before the exposed Blessed Sacrament. The more time I spend before the Eucharist, the more I desire to be in union with Him, to be a “Living Eucharist” and to radiate His mercy, drawing strength from His merciful Heart in the Eucharist.

I describe the Eucharist as the merciful, humble, holy presence of Jesus. And His presence radiates. I’ve expressed the radiant energy of the Eucharist in an equation that is like Albert Einstein’s equation for the energy released from matter — as proved by the explosion of the atom bomb: $e=mc^2$. That is, the energy released (e) is equal to the mass of the material (m), times the speed of light times the speed of light (c^2).

Eucharistic energy (E) is equal to the Lord’s mercy (m), times His humility (h), times His holiness (h); $E = mh^2$. The Eucharist is the merciful, humble, holy presence of Jesus. we, too, are to be His merciful, humble, holy presence!

I have this Eucharistic equation inscribed below the icon of the “extreme humility of Jesus” which hangs in my Chapel facing the Holy Eucharist.

A number of times St. Faustina saw the Eucharist radiating the rays of mercy (*Diary*, 36, 344, 346, 370, 657, 1462) and at times radiating over the whole world (420, 441, 1046):

Once, the image [of the Merciful Jesus] was being exhibited over the altar during the Corpus Christi procession [June 20, 1935]. When the priest exposed the Blessed Sacrament, and the choir began to sing, the rays from the image pierced the Sacred Host and spread out all over the world. Then I heard these words: **These rays of mercy will pass through you, just as they have passed through this Host, and they will go out through all the world.** At these words, profound joy invaded my soul (*Diary*, 441).

Shouldn't all the faithful be irradiated with His mercy in order that we may radiate His mercy to others? Then we would truly live the command of our Lord: “Be merciful even as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). Shouldn't all of us radiate the Lord's humility and holiness as well?

Then we would radiate His mercy as a “Living Eucharist.”

Q. Does a “Living Eucharist” Radiate?

A. Yes! St. Faustina recorded in her Diary her desire and prayer to be a living reflection and radiance of the merciful Jesus:

I want to be completely transformed into Your mercy and to be Your living reflection, O Lord. May ... Your unfathomable mercy, pass through my heart and soul to my neighbor (*Diary*, 163).

My Jesus, my strength, my peace, my repose; my soul bathes daily in the rays of Your mercy (*Diary*, 697).

I expose my heart to the action of Your grace like a crystal exposed to the rays of the sun. May Your image be reflected in it, O my God, to the extent that it is possible to be reflected in the heart of a creature. Let Your divinity radiate through

me, O You who dwell in my soul (*Diary*, 1336).

St. Faustina also records the words of our Lord about His desire to radiate through us:

Tell [all people], My daughter, that I am Love and Mercy itself When a soul approaches Me with trust, I fill it with such an abundance of graces that it cannot contain them within itself, but radiates them to other souls (*Diary*, 1074).

Later, she records the Lord's desire that chosen souls be like stars that radiate light and light up the darkness of the world:

The Lord has given me to know how much He desires the perfection of chosen souls.

Chosen souls are, in My hand, lights which I cast into the darkness of the world and with which I illumine it. As stars illumine the night, so chosen souls illumine the earth. And the more perfect a soul is, the stronger and the more far-reaching is the light shed by it. It can be hidden and unknown, even to those closest to it, and yet its holiness is reflected in souls even to the most distant extremities of the world (*Diary*, 1601).

These words of radiating light recall the words of our Lord: "You are the light of the world" (Mt 5:14, The Sermon on the Mount). They reflect, also, these words of Jesus:

I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness: no, he shall possess the light of life (Jn 8:12, see also Jn 9:15 and Jn 12:46).

When Jesus is present in us as the light of the world we radiate His light as a "Living Eucharist." St. Paul describes this radiation of the Christian at Philippi: "You shine like the stars in the sky while holding fast to the word of life" (Phil. 2:15).

St. Peter writes: "Keep your attention fixed on [the prophetic message], as you would on a lamp shining in a dark place until the streaks of dawn appear and the morning star risen in your heart (2 Pt 2:19).

And in the Our Father we pray each day for the daily bread that sustains the “light of life” in us. We ask for the grace to be a “Living Eucharist.”

Q. But what do you do when you experience darkness and misery?

A. We all experience times of darkness and misery. It is the common experience of saints and mystics through the ages. They experienced the merciful love of God purging, illuminating, and transforming them into an ever more intimate union with Him. The Lord works in darkness and in our misery to prepare an ever greater space for Himself. Let Him make space for grace.

One image that has helped me to understand the times of darkness and misery is the image of a leaky beach ball that floats in water but only 10% of it is above the surface. We are like that beach ball with only 10% of our conscious life above the surface. Some 90% of our life, with its past hurts and wounds, is sub-conscious. Any disturbance can rotate the beach ball so that the 10% above the surface is now a dark or miserable hurt of the past, coming up from the sub-conscious 90%.

There are various ways to respond to the surfacing of the darkness and misery within. You can become depressed and frustrated *or* you can use the present situation to ask for the Lord’s mercy to heal the dark hurt. It is a moment of grace because you can only surrender to the Lord what you are conscious of. So, ask for healing, with a simple prayer of “Jesus, mercy”. Thank the Lord for surfacing what is hidden, because now it can be healed.

I find it important and effective to invoke the Holy Spirit through the intercession of Mary, the beloved spouse of the Spirit. We need to invoke the Holy Spirit regularly and often to fill our hearts afresh because we are earthen vessels that are cracked and we leak! And our mother, Mary, specializes in drawing down the Holy Spirit. “Help me to surrender ever more fully to the Spirit!”

(Consecration to the B.V.M.)

There are other ways I’ve found effective to respond to the surfacing of the “garbage” - the hidden “snakes and scorpions”:

- I try to respond with peace, patience, and perseverance, topped with silence and trust. The

beach ball will soon turn around again!

