SILENT HOMILIES

The Mercy That Fits an Ordinary Day

Living the message of St Faustina
in the hour a cuckoo clock can remember





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The Mercy That Fits an Ordinary Day

Living the message of St Faustina
between the dishes, the ward,
and three o'clock

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, who learned mercy in a kitchen and at a convent gate, and to every person who is trying to live that same mercy on an ordinary Tuesday — in a house, a ward, a parish, or a quiet room where no one is watching.

Preface

Why this message is needed today

There are already many books about Saint Faustina. Some tell her life from Głogowiec to Łagiewniki. Some collect the great promises of the Diary.

Some explain the Feast, the Image, the Chaplet, and the Hour as if they were four separate treasures kept in four separate drawers. This book is written for a different kind of reader. It is written for the person who already knows the name of the devotion, and perhaps even prays the Chaplet, and who still wonders how the message is supposed to look on a wet afternoon in an ordinary house.

It is written for the priest who has preached Divine Mercy Sunday and then gone back to the same hospital corridor. It is written for the parent whose evening has no room for a retreat, and for the sick person whose prayer has become very small. The message Jesus gave to Sister Faustina was not first a programme.

It was a way of standing before God and before other people. He asked for trust. He asked for mercy in deed, in word, and in prayer. He asked that this should happen always and everywhere, not only on the Sunday after Easter and not only when we feel ready.

That is why the title of this book speaks of an ordinary day. Mercy that cannot fit into Tuesday is not yet the mercy she was taught. I write as a parish priest in a small Catholic parish in South Wales, and as a hospital chaplain who has stood at many bedsides.

The stories in these pages are short and they have been anonymised, because mercy does not need a name on a poster. The facts about the Diary and about the history of the devotion have been checked against the sources that the Church herself uses. Where a number from the Diary is given, it is given so that you can go and read the passage yourself.

The Church needed almost twenty years, after a period of official caution, to let this devotion breathe again. Faulty translations of the Diary had caused confusion in Rome. Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, then Archbishop of Kraków, opened a new investigation.

The prohibition of 1959 was declared no longer binding in April 1978. Six months later that same cardinal became Pope. He later said that from the beginning of his ministry in Rome he considered the message of mercy his special task.

If the Church herself had to learn this message slowly, we should not be surprised if we need time as well. This is not a book of secrets. It is a book of ordinary hours.

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How to use this book

You do not need to read this book in one week. The chapters are short enough to be opened in ten or fifteen minutes, which is often as much time as an ordinary day will give. You may begin with the chapter that matches the place where you are standing — home, work, parish, sickness, or a wound that has not healed.

If you can, end the chapter by doing the one small practice that is suggested, even if you do it poorly. Keep a copy of the words Jesus I trust in You somewhere you will see them. In Polish they are Jezu, ufam Tobie. Faustina wrote them because Jesus asked that they be signed on the image.

They are not a slogan. They are a sentence you can say when you have no other sentence left. If you have the Diary, you may wish to read the numbered passages that are mentioned. You do not need the Diary in order to use this book.

The Church has already received the message. What remains is to live it where you actually are.

Part One

The Heart of the Message

Chapter 1

What Jesus asked of St Faustina — and of us

The core: trust and mercy.

A great many people have heard the name of Saint Faustina, and a great many more have seen the image of Jesus with two rays falling from His Heart. Fewer people have been told, in ordinary language, what Jesus actually asked her to do, and what that request looks like when you are not a nun in a Polish convent but a parent in a kitchen, a nurse at the end of a shift, or a priest walking back to the car from a hospital.

Helen Kowalska was born in 1905 in the village of Głogowiec, in a poor family that prayed and worked. She entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy and took the name Maria Faustina. Jesus spoke to her, as the Church later judged after long examination of her writings, and He asked her to be the secretary of His mercy. That word secretary is easy to skip past. It means that she was not asked to invent a new religion. She was asked to write down, carefully, what she was given, so that the rest of us would not have to guess.

The heart of what she wrote down is not a complicated system. Jesus asked for trust. He asked that people receive mercy and then give it away. He asked that this should happen not only on a

special Sunday, and not only when we feel holy, but in the places where we already live. The Diary, which the Church permitted to be published after a period of caution in the middle of the twentieth century, is full of kitchens, gates, sick rooms, and ordinary hours. That is why this book exists. The message does not need another shrine first. It needs a Tuesday that has room for it.

One fact that still surprises visitors is that the devotion was officially restricted in 1959, because early translations of the Diary had caused confusion in Rome. For years many Catholics could not hang the image in a church. Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, then Archbishop of Kraków, asked that the writings be studied again. In April 1978 the restriction was lifted. Six months later that same cardinal became Pope John Paul II. He later said that from the beginning of his work in Rome he considered the message of mercy his special task. The Church herself had to learn slowly. We should not be ashamed if we need time as well.

What Jesus asked of Faustina, He now asks of us in a simpler form. Trust Him when the day is ordinary. Treat the person in front of you as someone for whom His Blood was shed. Pray the prayers He taught, without turning them into a hobby that only fits a quiet week. That is the whole of the first chapter, and it is already enough work for a lifetime.

A practice for today

Today, name one place in your ordinary day where mercy could fit — a doorway, a sink, a telephone — and decide that this is holy ground.

A short prayer

Jesus, You asked for trust and for mercy. Teach me both in the place where I actually live. Jesus, I trust in You.

Chapter 2

"Jesus, I trust in You"

The prayer that changes an ordinary hour.

The words Jesus, I trust in You look small when they are printed under a picture. In Polish they are Jezu, ufam Tobie, which Faustina heard as the signature that had to stand on the image. They are not a motto for a banner. They are a sentence a person can say when every other sentence has run out.

