

[Readings: Acts 5:12-16; Ps. 118; Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19; John 20:19-31]

Are you anxious? Do you worry? Then today's Divine Mercy message is for you! The Diary of St. Faustina, the visionary who gave us the Divine Mercy devotion wrote in her diary: "You should not worry too much about adversities. The world is not as powerful as it seems to be."

In recent years, the Divine Mercy message has become increasingly popular. Thanks to the efforts of St. John Paul II, many individuals are aware of the fact that Jesus appeared to St. Maria Faustina Kowalska (a Polish nun who died in 1938) and revealed the depth of His mercy. She was instructed to share the message that God loves us and that His mercy is greater than our sins. And, while this is great news and can fill us with tremendous hope, there is an aspect of the Divine Mercy message that is virtually unknown. The revelation given by Jesus to St. Faustina is not only directed toward hardened sinners, but also to those who live in fear. If you are looking for a way to break free from worry, the message of Divine Mercy is your answer!

There's no doubt that life can be challenging. At one point or another, everyone will deal with trials and tribulations. When these difficulties arise, it is perfectly acceptable to experience the emotion of fear. According to Church teaching, this feeling is not wrong or sinful. What can be problematic, however, is letting your fear lead to worry. Choosing to worry instead of turning to prayer exhibits a lack of trust in God's providence. It also presents an obstacle to holiness. In one of His conversations with St. Faustina, Jesus had this to say:

My child, know that the greatest obstacles to holiness are discouragement and an exaggerated anxiety. (Diary of St. Faustina, 1488)

Both discouragement and exaggerated anxiety arise when we fail to trust in the Lord's goodness and His desire to assist us. Addressing the idea of distrust, Jesus spoke the following words to St. Faustina:

How painfully distrust of My goodness wounds Me! Sins of distrust wound Me most painfully. (Diary, 1076)

My child, all of your sins have not wounded My Heart as painfully as your present lack of trust does. (Diary, 1486)

Although these messages are startling, there is no need for us to panic. The Lord had much more to say to St. Faustina about this topic and we would be wise to listen.

We often succumb to worry or discouragement because we live our lives as if everything depends on us. It doesn't! We should never forget that the all-loving and all-powerful Lord of the Universe wants to assist us with our daily struggles:

Why are you afraid? Do you think that I will not have enough omnipotence to support you? (Diary, 527)

Do not fear; I will not leave you alone. Do whatever you can in this matter; I will accomplish everything that is lacking in you. You know what is within your power to do; do that (Diary, 881).

You should not worry too much about adversities. The world is not as powerful as it seems to be. (Diary, 1643)

So far we've learned that our lack of trust hurts Jesus and that we never have to face our problems alone. No doubt these are important messages, but it's probably not enough. When problems arise and fear sets in, we need something more than reminders of why we shouldn't worry. We need a plan of action. Fortunately, Jesus provides us with exactly that.

Ask For Help!

While most of us know that Jesus instructs us to avoid worry (Matthew 6:25-34), we often fall short of our goal. One of the biggest challenges is that it can be extremely difficult to avoid doing something negative, unless we replace it with something positive.

Therefore, the "do not worry" message sometimes gets ignored because it's deemed to be impossible. When we do make an effort to grit our teeth and not worry, we often fail miserably. In another piece of advice to St. Faustina, Jesus reveals why this happens:

The cause of your falls is that you rely too much upon yourself and too little on me. (Diary, 1488)

There you have it. Instead of trying to give up worrying on your own, Jesus wants us to ask for His help. Unfortunately, we often hesitate to ask for fear of bothering Him.

What a mistake! Jesus specifically told St. Faustina that it pleases Him when we give Him our problems:

You will give me pleasure if you hand over to me all your troubles and griefs.
(Diary, 1485)

I am very pleased that you confide your fears to Me, my daughter: Speak to Me about everything in a completely simple and human way; by this you will give Me great joy. (Diary, 797)

For anyone who is prone to anxiety, the Divine Mercy message is literally an answered prayer. Jesus cares deeply about us and doesn't want us to suffer needlessly. He desires that we share all of our troubles with Him and ask for His assistance. By doing so, we give Him a chance to work in our lives.

I also encourage you to get into the habit of praying the words found at the bottom of the Divine Mercy image: "Jesus, I trust in You." These words don't represent a feeling. Rather, they represent a conscious decision to trust Jesus with all of your needs. It doesn't matter if your stomach feels queasy and your knees are shaking, the words will still be effective. Try it for yourself and see what happens.

At each Mass where I preside, when I receive Communion, as I place the chalice back on the altar, I say these words in Polish: *Jestem przy Tobie, pamiętam, czuwam. Jezu, ufam Tobie!* The first is taken from a Marion hymn and means, "I am with you, I remember, I stand watchful." The other is "Jesus, I trust in You." I don't know why I say them in Polish, the language of my ancestors. When Pope John Paul II was pope, I was told that God is Polish, or at least, He listens to Polish prayers first!

God knows your needs: He desires to bring you closer to Himself, and He will do so as long as you keep striving and stumbling towards Him. God is only as far away as we place Him and never as far away as we think. For it is in Him that we live and move and have our being. AMEN! ALLELUIA!