- I sing songs of praise and thanks to the Lord of this situation. Sing in tongues and let the Holy Spirit pray according to God's will (Rom 8:26).
- I smile at the Lord's mysterious way of working — have a good and holy laugh.
- I say “yes, yes, yes” to the Lord's purging love so that I can be cleansed and move on to the next steps of illumination and transformation.
- I turn to the Lord in a Spiritual Communion and ask the favorite question of St. John of the Cross: “Where are you hidden now Lord?” You can hear the reply: “In the depths of your heart! Where are you?”
- I keep saying “yes, yes, yes” because the Lord is leading me in a three-step love- dance, a dance spiraling ever upwards to an ever greater union with Him by the three steps of purging, illuminating, and transforming love. He waits for *your* free “yes” to go higher, too!
- I trust in Jesus even more! Trust in the Lord of the dance.

St. Faustina writes:

When my soul is in anguish, I think only in this way. Jesus is good and full of mercy, and even if the ground were to give way under my feet, I would not cease to trust in Him (*Diary*, 1192).

St. John the Apostle writes:

This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith (RSV, 1 Jn 5:4).

Chapter Eleven

The Spirituality of Pope John Paul II

Q. What are the characteristics of the Spiritual Life of Pope John Paul II?

A. To comment on all the features of John Paul II's spiritual life would take a book! But I can at least highlight the main characteristics:

- He is *totally given* to the ministry of Chief Shepherd of the Church. With a grace-filled zeal he challenges us by his life of holiness and his service to all men and women.
- He is a *man of prayer*. He draws his strength from the Lord in Holy Mass and in presence before the Blessed Sacrament.
- He is *centered and focused on the Thrice-Holy God*: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- He is *totally entrusted to Mary*, the Mother of God. His motto is "Totus Tuus".
- He is a man who *continues to suffer* for the world in union with Jesus Christ for the sake of the redemption of the world (see Col 1:24).
- He is *greatly concerned for human dignity and freedom*.
- He is *energized by the faith of people*, especially the youth and children.
- He is a *man of mercy*: trusting in the Lord Jesus and asking forgiveness for injuries inflicted through the members of the Church.
- He *intercedes for mercy* on the whole world by his prayer.
- He *offers his many sufferings* for those in need of mercy.
- He *challenges the youth* of the world as well as married couples, the sick and suffering, all of us, to holiness and evangelization.
- He *evangelizes* by his very presence, by his writings, his pilgrimages, offering Holy Mass,

encouraging, forgiving. “Do not be afraid, open your hearts to the Redeemer” (Homily at his inauguration) is his repeated exhortation.

- He is a *man without fear*. For the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he goes out to all peoples of the world with boldness — to the marginalized, to those who reject his message, to those in need of the message of mercy.
- He is a *man of vision*; driven to implement the Second Vatican Council, especially in *Ecumenism*, to restore Christian unity; in *Evangelization* and re- evangelization to Jesus Christ; in *Holiness* that all personally experience the power, the presence and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- He is a *mystic* - he experiences the living God and calls us to personally experience the merciful God. He calls all of us to a “New and Divine Holiness”.

Q. What is the focus of John Paul II on the need of holiness?

A. John Paul II the Great Mercy Pope has focused on three areas of the Second Vatican Council and made them into themes of his pontificate: the universal call to *holiness*, a new *evangelization* and *ecumenism* that will lead to Church unity.

Consider just the Universal Call to Holiness. Chapter five of the Dogmatic Constitution (*Lumen Gentium*) of Vatican II entitled: “The Call of the Whole Church to Holiness:”

In the Church, everyone belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is *called to holiness*, according to the saying of the Apostle: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Th 4:3; Eph 1:4).

Pope John Paul II has very actively encouraged us to sanctity, to union with Jesus Christ. From the beginning of his pontificate he has challenged us to “Open Your hearts to the Redeemer!”

Moreover, John Paul II has given us many models of holiness during his 26 years as pope. He beatified over 1,345 and canonized 483 men and women, most of them martyrs, for their faith in the Lord. St. Faustina is the 197th saint he has canonized, the first Saint of the Jubilee year 2000. That is more than half the saints of the 593 saints canonized in the last 500 years! John Paul has

certainly made it loud and clear that he wants us to follow their example. This world needs millions of saints to call down God's mercy!

In his reflection on the graces of the Jubilee Year 2000 and looking ahead to the new millennium, John Paul II calls "the core of the great legacy it leaves us ... the contemplation of the face of Christ" (*At the Beginning of the New Millennium*, Jan 6, 2001). He states that an effective post-Jubilee pastoral plan must be profoundly rooted in contemplation and prayer (#15):

We are certainly not seduced by the naive expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some *magic formula*. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person and assurance which he gives us: I am with you!

It is not therefore, a matter of inventing a "new programme." The programme already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel ... Christ himself ... this programme for all times is our programme for the Third Millennium (#29).

All pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness. ... stressing holiness remains more than ever an urgent pastoral task ... "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 The 4:3).(#30).

"Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48).

This *kind of perfection must not be misunderstood as if it involved some kind of extraordinary existence*, possible only for the few "uncommon heroes" of holiness. I thank the Lord that in these years he has enabled me to beatify and canonize a large number of Christians, and among them many lay people who attained holiness in the most ordinary circumstances of life ... the paths to holiness are personal and call for a genuine "training in holiness" (#31).

This training in holiness calls for ... the art of prayer ... but also *personal experience* ... the secret of a truly vital Christianity (#32, emphasis added).

The great mystical tradition of both East and West has much to say in this

regard. It shows how prayer can progress as a genuine dialogue of love, to the point of rendering the person wholly possessed by the divine Beloved, vibrating at the Spirit's touch, resting filially within the Father's heart. *This is the lived experience of Christ's promise:* "He who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will manifest myself to him" (Jn 14:21) (#33 emphasis added).

Our Holy Father, John Paul II is calling us, as well as challenging us, to be holy with the very holiness of God Himself! Yes, we need "training in holiness;" we need schools of holiness and prayer. We need communities of:

Thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly "falls in love." Intense prayer, yes, but it does not distract us from our commitment to history: by opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters and makes us capable of shaping history according to God's plan (#33).