Trust, in the way Jesus used the word with Faustina, is not the same as feeling calm. Many pages of the Diary were written when she was tired, misunderstood, or ill with tuberculosis. Trust is the decision to put the next hour into His hands even when the hour looks unpromising. A mother who says those words while the washing is still wet is not being less holy than a nun who says them in a chapel. She is standing in the same place Faustina stood: before a God who asked to be trusted in the middle of work.

People sometimes treat the sentence as magic, as if repeating it would change the weather. Jesus did not offer it that way. He offered it as a door. On one side of the door is the habit of managing everything ourselves. On the other side is the habit of handing the unmanageable part back to Him. Most of us walk through that door several times a day, and then walk back again.

The words are there for both journeys.

If you have never said them slowly, try it once today without an audience. Say them in the language that sits most easily in your mouth. You do not need to feel anything. You only need to mean, as far as you can, that you will not spend the next hour pretending you are God.

A practice for today

Attach the words Jesus I trust in You to one existing moment of the day, and keep that hook for a week.

A short prayer

Jesus, I do not always feel this. I choose to place my weight on You. Jezu, ufam Tobie.

Chapter 3

Mercy is not only a feeling

It is a decision: deed, word, and prayer.

Mercy is often spoken of as a warm feeling we have toward people we already like. Jesus did not describe it that way to Faustina. He spoke of mercy as something that has to take shape in three places: in what we do, in what we say, and in what we pray. A feeling may start the work. It cannot finish it, because feelings go home early.

Deed means the plate that is washed, the lift that is offered, the visit that is made when you would rather stay in the chair. Word means the sentence that does not add a wound, and sometimes the sentence that asks pardon. Prayer means carrying the person to God when you cannot carry them anywhere else. Faustina was told that these three belong together. A person who only prays and never acts has not yet understood the message. A person who only acts and never prays will run out of water.

This is older than the Diary. The Church has always numbered the works of mercy — feeding, visiting, burying, teaching, forgiving — because she knew that love has to borrow hands. What is fresh in Faustina's pages is the insistence that the same Christ who asks for those works also asks to be trusted while we do

them. Mercy is not a project we run for God. It is God moving through a day that already belongs to Him.

When you next wonder whether you have been merciful, do not start with your mood. Start with a small list. Whom did I help. Whom did I speak of kindly. Whom did I name before God. The list will be incomplete. That is not a reason to throw it away. It is a reason to begin again at the next meal.

A practice for today

Before tonight, do one act of mercy on purpose: a deed, a word, or a prayer. Only one. Then stop counting.

A short prayer

Lord, let my mercy today be a decision, not a mood. Have mercy on us and on the whole world.

Part Two

Mercy in Daily Places

Chapter 4

Mercy at home

Family arguments, tired evenings, ordinary duties.

Home is the place where mercy is most easily postponed, because the people there will still be there after supper. A sharp word to a stranger on a bus feels like a failure. A sharp word to a husband, a child, or a parent can feel like the weather of the house, something we no longer notice.

Jesus asked Faustina for mercy in the kitchen as well as in the chapel. She peeled vegetables. She kept the convent gate. She learned that holiness that cannot survive a sink will not survive a vision either. For those of us who do not live in a convent, the lesson is the same. The person who shares the house with you is the first neighbour the Gospel mentions.

Mercy at home is often unimpressive. It looks like listening to a story you have already heard. It looks like not winning an argument that could be won. It looks like going to bed without leaving a wound open overnight. None of this will be written on a parish noticeboard. All of it is the devotion that the Diary was trying to teach.

If the house is difficult — if there is illness, or silence, or a grudge that has furniture of its own — mercy does not mean

pretending the house is easy. It means asking for the grace of one kind act that you can actually complete today. God is not waiting for you to become a different family before He comes in. He is already at the table. The question is whether we will pass Him the same courtesy we would pass a guest.

A practice for today

In the house, choose one tired moment this evening and meet it with a small kindness that needs no speech.

A short prayer

Jesus, stay in our kitchen when we are tired. Make this house a place where mercy can sit down.

Chapter 5

Mercy at work

Difficult people, honesty, small kindness.

Work is where many Christians keep their faith in a drawer, because the office, the ward, the shop floor, or the cab of a van does not look like a chapel. The Diary does not give us an excuse for that drawer. Faustina's obedience was lived among pots, linen, and people who did not always understand her. Mercy at work is not a poster behind the reception desk. It is the way we treat the person whose name we say every day and still have not learned to see.

Difficult colleagues are not a special category outside the Gospel. They are the neighbour with a different timetable. Honesty in speech, refusal to join a cruel joke, a share of the heavy lifting, a quiet prayer for the person who makes the room tighter — these are the works of mercy translated into a wage packet. They will not always be noticed. That is part of their value. Jesus told Faustina that He values what is done out of love more than what is done to be seen.

There is also mercy toward your own limits. A tired nurse who has nothing left for a long conversation can still speak kindly at the desk. A priest who has already made too many visits can still refuse

to take his fatigue out on the last person who knocks. Mercy that never includes the worker will soon become a performance.

If you can offer one hidden kindness at work this week, without announcing it, you will have understood more of the Diary than a person who has only read about Łagiewniki.

A practice for today

At work, pray once for the person who is hardest to like, and do your own task today without adding heat.

A short prayer

Lord, You stood at a carpenter's bench. Bless the work of this day and the people who share it.

Chapter 6

Mercy in the parish

How a community becomes a place of mercy.