John Paul II took a great bold step on August 18, 2002 at the Shrine of The Divine Mercy in Lagiewniki, a suburb of Krakow:

Today... 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 St. 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. 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 Krakow 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!

“A spark ... a fire of mercy ... witnessess to Mercy!” - what a marvelous description of holiness as a living Eucharist.

Q. Is Pope John Paul II a “Living Eucharist?”

A. I would say, “yes,” as evidenced by his radiant presence:

- He radiates God’s *mercy* in his writing, in his preaching, and in his practice of asking forgiveness and giving forgiveness.
- He radiates *humility* in his total gift of himself in service of the Church and world. He gives thanks to God that all he has and does as he repeatedly proclaims that all is the gift of God: “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever” (Ps 89:2).
- He radiates *holiness* and the presence of Jesus, in his meeting and celebrating with people around the world. His whole life is focused on Jesus: The Word of God made flesh.

Yes, John Paul II is a “Living Eucharist!”

The marvelous Jubilee Year 2000 and the pastoral plan described in *At the Beginning of the Third Millennium* is one grand and universal call and challenge by John Paul II to holiness.

From the beginning of his Pontificate in October of 1978, John Paul II has called us to open the door of our hearts to the redeemer. At the opening of the Jubilee Year 2000 he challenged us to walk through the door which is Christ. He repeatedly, like a theme song of his pontificate, has challenged us: “Do not be afraid!”

Chapter Twelve

New and Eternal Holiness

Q. What is this “new and eternal holiness” that John Paul II calls us to?

A. Pope John Paul II recently wrote of a “‘new and divine’ holiness with which the Holy Spirit wishes to enrich Christians at the dawn of the third millennium ... to make Christ the heart of the world” (on the centenary of the founding of the Rogation Priests of the Sacred Heart, *L’Osservatore Romano*, July 9, 1997).

The *new and eternal holiness* is a maturing of the holiness of Jesus revealed in the Gospels. It is living the fullness of the Lord’s Prayer - *His kingdom come* - that the Lord reign in our hearts *now* by the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father” - *that His will be done on earth now as it is in heaven.*

Q. How can I live the fullness of the Our Father?

A. We do so by becoming *holy* through the Holy Spirit and by doing and *living in God’s will* on earth as in heaven. The will of the Father is His kingdom where Jesus reigns by the Holy Spirit. This is God’s master plan for His grand family of saints. Where each saint is a unique, unrepeatable, precious gem in His great mosaic.

Q. What am I to become on earth?

A. Each of us is to become a living presence of Jesus: a *Living Eucharist*.

We are to become a *living presence* of Jesus *radiating* His love and mercy as we *live in and by His will*. And by praying “Give us this day our daily bread” we are asking for the grace we need to be a living presence of Jesus on earth - a “Living Eucharist.”

Like the Holy Eucharist we are to radiate the *Holy, Humble, Merciful* presence of Jesus: *Holy*

by the Holy Spirit. *Humble* by our transparency and thanksgiving. *Merciful* like our heavenly Father. And yet each of us is a unique “Living Eucharist.” Ask the Lord what your unique and precious holiness is to be!

Q. I want to know what my unique expression of being a “Living Eucharist” is to be like. Would you help me?

A. Listen to the Lord by being present to Him with your heart in silent prayer. He speaks clearly but His language is quite different: It is silence! In the silence of the depth of your heart the Lord will make known His desire and providential plan for you to be a saint. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart and guide you in your desire for holiness and living in His will as a “Living Eucharist.”

Q. How did St. Faustina live out the Our Father in a unique way?

A. St. Faustina strived for holiness with all the strength given to her by God’s grace and by living in God’s will with complete trust in His mercy. In her diary she expresses her desire to be a saint, to be a “Living Eucharist”, and to trust in His mercy:

Lead me, O God, along whatever roads You please; *I have placed all my trust in Your will, which is, for me, love and mercy itself (Diary, 1264 emphasis added).*

She records the words of our Lord to those who want to be saints:

Let souls who are striving for perfection particularly adore My mercy, because the abundance of graces which I grant them flows from My mercy. I desire that these souls distinguish themselves by boundless trust in My mercy. I Myself will attend to the sanctification of such souls. I will provide them with everything they will need to attain sanctity. The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is — trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive (Diary, 1578).

Chapter Thirteen

The Gift of John Paul the Great:

The Legacy of Holiness.

Q. What do you mean by the Legacy of Holiness?

A. The word *legacy* means gift. It is either a legal gift as in a last will and testament or a gift given to all. Pope John Paul's legacy was his life and death of holiness lived as an example and gift for all — *how to be holy*.

I personally experienced his holiness as a radiation of his presence. Many people have experienced and testified to his radiant presence for example the millions of young people drawn to him around the world in the World Youth days and multitude that met him personally and in audiences.

John Paul was a teacher and model of a life of prayer and works. Many observed by TV how he would be refreshed in the midst of a grueling travel and pilgrimage schedule. He would kneel before the Blessed Sacrament for a quarter of an hour in silence with his hands holding his head, while the TV camera crew waited. Then he would spring up refreshed and continue the pilgrimage.

On November 13, 1996, I personally saw him in that profound prayer posture in preparation for celebrating Holy Mass in his private Chapel in the Vatican. I was assigned a place about a yard from his side and was distracted by the question: "What is he praying?" What kept coming to my heart were the words: "Have mercy on us and on the whole world."

It was in June of 1997 that I read his personal witness on how he prayed. He gave his personal testimony while at the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Lagiewniki/Krakow Poland on June 7, 1997. He said I have come here to "Sing of the mercies of the Lord forever" (Ps 89). He then said "I pray unceasingly "Have mercy on us and on the whole world' " (Chaplet of Divine Mercy Diary #476). What a confirmation of the word I heard in my heart about this holy man of prayer!

Not only did he pray but John Paul II also taught us *how to pray* by his homilies and writings. In the same talk at the Shrine of Divine Mercy he quoted the conclusion of his second encyclical *Dives in Misericordia (Rich in Mercy)*:

At no time and in no historical period — especially at a moment as critical as our own — can the Church forget *the prayer that is a cry for the mercy of God* amid the many forms of evil that weigh upon humanity and threaten it...

The more the human conscience succumbs to secularization, loses its sense of the very meaning of the word ‘mercy’, moves away from God, and distances itself from the mystery of mercy, the more the *Church has the right and the duty* to appeal to the God of Mercy “with loud cries” (*Dives in Misericordia* #15).

On that same occasion of his pilgrimage to the Shrine of Divine Mercy he said that he came to commend the concerns of the Church and humanity to the Merciful Christ:

On the threshold of the Third Millennium I come to entrust to Him once more my petrine Ministry — “Jesus, I trust in you” (June 7, 1997).

Notice that he said:

“Once more” I trust my petrine ministry to the Divine Mercy”.

And then in his final message on Divine Mercy Sunday 2005 — but read by Archbishop Leonardo Sandri. After the pope’s death — John Paul II again repeated his entrustment and his continual prayer:

Jesus, I trust in you, have mercy on us and on the whole world! Amen!

He concluded his life as a model of how to live and how to die as a holy man with a great “AMEN”.

Q. Would you please tell me more about his legacy of Divine Mercy and how it expressed his legacy of holiness?

A. In the book *John Paul II The Great Mercy Pope* (Marian Press, Stockbridge, MA) I pointed out that John Paul II was the great teacher of Mercy (In Part I): a model of Mercy (in Part II) and

used mercy in his various themes (in Part III) such as “Do not be afraid”.

In preparing the second edition of the book, updating it through the death and funeral of John Paul II, I added a fourth part on the Legacy of Mercy ... his gift to the church and world for the Third Millennium (see homily at the Canonization of St. Faustina, the great Apostle of Divine Mercy, April 30, 2000).

I would also point out that John Paul II — lived a life of mercy: He lived the A.B.C’s of *Divine Mercy-Message and Devotion* — he :

Asked for God’s mercy in his continual prayer

Became merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful (Lk 6:36).

Completely trusted and repeatedly entrusted his life to Jesus: Jezu Ufam Tobia (Jesus I trust in You!).

At a Symposium on the first anniversary of publishing *Dives in Misericordia* (Nov. 22, 1981, at the Shrine of Merciful Love in Callévalenza Italy), the first public appearance after his recuperation from an attempted assassination, the Holy Father said:

Right from the beginning of my ministry in St. Peter’s See in Rome I considered this message [of Divine Mercy] my special task Providence has assigned it to me in the present situation of man, the Church and the world. It could be said that precisely this situation assigned that message to me as my task before God.

Then in answer to George Weigil, the pope’s biographer who asked “Why did you write *Dives in Misericordia*? John Paul II answered:

...that he felt “spiritually ‘very near’ to St. Faustina and had been “Thinking about her for a long time” when he began writing *Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in Mercy).

John Paul II lived the message of mercy which he called “love’s second name” (*Dives in Misericordia* #7). He lived and prayed for “that love which is the Father may be revealed through the work of the Son and Holy Spirit and be shown to be present in our modern world and be shown

to be more powerful than evil; more powerful than sin and death” (*Dives in Misericordia* #15).

On Divine Mercy Sunday April 10, 1994 at the noontime *Regina Caeli* address John Paul II spoke of Christ’s peace as the triumph of Divine Mercy and he called Blessed Faustina Kowalksa “the great Apostle of Divine Mercy in our times”. Then in his last book *Memory and Identity* he expanded his honoring of St. Faustina.

Q. It sounds like St. Faustina is another Legacy of John Paul II. Could you tell me more about St. Faustina and John Paul II?

A. John Paul II found St. Faustina to be a special Saint of Divine Mercy and a model of holiness for our times. He described St. Faustina as one:

...Who was chosen by Christ to be a particularly enlightened interpreter of the truth of Divine Mercy. For Sister Faustina, then truth led to an extraordinarily rich mystical life. She was a simple, uneducated person, and yet those who read the Diary of her revelations are astounded by her depth of her mystical experience. I mention Sister Faustina because her revelations focused on the mystery of Divine Mercy, occurred during the period preceding the Second World War. This was precisely the time when the ideologies of evil, nazism and communism, were taking shape. Sister Faustina became the herald of the one message capable of off-setting the evil of those ideologies, the fact that God is Mercy — the truth of the Merciful Christ. And for this reason, when I ever called to the See of Peter, I felt impelled to pass on those experiences of a fellow Pole that deserve a place in the treasury of the Universal Church. (*Memory and Identity* p. 5-6 Chapter 2).

Then in Chapter 10 John Paul II continues to honor St. Faustina, describing her Diary “as a particular [unique] Gospel of Divine Mercy” and how “Divine Mercy is the limit imposed on evil,” a text quoted by Cardinal Ratzinger at the funeral Mass of John Paul II:

I have chosen here to speak of Sister Faustina and the devotion to the merciful

Christ which she promoted because she too belongs to our time. She lived in the first decades of the twentieth century and died before the Second World War. In that very period the mystery of Divine Mercy was revealed to her, and what she experienced she then recorded in her *Diary*. To those who survived the Second World War, *Saint Faustina's Diary appears as a particular Gospel of Divine Mercy*, written from a twentieth-century perspective. The people of that time understood her message. They understood it in the light of the dramatic buildup of evil during the Second World War and the cruelty of the totalitarian systems. *It was as if Christ had wanted to reveal that the limit imposed upon evil, of which man is both perpetrator and victim, is ultimately Divine Mercy*. Of course, there is also justice, but this alone does not have the last word in the divine economy of world history and human history. God can always draw good from evil, he wills that all should be saved and come to knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim 2:4): God is Love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8). *Christ, crucified and risen just as he appeared to Sister Faustina, is the supreme revelation of this truth*.