A parish can speak about mercy every Sunday and still make it hard for a stranger to find a seat. Jesus did not give Faustina a message for private souls only. He asked that the whole world know how much He loves. A parish is the nearest piece of that world most of us can touch.

Mercy in a parish looks like noticing who is missing, and noticing who is always present and never asked how they are. It looks like a funeral cup of tea that is not rushed. It looks like a first confession that is not treated as an exam. It looks like the hall being used for the lonely as well as for the booked event. None of this requires a new committee if the old committees already have eyes.

Priests have a particular duty here, because we can hide behind the sanctuary and call it reverence. I have learned that the person who waits after Mass often has a sentence that will not fit into the newsletter. Mercy is giving that sentence somewhere to land. Lay people have a duty as well. The Church is not a service we attend. It is a body that either makes room or quietly closes.

Faustina's congregation ran homes for young women who needed protection. Their mercy had an address. A parish that has no address for mercy except the homily has not yet unpacked the box. Start with one person whose name you know and whose week you do not. That is already a shrine.

A practice for today

Notice one person after Mass, or one silent need in the parish, and answer it without a committee.

A short prayer

Jesus, make our parish a refuge, not a display. Teach us to preach mercy by the way we stand in the porch.

Chapter 7

Mercy when we are sick or caring for the sick

Trusting Jesus when we feel weak.

Sickness changes the size of a day. Prayer that used to be twenty minutes long becomes one line. Work that used to be a duty becomes a memory. Jesus did not wait for Faustina to be strong before He spoke of mercy. She wrote much of the Diary with tuberculosis in her lungs. The message is not only for people who can still kneel.

If you are the one who is ill, mercy toward yourself is allowed. It is not selfish to rest. It is not a failure to ask for help. Trust, in a sickbed, may be no more than letting the next dose and the next visitor come without turning them into a test of God. The Chaplet can be said slowly, or only in part. Christ is not paid by the decade.

If you are the one who cares, mercy includes the truth that you will not last if you never sit down. Faustina knew both sides of the ward. She was the sister who served, and she was the patient who had to be served. The Church's oil, her Confession, her Communion brought to the house — these are not last resorts. They are mercy given a body.

I have sat beside beds where no useful sentence would come, and where the only honest thing left was to cry with the family without making a speech. That, too, is the message. Mercy does not always arrive as a homily. Sometimes it arrives as a shared silence that does not run away.

A practice for today

If you are ill or caring for someone who is, offer the next brief instant of pain or waiting as a prayer for the dying.

A short prayer

Jesus, You were weak enough to need help carrying the Cross. Be close to the weak today. I trust in You.

Chapter 8

Mercy when we have been hurt

Forgiving as we have been forgiven.

Being hurt is one of the ordinary ways a heart closes. The Diary does not pretend that wounds are imaginary. Faustina was misunderstood in her own community. She was thought strange. She had to obey people who did not see what she saw. Forgiveness, in those pages, is not a feeling that arrives when we are ready. It is a decision that we place in God's hands because we cannot finish it ourselves.

Jesus asked that we be merciful as He is merciful. He did not ask that we call harm a gift. Forgiveness does not say that the wound was nothing. It says that the wound will not be allowed to become the whole house. Sometimes the first step is only to stop rehearsing the scene. Sometimes it is to pray for the person by name, badly, for a week. Sometimes it is to go to Confession with the bitterness as well as with the other sins, because bitterness is also a way of refusing mercy.

There are hurts that need time, and there are hurts that need a wise other person, and there are hurts that need the law as well as the Gospel. This chapter is not asking anyone to stay in danger. It is asking that we do not confuse self-protection with a life sentence

of hatred. The image of Mercy shows rays falling on the world as it is. The world as it is includes the person who wounded you. You do not have to feel fond of them today. You can still refuse to close the door that Christ has opened.

A practice for today

Name the hurt before God. Ask for the will to will the other person's good. Say the Chaplet once for them if you can.

A short prayer

Father, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Make that sentence true in me.

Part Three

The Simple Practices Jesus Gave Us

Chapter 9

The Chaplet of Divine Mercy

Praying it in ordinary moments.

The Chaplet of Divine Mercy is prayed on ordinary rosary beads. It does not need a special set. Jesus taught it to Faustina in Vilnius in September 1935, on the night before she was to pray for Poland. He told her to say it unceasingly. He also made promises that the Church has allowed us to hear: that He would treat the dying with particular mercy when the Chaplet is said for them, and that He would stand as Saviour and not only as Judge.

The prayers are simple enough for a child and deep enough for a theologian. On the large beads we offer the Father the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world. On the small beads we ask for mercy for the sake of His sorrowful Passion. At the end we say three times, Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world. The whole prayer takes about seven minutes if it is not hurried.

Seven minutes is the reason many people never begin. They are waiting for a better hour. Faustina was told that the Chaplet was for the dying, for sinners, and for the needs of the world. Those needs do not wait for our free evening. A chaplet said in a parked

car, or at the sink, or in a hospital corridor, is the same prayer as a chaplet said in a shrine. The Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy remind people not to turn it into a second rosary with extra meditations stuffed between the decades. Jesus gave the words. They are enough.

If you have never said it, say it once today for someone who is dying, even if you do not know their name. That is already the work of the next chapter's association, and it is already the work Jesus asked for in the Diary.

A practice for today

Say the Chaplet once in an ordinary place — a car, a kitchen, a corridor — for someone who is dying tonight.

A short prayer

Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son. Have mercy on the dying.

Chapter 10

The Hour of Great Mercy

Three o'clock, even for one minute.