Here I should like to return to what I said about the experience of the Church in Poland during the period of resistance to communism. It seems to me to have a universal value. I think that the same applies to Sister Faustina and her witness to the mystery of Divine Mercy. *The patrimony of her spirituality was of great importance*, as we know from experience, for the resistance against evil and inhuman systems of the time. *The lesson to be drawn from all this is important not only for the Poles, but also in every part of the world where the Church is present*. This became clear during the beatification and canonization of Sister Faustina. It was as if Christ had wanted to say through her: "Evil does not have the last word!" The Paschal Mystery confirms that good is ultimately victorious, that life conquers death and that love triumphs over hate. (Emphasis added) (*Memory and Identity*, John Paul II, 2005 Chapter 10 on the Mystery of Mercy p.

54-55).

How important this text of *Memory and Identity* is for John Paul II's legacy of Divine Mercy: the image of the Divine Mercy is described as {the supreme revelation of this truth", and the Message of Divine Mercy is not just for Poland but for the whole Church! Divine Mercy is the message for the Third Millennium.

Q. Pope John Paul left us many legacies. Which of these teach us how to Be Holy?

A. The legacies of John Paul II are great and numerous. Such publications as *John Paul the Great: Maker of the past-concealed Church*. Edited by William Oddie, Ignatius Press, 2003 is a collection of essays based on a conference on the 25th year of John Paul II Pontificate and *Crisis* magazine, May 2005 on the legacies of John Paul the great give us a magnificent over-view of his pontificate.

I'll list some of the legacies and indicate how they challenge us to Be He Holy:

Legacy of

- *Authentic interpretation of Vatican II*
 - stressing the primacy of Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of man and the center of the universe and history (see John Paul II's first encyclical opening line of Redeemer of Man).
 - stressing the universal call to holiness (Chapter V of *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican II) as the bases for the New evangelization and ecumenism
- *Encouraging new ecclesial movements...*
 - Such as the charismatic renewal, folklore, cursillo neo-catechusmento and many others, that call us to *Be Holy*.
- *The Mariology of John Paul II: Totus Tuus*
 - Calling us to a total gift of ourselves and *Be Holy*.
- *The beatification of 1.345 and canonization of 483 holy men and women*

—Challenge everyone to *Be Holy* with hundreds of models

- *The new feminism*
 - Calling women to *Be Holy*.
- *The Theology of the Body*
 - called married couples to *Be Holy*
 - based morality on sacred scripture.
- *He changed the Political World*
 - by speaking the truth in love.
 - by living as a Holy Man & Woman
- *The Celebration of the Jubilee 2000 and the years of preparation*
 - millions walked through the open Holy Doors, challenging us to repentance and *Be Holy*
- *The New Evangelization*
 - by his world travel, teaching the nations to *Be Holy*.
- *His Theological View of every man*
 - you are a child of God.
 - your dignity is God's gift and is to be respected by all.
 - you are called to *Be Holy*.
- *His Legacy of Life from conception to death*
 - Life is a gift of God.
 - to be honored from beginning to the end.
- *His life and death as a Holy Man*
 - a life of prayer and total gift to God and to the service of the Church and nations calling all: *Be Holy*.

- *The Social teachings of John Paul II*
 - teaching us to put the truth of Jesus Christ, justice and mercy and our holiness into the market place and the nations.
- *The Fourteenth encyclicals and numerous Apostolic letters and exhortations.*
 - teach us to use our whole person, body, Soul and Spirit to *Be Holy*.
 - give the authentic interpretation of Vatican II.
- *The witness of prayer and hope*
 - Do not be afraid of opening the doors of your heart to Jesus (Inaugural address October 1978).
 - Do not be afraid to *Be Holy*.
 - Contemplate the face of Jesus, with Mary (Prayer for the third millennium.)
- *The love of youth:*
 - You are the future of the Church.
 - live and speak the truth in love.
 - Be Holy!
 - give your life totally to Jesus Christ!
- *His teaching us the power of redemptive suffering by his life and death*
 - “It is wonderful to be able to give oneself to the very end for the sake of the kingdom of God” (Letter to the Elderly, 1999).
 - He lived and fulfilled the teaching of St. Paul: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of the Church” (Col 1:24).
 - The day before he died he spoke to the Lord: “I have looked for you. Now you have come to me and I thank you”.
 - His last word was an “AMEN” concluding the prayer of the youth below his win-

dow — and he died.

- *The Legacy of the Holy Eucharist*

—So powerfully and personally taught in his last encyclical: *The Church Lives by the Eucharist*.

By proclaiming the year of the Eucharist to end with the Synod of Bishops in October 2005.

Challenges the Church to “Eucharistic Amazement” — a challenge to *Be Holy*.

- *The Legacy of Divine Mercy is unique among all the legacies.*

—Proclaimed in his second encyclical *Dives in Misericordia (Rich in Mercy)*.

—His special legacy given to the Third Millennium as at the canonization of St. Faustina (Mercy Sunday, April 30, 2000): “By this act [of canonization] I intended today to pass this message on to the Third Millennium ... to all the people ...”

The Legacy of Divine Mercy is unique because of his own testimony: “Providence has assigned it to me ... as my task before God” (Collevalenza, Italy, Nov. 22, 1987); The Message of Divine Mercy “... forms the image of this pontificate” (Krakow, Poland, June 7, 1997).

- *The Legacy of Mary*

—TOTUS TUUS (I am all yours Mary) was the motto of his priesthood, episcopate and pontificate.

—He daily renews his consecration to Mary using the prayer of St. Louis de Monfort.

—He repeatedly consecrated the world to Mary: Fatima, May 13, 1982; Vatican, March 25, 1984; in union with the bishops of the world; Vatican entrusted the Third Millennium to Mary before the Fatima Statue.

—In his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia (Rich in Mercy)* in the section on the

Mother of Mercy

...as the one who received mercy in a remarkable and exceptional way, as no other person has (#9).

...and in an equally “merits” that mercy... (#9)

—John Paul II honored Mary by his encyclical on Mary (*Redemptoris Mater*, Mother of the Redeemer)

—In most of his major writing and speaking he concluded by honoring Mary.