Jesus asked Faustina to mark three o'clock in the afternoon as the Hour of Great Mercy, because that was the hour of His death. He did not ask everyone to kneel for sixty minutes. He said that He would grant mercy to the whole world at that hour, and that even a brief remembrance of His Passion — a visit to the Blessed Sacrament if possible, or a short prayer where we are — would be received.

This is one of the most practical gifts in the whole devotion, and one of the most often missed. People think they have failed the hour if they cannot stop the day. Jesus allowed a minute. A minute can be said at a desk, in a school playground, in a hospital lift, or in a kitchen while the kettle boils.

I learned to remember hours long before I learned the Diary. In my childhood my parents had a cuckoo clock. The little bird came out and told the house that another hour had arrived. A close friend of mine still has a cuckoo clock on the wall, and every hour it gives that same clear, slightly comical, beautiful signal. I have come to hear it as a mercy. Three o'clock does not have to be hunted on a telephone. A clock that speaks can carry the reminder

for us. Any ordinary chime will do. The point is not the bird. The point is that the Passion is not only for Good Friday. It belongs to Wednesday afternoon as well.

If three o'clock finds you in a meeting or on a ward, you do not need to announce anything. You can remember, inwardly, that Blood was shed at this hour, and you can ask for mercy on the person in front of you. That is the whole practice. It has never needed a committee.

A practice for today

When the clock next finds three, stop for one minute. Remember the abandonment. Ask for mercy on sinners.

A short prayer

At the hour of Your death, Jesus, mercy was opened wide. I stand in that opening. Have mercy on us.

Chapter 11

The Image of Divine Mercy

Keeping it visible, and letting it speak.

The image of Divine Mercy was painted in Vilnius under Faustina's unhappy supervision. She cried because the picture did not match what she had seen. Jesus told her that the greatness of the image was not in the paint. The greatness was in His grace. The pale ray and the red ray, He said, represent water and blood — the sacraments and the life that comes from His Heart. Under the image He wanted the signature: Jesus, I trust in You.

For years, after 1959, many churches were not allowed to display it. That fact still startles people who grew up with the picture on every wall. The restriction was lifted in 1978. Since then the image has travelled further than Faustina's convent ever did. The danger now is the opposite one. We can hang it and stop seeing it.

Keeping the image visible is not decoration. It is a quiet preacher that does not interrupt. A house, a sacristy, a hospital bag, a telephone lock screen — any of these can hold the two rays if we let them. What matters is that the picture is not treated as a charm. It is a request. It asks the person who looks at it to trust, and it asks the person who hangs it to live in a way that does not

make the signature look like a lie.

If you have no image yet, you do not need an expensive frame. A simple print, blessed if you wish, placed where your ordinary day will meet it, is already the devotion as Jesus described it to a nun who thought the first painting was a failure.

A practice for today

Place the image where life already happens, and look at the signature long enough for it to become a prayer.

A short prayer

Not in the beauty of the brush, but in Your grace. Jesus, I trust in You.

Chapter 12

The Feast and the Sacraments

Confession and Communion as fountains.

The Feast of Mercy falls on the Sunday after Easter. Jesus asked that it be a refuge for souls, and that people come with trust, after a good Confession, and receive Holy Communion. He attached to that coming a promise of complete remission of sins and punishment, which the Church understands in the light of her own teaching on grace and indulgence. The feast is not a replacement for Easter. It is Easter held out a week longer, toward people who need to hear that mercy is stronger than their past.

Confession and Communion are the fountains. The Chaplet and the image are streams that run from them. A person who collects Divine Mercy prayer cards and never goes to the sacrament has not yet opened the door Jesus pointed to. A person who goes to the sacrament and then refuses mercy to the next human being has walked back out of the same door.

Preparation for the feast can be very simple. Make a Confession that is honest rather than impressive. Come to Mass. Receive. Ask for the grace to treat someone kindly that same afternoon. The novena that begins on Good Friday, with a different intention each day, is a beautiful extra. It is not a ticket. Jesus listed the souls

He wanted prayed for — all mankind, priests, good and devout souls, pagans, those who do not believe in Him, the lukewarm. The last day, for the lukewarm, is the one that still surprises people. He spoke of them with particular pain. Many of us will recognise ourselves there, which is why the day exists.

A practice for today

If you have not been to Confession for a long time, make the appointment this week. Do not wait for April.

A short prayer

Jesus, Your hands are full of graces. I will not treat You as a dead object. Have mercy on me, a sinner.

Part Four

Living as an Apostle of Mercy

Chapter 13

Spreading mercy without preaching

Small, quiet ways to share the message.

Spreading the message does not require a microphone. Faustina was not sent to organise a tour. She was sent to write, to pray, and to be obedient in a kitchen. Most of the apostles of mercy I have met look like that. They mention the Chaplet to a neighbour who is afraid of dying. They keep an image in a place where a visitor might see it and ask. They say the three o'clock prayer without advertising the time.

Preaching has its place. A parish mission, a homily on Divine Mercy Sunday, a talk in a hall — these can open a door. They can also become a substitute for the door. People remember who sat with them more than they remember who explained the Diary. If you want to share the message this month, choose one person and one small gift: a card, a pair of beads, a sentence of encouragement, an invitation to pray seven minutes with you. Then stop talking and let the prayer do what Jesus said it would do.

There is a particular way of spreading mercy that this book will describe in a later chapter: joining other people in praying the Chaplet each day for someone who is dying. That work does not need a stage. It needs a yes that can last longer than a mood.

A practice for today

This month, let one person meet the message because of you, without a debate.

A short prayer

Lord, complete what I lack. Make my small yes enough for someone who is afraid of You.

Chapter 14

When mercy feels difficult or dry

What to do on the hard days.