—In each country he visited the major Marian Shrines.

—His prayer for Church of the Third Millennium is to “Contemplate the face of Jesus with the eyes of Mary” (Pope Benedict CXVI, May 2005).

Q. Tell me more about the Legacy of Mary and the Eucharist and the Holiness of John Paul II.

A. Mary and the eucharist were at the core of the holiness of John Paul II. Mary was not just a devotion but the way that God chose for His Son to take on human flesh. The Father and Spirit prepared Mary by her Immaculate Conception and by her total “yes” to God’s will, her “fiat”. It is this total faith of Mary that John Paul II described in his encyclical *Mother of the Redeemer* commentary on the word of St. Elizabeth: “Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord” (Lk 1:45). The holy father then defined that faith: “To believe/trust means ‘to abandon oneself’ to the truth of the word of the living God” (#14). John Paul II abandoned himself to Mary as his mother and teacher with his motto *TOTUS TUUS* — I am all yours Mary. It was a way of life for him and a way to holiness.

Then in his last Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia Vivit* (*The Church lives by the Eucharist*) John Paul II in the last Chapter 6: At the school of Mary, Woman of the Eucharist shows us how Mary is our special teacher of how to live a Eucharistic faith. In chapter one of the Mystery of Faith —“a great Mystery, a *Mystery of Mercy*” — a love that goes to the end (#11, Jn 13:1). Mary lived out

this Mystery of Mercy by her Eucharistic faith. John Paul then writes “Mary seems to say to us: ‘Do not waver; trust in the words of my Son. If He was able to change water into wine, He can also turn bread and wine into His Body and Blood’ ...” (#54).

John Paul II describes the effect of our offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: it transforms us and commits us to transforming the world. In effect he describes how we are to *Be Holy*:

Proclaiming the death of the Lord “until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26) entails that all who take part in the Eucharist be committed to changing their lives and making them in a certain [definite] way *completely “Eucharistic.”* (#20), emphasis added).

This is his description of a “*Living Eucharist!*” — a person totally surrendered to the Lord, “offer[ing] our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1).

John Paul II concludes his final chapter on Mary, “the woman of the Eucharist”:

In the Eucharist the Church is completely united to Christ and his sacrifice, and makes her own the spirit of Mary. This truth can be understood more deeply by re-reading the *Magnificat* in a Eucharistic key. The Eucharist, like the Canticle of Mary, is first and foremost praise and thanksgiving. When Mary exclaims: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior”, she already bears Jesus in her womb. She praises God “through” Jesus, but also praises him “in” Jesus and “with” Jesus. This is the true “Eucharistic attitude.” (#58).

Truly Mary is our Mother and model of how we are to be a “Living Eucharist.”

Q. Where can I find more of John Paul II’s Teachings on how to Be Holy?

A. I would recommend the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (#2012—#2031) which is based on Sacred Scripture, on the Second Vatican Councils document *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) especially Chapter V: the call to the whole Church to Holiness.

The Apostolic Letters of John Paul II: *Christifidelis Laici* (the vocation and the mission of the lay faithful of the Church and the word), especially the sections # 16 Called to holiness, and #17 The Life of Holiness in the world; *Novo Millennium Innuente* (At the Beginning of the New Millennium), the whole document is powerfully written to challenge us to holiness; John Paul II's encyclical letter *Ecclesial de Eucharistia* (The Church lives by the Eucharist), is a powerful and personal call to be "completely Eucharistic (Living Eucharistic); the encyclicals *Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in Mercy) and *Redemptoris Mater* (Mother of the Redeemer) made holiness possible for us all.

I would recommend reading the book: *John Paul II: The Great Mercy Pope* (Marian Press, Stockbridge, MA 01263, First edition 2001, Second up-dated edition in preparation December 2005). This book describes John Paul the Great in four categories: The Teacher of Mercy, The Model of Mercy, The Themes of Mercy and The Legacies of Holiness.

Chapter Fourteen

The Wrap-up

Q. Could you give me some final summary statements on how I can become a saint and a mystic?

A. Here are some summary statements to challenge you to be holy:

- Trust in Jesus even more!
- Be a “Living Eucharist.”
- Radiate His Presence: His Holiness, His Humility, His Mercy, to all. In this way *live* the Magnificat of Mary.
- Rejoice in the Lord always. Pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks, For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus regarding you all! (1 Thess 5:16-19).
- Live the Lord’s Prayer - on earth as in heaven: “Thy will be done.”
- Make frequent spiritual Communions.
- Give thanks for everything, always, and everywhere — all is gift! Thanksgiving is the KEY that opens up the Holiness of the Holy Trinity to us. *Thanksgiving* is the key to humility; humility is the key to transparency; transparency is the key to the presence of the holy Lord; presence of the Holy One, Jesus Christ in our hearts is to be a “Living Eucharist” — a holy, humble, merciful presence of Jesus. Thus, holiness is becoming a “Living Eucharist.”
- Invoke the Holy Spirit unceasingly: desire and ask for more!
- To please the Lord, be present to Him with your heart, in the Heart of Mary, trusting, rejoicing and giving thanks.
- Love the Lord with *His love*, with your whole heart, your whole mind and your whole strength - and your neighbor as another self.

- Don't waste your sufferings: with love, entrust them to the merciful Heart of Jesus.
- Be merciful with the mercy of the heavenly Father - in deed, word and prayer.
- *Desire* more of God. *Ask* for more of the Holy Spirit. *Allow* Him to work more in you and transform you.

Q. Could you give us some wrap-up statements of St. Faustina on being a saint?

A. These Diary entries express her desire:

O my Jesus, how very easy it is to become holy; all that is needed is a bit of good will. If Jesus sees this little bit of good will in the soul, He hurries to give himself to the soul, and nothing can stop Him, neither shortcomings nor falls — absolutely nothing. Jesus is anxious to help that soul, and if it is faithful to this grace from God, it can very soon attain the highest holiness possible for a creature here on earth. God is very generous and does not deny His grace to anyone. Indeed He gives more than what we ask of Him. Faithfulness to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit — that is the shortest route (*Diary*, 291).

It is only in eternity that we shall know the great mystery effected in us by Holy Communion. O most precious moments of my life! (*Diary*, 840).

I desire that my whole life be but one act of thanksgiving to You, O God (*Diary*, 1285).

Jesus, there is one more secret in my life, the deepest and dearest to my heart: it is You yourself when You come to my heart under the appearance of bread.

Herein lies the whole secret of my sanctity. Here my heart is so united with Yours as to be but one. There are no more secrets, because all that is Yours is mine, and all that is mine is Yours. Such is the omnipotence and the miracle of Your mercy. All the tongues of men and of angels united could not find words adequate to this mystery of Your love and mercy (*Diary*, 1489).

EPILOGUE

Live whole heartedly and Eucharistically the three fold gospel commandment:

Be Merciful (Lk 6:36);

Be humble (I Peter 5:6);

Be holy (1 Peter 1:16).

In this way reflect the life of the most Holy Trinity — ***Be Merciful:***

The Father who is rich in mercy (Eph 2:4),

The Son who humbled Himself (Phil 2:8),

The Holy Spirit who fills our hearts (Rom 5:5).

Live the Magnificat of Mary (Lk 1:46-55) — ***Be Humble:***

Rejoice always;

Pray without ceasing;

In all things give thanks;

for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus regarding you all (1 Thess 5:16-18).

Be a Living Eucharist — ***Be Holy:***

Be present to the ONE who is present;

Be transformed by His presence;

Radiating His presence.

APPENDIX A

John Paul's Homily on the Thirst of Jesus

(Christ's thirst for the gift of love from all whom the Father has given him, was the focus of the homily the Holy Father preached on 14 March, 1993, the Third Sunday of Lent)

“Give me a drink!” (Jn. 4:7).

With these words Jesus begins his lengthy, profound conversation with the Samaritan woman

...

Tired from his journey, Jesus sits down at the well about noon. The natural thirst produced by the heat of that hour of the day is the sign revealing *another thirst, a spiritual one*, which comes over his divine person: Jesus is thirsting for souls, seeking the faith and love which the Father has invited mankind to offer him in full freedom by accepting him as their Savior.

“Give me a drink!”. Jesus asks the Samaritan woman not only for some water from a well dug many centuries earlier by the patriarch Jacob; he is asking her to acknowledge him as the promised Messiah, the one who will give the living water of the Holy Spirit ...

The dialogue refers to another statement we find on Jesus' parched lips at the supreme hour of the cross. “I thirst” (Jn. 19-28). The image of the crucified *is the supreme sign of God's infinite love* ... One cannot remain indifferent to so great a love!

Dear brothers and sisters ... this is *the profound meaning of Jesus' thirst* ... The Son of God made man, who died to free us from sin, awaits the faithful and generous res[ponse of all whom the Father has given him and who therefore belong to him. He *thirsts for the gift of our love*.

As I stated in my recent Lenten Message: “Today, Christ repeats his request and relives the torments of his passion in the poorest of our brothers and sisters{ (n. 1) ...

You know well where to draw the light and strength for such a demanding mission ... [from] a treasure that is the principle strength of evangelization: The Blessed Sacrament, source of all evangelization.

Your community, then, dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament, is called in a special way to give witness to respect and love for the sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood. You will be helped and spurred on in doing this by your commitment to a daily Eucharistic adoration...

May the program of adoration and prayer ... accompany you every day of the year. Gather up and present to the Lord the anxieties and sufferings, the toils and pains, the joys and hopes of everyone you meet on the way. May your whole life become a single offering to the Lord in union with the Redeemer's sacrifice ...

I entrust your good intentions to the motherly protection of Mary, whom you venerate under the meaningful title of "Our Lady of Pardon." May she obtain from the Lord that forgiveness that is the sign of His infinite love and give us in turn the strength to forgive and love our brothers and sisters.

... "Lord, you are truly the Savior of the world; give me the living water, that I may never thirst again."

L'Osservatore Romano, 17 March 1993

APPENDIX B

A Personal Letter from the Servant of God, Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Mother Teresa wrote a personal and private letter to her community of Missionaries of Charity (MC). It was made public after she died. I share her letter as an example of what it means to be a “Living Eucharist” and conclude with Pope John Paul II’s homily on the thirst of Jesus that inspired her letter.

Please read the letter as though addressed to you, personally:

25 March, 1993, Varanasi

My Dearest Children — Sisters, Brothers, and Fathers,

This letter being very personal, I wanted to write in my own hand — but there are so many things to say. Even if not in Mother’s hand, still it comes from Mother’s heart.

Jesus wants me to tell you again, specially in this Holy Week, how much love He has for each one of you — beyond all you can imagine. I worry some of you still have not really met Jesus — one to one — you and Jesus alone. We may spend time in chapel — but have you seen with the eyes of your soul how He looks at you with love? Do you really know the living Jesus — not from books but from being with Him in your heart? Have you heard the loving words He speaks to you? Ask for the grace. He is longing to give it. Until you can hear Jesus in the silence of your own heart, you will not be able to hear Him saying “I thirst” in the hearts of the poor. Never give up this daily intimate contact with Jesus as the *real living person* — not just the idea. How can we last even one day without hearing Jesus say “I love you” — impossible. Our soul needs that as much as the body needs to breathe the air. If not, prayer is dead — meditation only thinking. Jesus wants you each to hear Him — speaking in the silence of your heart.

Be careful of all that can block that personal contact with the living Jesus. Devil may try to

use the hurts of life, and sometimes our own mistakes — to make you feel it is impossible that Jesus really loves you, is really cleaving to you. This is danger for all of us. And so sad, because it is completely opposite of what Jesus is really wanting, waiting to tell you. Not only that He loves you, but even more — He longs for you. He misses you when you don't come close. He thirsts for you. He loves you always, even when you don't feel worthy. When not accepted by others, even by yourself sometimes — He is the one who always accepts you. My children, you don't have to be different for Jesus to love you. Only believe — You are precious to Him. Bring all you are suffering to His feet — only open your heart to be loved by Him as you are. He will do the rest.