There are days when the word mercy tastes of nothing. The beads feel like an extra job. The image on the wall looks like furniture. Faustina knew those days. She wrote about darkness, dryness, and the fear that she had misunderstood everything. The Church did not canonise her because she always felt light. She was canonised because she stayed.

On a dry day the rule is smaller, not larger. Say the short sentence. Keep the minute at three o'clock if you can. Do one kind thing that does not depend on a feeling. Do not add a new book, a new novena, and a new self-accusation. Dryness is not always a sin. Sometimes it is the weather. Sometimes it is tiredness. Sometimes it is the moment when trust has to walk without the comfort of trust.

If the dryness lasts and turns into despair, that is a different matter, and it deserves a good confession and, if needed, a doctor. Jesus told Faustina that the greatest sinners have the most right to His mercy. He did not tell her that the exhausted have no right to a rest. Begin again with whatever you can honestly offer. A decade. A minute. A kind word you do not feel. He knows the difference

between refusal and poverty.

A practice for today

Reduce the plan. Do the smallest merciful thing in front of you, and go to bed without judging the whole year.

A short prayer

Jesus, on the dry days I still place my weight on You. Stay with me in the silence.

Chapter 15

What I have seen

Observations from parish and hospital life.

I have seen mercy change the air in a room without changing the diagnosis. I have seen a man who had been away from Confession for more than fifty years weep as if a window had been opened in a house that had been shut since his youth. I have seen a family who had no sentences left sit down and let a short Chaplet do the talking for them.

I have also seen mercy that had no words at all. There have been bedsides in South Wales where I have cried with a family and have not trusted myself to speak. The machine is still making its noises, or has just stopped. Someone is holding a hand. There is nothing useful to add, and adding something would only be a way of protecting myself from the room. In those minutes I have learned that mercy can be tears that stay. Jesus does not always send a priest into a ward to explain. Sometimes He sends him to be quiet and not to leave.

I have seen the same Lord in the eyes of the sick, looking back without a sermon. I have been glad, in those moments, to be allowed to stand there at all. Hospital chaplaincy has taught me that the message of the Diary is not a decoration for people who

already pray. It is a rope thrown toward people who cannot pray, and toward the people who love them.

What I have seen is not a proof that every story ends gently. Some rooms remain hard. Mercy does not tidy the world. It refuses to let the world be abandoned. That is the only observation I trust enough to write down.

A practice for today

Remember one ordinary scene of mercy you have already seen, and thank God for it by name.

A short prayer

Thank You for the mercy I have seen and for the mercy I have received. Keep me quiet enough to notice both.

Chapter 16

A simple daily plan

How to begin living this tomorrow.

If you want a plan that can survive an ordinary week, keep it smaller than your ambition. In the morning, before the news, say Jesus, I trust in You, once, slowly. At some point in the day, do one hidden kind act that costs a little. At three o'clock, or as near as you can, remember the Passion for the length of a single honest minute. In the evening, if you can, pray the Chaplet, or even one decade, for the dying and for your own sins. Once a month, go to Confession. On Sunday, receive Communion as a person who knows they are being fed, not as a person collecting a stamp.

That is the whole plan. It will not impress anyone who measures holiness by the number of pages read. It will, if it is repeated, look very like the life Jesus asked from a sister who spent her days at a gate.

You may wish to add one further yes, which the next chapter describes. You may wish to let a small association remind you, once a day, of a dying person who has a first name and who needs seven minutes. The plan does not depend on that yes. The plan is already enough to begin tomorrow.

A practice for today

Tomorrow morning, begin the simple plan. Do not wait for a better version of yourself.

A short prayer

Jesus, I trust in You with this ordinary day. Let mercy fit inside it.

Chapter 17

A seven-minute yes

The SOS Divine Mercy Chaplet Association.

There is a small association, coordinated from a Catholic parish in South Wales, that exists for one reason. It exists so that the Chaplet Jesus taught Faustina will be said each day for a particular dying person, by name.

The idea is taken straight from the Diary. In passage 1565 Jesus says to Faustina, My daughter, help Me to save a certain dying sinner. Say the chaplet that I have taught you for him. She began to pray. She saw the man in terrible struggle. His guardian angel was defending him and seemed almost powerless. While she said the Chaplet she saw Jesus as He is shown in the image. The rays from His Heart covered the sick man. The powers of darkness fled. The man died in peace. Faustina understood, she wrote, how important the Chaplet is for the dying. It appeases the anger of God.

The SOS Divine Mercy Chaplet Association tries to take that page out of the book and put it into the week. Members make a simple promise. They will pray one Chaplet each day, which takes about seven minutes. Each day they receive one message — by email, by WhatsApp, or by text if they live in the United Kingdom

— containing the first name of a dying person. They do not need to reply to the message. They pray, as soon as they reasonably can, for that soul. If the message arrives at work, they pray when work allows. There is only one name a day. There is not a flood of requests.

What surprises people when they first hear of it is the number. Many members, at the time of writing some two hundred and seventy, pray for the same dying person on the same day. That is the point. Jesus did not ask Faustina to pray for a crowd of anonymous souls in that vision. He asked her to help Him save a certain sinner. The association tries to keep that particularity. One name. Many voices. Seven minutes.

The work is coordinated through Our Lady of Margam Catholic Church, in the Archdiocese of Cardiff- Menevia. It is not a new doctrine and it is not a club with badges. It is a way of making sure that someone who is dying today is not left without the prayer Jesus asked for. You can read the questions people usually ask, and you can ask to join, at soschaplet.com. Before you say yes, the site asks you to consider whether you can keep the seven minutes. That question is a kindness. A promise that lasts a week and then dies of embarrassment helps no one.

If you cannot join, you can still do the work quietly. Pray the Chaplet today for the dying whose names you will never know. The association is only one ordinary way of answering a request

that was first spoken in a convent corridor in 1930s Poland. The request itself is larger than any website. It is the request of a Lord who does not want the last hour of a life to be fought without help.

A practice for today

Read the simple questions at soschaplet.com. If you can give seven minutes a day, consider joining. If you cannot, pray one Chaplet today for someone who is dying.

A short prayer

Jesus, for the sake of Your sorrowful Passion, have mercy on the dying whose names we are given, and on those whose names we will never know.

Further pages

For readers who want to go a little further

The nine days, and the last day that surprises us

Jesus asked Faustina to say the Chaplet for nine days before the Feast, beginning on Good Friday. He also gave her a novena in which, on each day, a different group of souls is brought to His Heart. Many people know that such a novena exists and have never heard who is prayed for on which day. The list is worth knowing, because it teaches the width of mercy.

On the first day she was told to bring all mankind, especially sinners. On the second, the souls of priests and religious. On the third, the faithful. On the fourth, those who do not believe in God and those who do not yet know Jesus. On the fifth, the separated brethren. On the sixth, the meek and humble, and the souls of children. On the seventh, people who venerate the mercy of Jesus and spread its honour. On the eighth, the souls in purgatory. On the ninth, the lukewarm.

The last group surprises readers. We expect the novena to end with the great saints or with the dying. It ends with the lukewarm, because their half-heartedness wounded Him in a particular way. A parish that prays this novena is forced, on the last day, to pray for people who look very like ourselves on an ordinary Tuesday: baptised, tired, not hostile, not on fire. Mercy that cannot reach the lukewarm will not reach the rest of the house either.

You do not have to wait for Good Friday to use the pattern. In an ordinary week you can take one group a day and hold them at three o'clock. Monday for sinners, Tuesday for priests, and so on. The point is not to complete a chart. The point is to let your prayer be wider than your family and your opinions.

How the Diary reached us — and why it was nearly silenced

The Diary was not published as a tidy book in her lifetime. Faustina wrote in notebooks, under obedience, often in poor health. After her death the pages had to be guarded, copied, and eventually translated. Some early translations into French and Italian flattened her Polish or made her sound stranger than she was. Rome, reading those versions and unable to check the originals easily while Poland lived under political constraint, chose to stop the promotion of the devotion in the forms she had proposed. That was the notification of 6 March 1959.

It is important to say what the notification was and what it was not. It was not a declaration that Faustina had been a fraud. It was a brake on a devotion whose papers the Holy See could not then verify with confidence. Brakes in the Church are sometimes later released. This one was. Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, as Archbishop of Krakow, opened the informative process on her life and virtues on 21 October 1965, with encouragement from the same office that had been cautious. The acts went to Rome. On 15 April 1978 the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declared the old notification no longer binding. On 12 July 1979 the Marians received a further letter: there was no impediment to spreading the devotion in the authentic forms proposed by Sister Faustina.

Six months after the notification was lifted, the Archbishop of Krakow became Pope. In 1980 he published the encyclical Dives in Misericordia, Rich in Mercy. He later said that from the beginning of his ministry in Rome he considered this message his special task. In 1993 he beatified Faustina. On 30 April 2000 he canonised her and gave the whole Church Divine Mercy Sunday. A girl from Glogowiec, with three years of school, had become the first saint of the new millennium.

This history is not a curiosity for specialists. It tells ordinary readers that the Church can be slow and still be a mother. It tells us that a true message may have to live in kitchens for a while. It tells us that translations matter, and that prayer in one's own language is not a second-best. And it tells us that the devotion we now take for granted was nearly silenced. If we treat it casually, we have not understood the cost of its arrival.

Questions people actually ask

People ask whether the promises of the Feast are a guarantee of heaven no matter how they live. The Church does not understand any promise of Christ as a way of avoiding conversion. Confession and Communion on that Sunday are themselves acts of conversion. A person who receives them while planning to keep a grave sin is not honouring the Feast. A person who comes with real sorrow and real trust is doing exactly what Jesus asked.

People ask whether they must use a particular image. They must not treat a painter as a sacrament. They may use a decent image that shows what Faustina was told to have painted: the Lord, the rays, the signature of trust. The first canvas is in Vilnius. The loved canvas of Hyla is in Krakow. Copies of both have fed prayer on every continent.

People ask whether they may say the Chaplet for a person who has already died. The Church prays for the dead in every Mass. The Chaplet can be said for the same intention. Faustina was also told to bring the souls in purgatory to His Heart on the eighth day of the novena. Prayer for the dead is not a rumour. It is an old mercy.

People ask what to do when a family member thinks the whole devotion is sentimental. Do not argue them into it. Keep the Hour without a speech. Be easier to live with. Sentimentality is a real

danger, and the best answer to it is a life that has become more truthful and more kind. If the devotion is making you less patient at home, you are not yet practising the three ways.

People ask whether a priest may recommend the Chaplet to someone who has been away from the Church for years. Yes. Jesus said that priests would recommend it to sinners as a last hope. A last hope is not a substitute for Confession. It is often the path that leads a person back to Confession. Offer both, in that order of gentleness.

People ask how to keep the Hour at work when three o'clock is the busiest time. Jesus already answered. A brief instant, where you happen to be, is enough. You do not need to leave the till. You need to remember.

People ask whether they should read the whole Diary. If they can, yes, slowly, not as a thrill and not as a quarry for quotations. If they cannot, this present book and the Church's liturgy on the Sunday after Easter are already enough to begin living the message. The Diary is a well. It is not a gate that must be passed before a person is allowed to trust God.