You all know in your mind that Jesus loves you — but in this letter Mother wants to touch your heart instead. Jesus wants to stir up our hearts, so not to lose our early love, specially in the future after Mother leaves you. That is why I ask you to read this letter before the Blessed Sacrament, the same place it was written, so Jesus Himself can speak to you each one.

Why is Mother saying these things? After reading Holy Father's letter on "I thirst," I was struck so much — I cannot tell you what I felt. His letter made me realize more than ever how beautiful is our vocation. How great God's love for us in choosing our Society to satiate that thirst of Jesus, for love, for souls — giving us our special place in the Church. At the same time we are reminding the world of His thirst, something that was being forgotten. I wrote Holy Father to thank him. Holy Father's letter is a sign for our whole society — to go more into this great thirst of Jesus for each one. It is also a sign for Mother, that the time has come for me to speak openly of the gift God gave Sept. 10 [1946] — to explain fully as I can what means for me the thirst of Jesus.

For me Jesus' thirst is something so *intimate* — so I have felt shy until now to speak to you of Sept. 10 — I wanted to do as Our Lady who "kept all these things in her heart." That is why Mother hasn't spoken so much of I Thirst, especially outside. But still, Mother's letters and instructions always point to it — showing the means to satiate His thirst through prayer, intimacy with Jesus, living our vows — especially our 4th vow. For me it is so clear — everything in MC exists only to satiate Jesus. His words on the wall of every MC chapel, they are not from the past only, but alive here and now, spoken to you. Do you believe it? If so, you will hear, you will feel His

presence. Let it become as intimate for each of you, just as for Mother — this is the greatest joy you could give me. Mother will try to help you understand — but Jesus himself must be the one to say to you “I Thirst.” Hear your own name. Not just once. Every day. If you listen with your heart, you will hear, you will understand.

Why does Jesus say “I Thirst”? What does it mean? Something so hard to explain in words - if you remember anything from Mother’s letter, remember this - “I thirst” is something *much deeper* than Jesus just saying “I love you.” Until you know deep inside that Jesus thirsts for you - you can’t begin to know who He wants to be for you. Or who He wants you to be for Him.

The heart and soul of MC (Missionaries of Charity) is only this - the thirst of Jesus’ Heart, hidden in the poor. This is the source of every part of MC life. It gives us our Aim, our 4th vow, the Spirit of our Society. Satiating the living Jesus in our midst is the Society’s only purpose for existing. Can we each say the same for ourselves - that it is our only reason for living? Ask yourself - would it make any difference in my vocation, in my relation to Jesus, in my work, if Jesus’ thirst were no longer our Aim - no longer on the chapel wall? Would anything change in my life? Would I feel any loss? Ask yourself honestly, and let this be a test for each to see if His thirst is a reality, something alive - not just an idea.

“I Thirst” and “You did it to me” - Remember always to connect the two, the means with the Aim. What God has joined together let no one split apart. Do not underestimate our practical means - the work for the poor, no matter how small or humble - that make our life something beautiful for God. They are the most precious gifts of God to our Society - Jesus’ hidden presence so near, so able to touch. Without the work for the poor the Aim dies - Jesus’ thirst is only words with no meaning, no answer. Uniting the two, our MC vocation will remain alive and real, what Our Lady asked.

Be careful choosing retreat preachers. Not all understand our spirit correctly. They may be holy and learned, but that does not mean they have the grace of state of our vocation. If they tell you something different than Mother is writing in this letter, I beg you not to listen or let it confuse you. The thirst of Jesus *is* the focus of all that is MC. The Church has confirmed it again and again — “Our charism is to satiate the thirst of Jesus for love and souls — by working at the salvation and sanctification of the poorest of the poor.” Nothing different. Nothing else. Let us do all we can

to protect this gift of God to our Society.

Believe me, my dear children — pay close attention to what Mother is saying now — only the thirst of Jesus, hearing it, feeling it, answering it with all your heart, will keep the Society alive after Mother leaves you. If this is your life, you will be all right. Even when Mother leaves you, Jesus' thirst will never leave you. Jesus thirsting in the poor you will have with you always.

That is why I want the Active Sisters and Brothers, the Contemplative Sisters and Brothers, and the Fathers to each one aid the other in satiating Jesus with their own special gift — supporting, completing each other and this precious Grace as one Family, with one Aim and purpose. Do not exclude the Coworkers and Lay MCs from this — this is their call as well, help them to know it.

Because the first duty of a priest is the ministry to preach, some years back I asked our Fathers to begin speaking about I Thirst, to go more deeply into what God gave the Society Sept. 10. I feel Jesus wants this of them, also in the future — so pray Our Lady keeps them in this special part of their 4th vow. Our Lady will help all of us in this, since she was the first person to hear Jesus' cry I Thirst with St. John, and I am sure Mary Magdalene. Because she was there on Calvary, she knows how real, how deep His longing for you and for the poor. Do we know? Do we feel as She? Ask her to teach — you and the whole Society are hers. Her role is to bring you face to face, as John and Magdalene, with the love in the Heart of Jesus crucified. Before it was Our Lady pleading with Mother, now it is Mother in her name pleading with you — “listen to Jesus' thirst.” Let it be for each what Holy Father said in his letter — a Word of Life.

How do you approach the thirst of Jesus? Only one secret — *the closer you come to Jesus, the better you will know His thirst.* “Repent and believe,” Jesus tells us. What are we to repent? Our indifference, our hardness of heart. What are we to believe? Jesus thirsts even now, in your heart and in the poor — He knows your weakness, He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you. He is not bound by time. Whenever we come close to Him — we become partners of Our Lady, St. John, Magdalene. Hear Him. Hear your own name. Make my joy and yours complete.

Let us pray. God bless you.

M. Teresa, M.C.