The Pope who would not let the message die

Saint John Paul II's encyclical on the Father who is rich in mercy is sometimes left on a shelf while the Chaplet is said in the porch. The two belong together. The Pope wrote as a pastor who had seen war, occupation, and the inside of a dying century. He wrote that the world had become very good at talking about justice and less good at talking about mercy, and that justice without mercy becomes cold.

He also wrote that mercy is not a soft alternative to truth. It is truth that leans down. When an ordinary Catholic keeps the Hour, says the Chaplet for the dying, and decides not to humiliate a person at home, that Catholic is living the encyclical without having to quote it. The Pope would not have minded. He had learned the message in Krakow, in the same air where Faustina had died, and he wanted it to reach people who would never read a papal document.

A small book like this one is written in that spirit. The high teaching is for the Church. The kitchen is where the teaching either becomes flesh or remains paper.

A page for the bedside

A few words especially for those who will use this book near a bed. You may have very little time. You may be afraid of saying the wrong thing. You may be the one in the bed.

If you are the visitor, sit down if you can. Standing makes the visit feel like an inspection. Say the person's name. Ask if they would like a short prayer. If they say yes, the Chaplet or even one decade is enough. If they say no, stay anyway for a minute and let silence be a kind of mercy. Do not explain the illness to them. They know more about it than you do.

If you are the one who is ill, you are allowed to pray badly. You are allowed to fall asleep in the middle of a bead. You are allowed to be angry and still to hold a crucifix. Communion brought to the house or to the ward is the same Christ as on the feast. Ask for it. If a priest can also bring the sacrament of the sick, ask for that too. It is not a signal that hope has ended. It is oil on a body that belongs to God.

If death is near, the Church is not embarrassed. She has prayers for that hour. The promise Faustina recorded — that Christ would stand as Merciful Saviour beside the dying when the Chaplet is said — is a promise the family can lean on when they have no other strength. Say the beads. Say the name. Then let the nurses do the work that is theirs. Mercy includes not getting in the

way.

Lines for a pocket

Short words from the Diary, with a little explanation

Some lines from the Diary are short enough to live in a pocket. They are given here not as trophies, but as sentences you can take into a day that has no room for a chapter.

Tell the world of My mercy. The flames of mercy are burning Me. I want to pour them out upon souls. That is Diary 1074, more or less as she heard it. The surprising word is burning. Mercy is not cool in this book. It is a fire that wants somewhere to go. When you feel nothing, remember that the fire is His, not yours.

My child, all your sins have not wounded My Heart as painfully as your present lack of trust. Diary 1486. It is a hard line. It is also a kind one, because it tells us what He wants most. He can work with sinners who come. He is blocked by people who will not believe that they may come.

You are to show mercy to your neighbours always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse or abstain from it. Diary 742. Always and everywhere is the sentence that turns a feast into a life. If you remember only one number from this book, remember that one.

At three o’clock, implore My Mercy, especially for sinners, and if only for a brief moment immerse yourself in My Passion. Diary

1320. The brief moment is the door for busy people. Use it.

I will refuse nothing to the soul that makes a request of Me in virtue of My Passion. Still 1320. The request must lean on the Passion, not on our worthiness. That is why the Chaplet is shaped as an offering of Christ, not as a list of our merits.

Not in the beauty of the colour, nor of the brush, is the greatness of this image, but in My grace. She wept over Kazimirowski's first painting. He answered her with this. It is a word for every imperfect prayer in this book.

Even the most hardened sinner, if he recites this chaplet only once, will receive grace from My infinite mercy. Diary 687. Once. The line is for priests at bedsides and for families who think it is too late to begin.

When they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the Merciful Saviour. Diary 1541. This is why the beads belong near the oil.

Souls who spread the honour of My mercy I shield through their entire life as a tender mother her infant, and at the hour of death I will not be a Judge for them, but the Merciful Saviour. Diary 1075. Spreading can be a card left in a waiting room. It does not have to be a tour.

The prayer most pleasing to Me is prayer for the conversion of sinners. The loss of each soul plunges Me into mortal sadness. Diary 1397. If your prayer has become only a list of your own needs, add one name that is not your own.

Jesus loves hidden souls. A hidden flower is the most fragrant. She wrote that about her own life in the kitchen. It is a word for people who will never be asked to speak at a conference.

I want to be completely transformed into Your mercy and to be Your living reflection. Diary 163. That is not a feeling. It is a vocation small enough for Tuesday.

Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy. Diary 699. Peace is not first a political technique. It is a turning. The turning can begin in one house.

If a soul does not exercise mercy somehow or other, it will not obtain My mercy on the day of judgment. The same family of entries as 742. Somehow or other. The phrase is almost homely. Somehow is enough to start.

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world. The Trisagion at the end of the Chaplet is older than Faustina. She was given a prayer that already belonged to the East and the West. Mercy is older than our movement.

Jezu, ufam Tobie. Jesus, I trust in You. Keep these last. If all the other lines fall out of the pocket, keep these.

Seven ordinary days

A way of living the book through one week

A week is a better teacher than a theory. What follows is not a law. It is a way of letting the sixteen chapters become seven days that an ordinary person might actually live. If a day fails, the week is not ruined. Tuesday does not depend on Monday having been perfect.

Monday often arrives with a list. Before the list, say the sentence once. Then choose the person who will be hardest to meet before noon, and decide in advance that your first word to them will not be a correction. That is a small deed of the mouth. At three o'clock, even if you are in a queue or on a road, remember the abandonment of Christ and ask mercy for priests, because Monday is when many of them sit in empty offices and wonder whether anything they said on Sunday remained. In the evening, do not rehearse the day as a trial. Name one mercy you received. If you cannot name one, ask to see tomorrow more clearly.

Tuesday is a good day for work. Do one task that is usually avoided, without announcing it. Honesty at work often looks like this: not adding a little extra blame to a colleague in a meeting. If you pray the Chaplet at all this week, Tuesday is a fair day to say it for people who do not believe, or who believe and have walked away. Jesus put them on the fourth day of the novena. They are

not a problem to be solved. They are people to be carried.

Wednesday sits in the middle and often feels grey. Grey days are when the Hour matters most, because nothing else in the day is asking to be remembered. Keep the brief instant. If you can visit someone, or write a message that is not a forward of other people's words, do that. A parish midweek Mass, if there is one, is a quiet place to remember that Communion is not only a Sunday event. Faustina's sadness that souls treat the Lord as a dead object can be answered by one attentive Wednesday.

Thursday has an old Christian memory of the priesthood and of the Eucharist. Pray for the priest who will stand at your altar this Sunday, by name if you know it. If you have been delaying Confession, Thursday is a better day than the Saturday crush. Mercy toward your own soul includes not leaving the washing until there is no time to do it well. If you are a priest reading this, Thursday may be the day to look again at the way you speak in the confessional. Jesus promised to anoint words that proclaim mercy. Anointing is for speech that has been prayed, not only prepared.

Friday remembers the Passion even when it is not Lent. If you can say the Chaplet today, say it for the dying of your town. You will not know most of their names. God does. If you can make a sacrifice that no one sees — a kindness, a silence, a gift — let it be joined to the Hour. Faustina wrote that suffering, when it is loved, crystallises love. She did not mean that we should go looking for

pain. She meant that the pain already in the week can be used, instead of only being endured.

Saturday is often a domestic day: shopping, children, the house, the graveyard visit that Polish families still know how to make. Mercy at home belongs here. Share a meal without the news on. Bless a child if you are a parent, even a grown child who would smile at the old gesture. If there is a wound in the family, Saturday afternoon is a possible hour to speak one true kind sentence that has been avoided since Christmas. Do not attempt the whole history. Attempt one sentence.

Sunday is the Lord's day, and twice a year it is also the Feast of Mercy. On an ordinary Sunday it is still the fountain. Go to Mass as a person who needs mercy, not as a person who is doing the Church a favour. After Mass, let one conversation in the porch be for someone other than your usual circle. If the image is displayed, look at the signature long enough to mean it. Then go home and let the afternoon be a little less crowded than the rest of the week, if life allows. Rest is also a mercy, and it is one that many devout people refuse.

At the end of seven days you will have failed some of this. That is not a reason to wait for a cleaner Monday in a cleaner month. It is a reason to say the sentence again. Jesus I trust in You. The week that starts after a failed week is the week Faustina would have recognised. She knew kitchens. She knew tiredness. She knew the

clock. She knew that mercy is not a perfect record. It is a door that opens again at three.

A letter to the reader

Dear reader, I do not know the room in which you are holding this book. It may be a kitchen. It may be a ward. It may be a chair at the end of a day that did not go well. The message you have been reading was first written in notebooks by a sister who knew all of those rooms in her own way.

You are not asked to become impressive. You are asked to trust Christ, and to refuse to live a day without some small mercy in it. If you can do that tomorrow, the book has done its work. The rest will be given as it is needed. May the Hour find you wherever you are.

And may you never be ashamed to say, with the words she was taught to write under the image, Jesus, I trust in You.

Short prayers from the Diary

Said simply, for ordinary hours

From the Diary, said simply. Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world. For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world. Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You. Jesus, I trust in You. Jezu, ufam Tobie. At three o'clock. You died for us, Jesus, and mercy was opened wide.

For the sake of Your sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us, on the dying, and on the whole world. Jesus, I trust in You. A short offering in dryness. I cannot feel this today. I place the day in Your hands.

Have mercy on me and on the person I find hard to love. Jesus, I trust in You.

Mercy in one ordinary day

A practical checklist

Mercy in one ordinary day Morning. Say once: Jesus, I trust in You. Offer the day as it is. One chosen act. Deed, or word, or prayer. Done on purpose for someone who needs it.

Three o'clock. A brief instant. Remember the Passion. Ask mercy for sinners and the dying. If you can. A Chaplet, even one decade, for a name you know.

Evening. Thank, and tell the truth about the day. No long trial. Sleep. Once this week. Forgive one small thing you had planned to rehearse again. Once this month. Let one other person meet the message because of you, without an argument.

Acknowledgements

The numbered passages in this book follow the standard English edition of Saint Faustina's Diary, Divine Mercy in My Soul. The history of the 1959 notification and its lifting in 1978 follows the public record of the Holy See and the research of the Marians of the Immaculate Conception, who kept the message alive when it was not fashionable. The first image is the painting by Eugeniusz Kazimirowski in Vilnius; the widely loved later image is the offering of Adolf Hyła in Kraków.

Any pastoral stories are from ordinary parish and hospital life in South Wales and have been anonymised. Any errors that remain are the author's, and they are offered with the same request that sits at the end of so many of her pages: Jesus, I trust in You.

A word of thanks

These pages were written so that the message of mercy could sit in an ordinary room. If they have helped you, and if you are able to leave a small gift, it will be received with gratitude. It will help the pastoral work of a small parish in South Wales, and it will let the next book be written.

Please do so only if you wish, and only if you can. There is no charge for reading. If you can help, I will be grateful.

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