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THE CALL INCLUDED IN THE DIVINE MERCY MESSAGE GIVEN TO SAINT FAUSTINA—THEOLOGICAL AND SYMBOLIC DIMENSION

A b s t r a c t. The article is an analysis of the proclamation delivered to the Church through St. Faustina in respect of God's calls contained in it. First, based on the picture of Jesus Merciful, it is inferred that there is a call to trust in God's Goodness and Mercy, to repent, to convert and accept the forgiveness of sins in the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. Afterwards, the Holy Sacraments are explained with reference to the mystery of the Redemption. The Holy Mass, as a sacrifice that makes present the Sacrifice of the Cross in an unbloody manner, gives rise to a call to its participants to unite with Jesus crucified and resurrected. In the last part, the author analyses the call to preach to the world the proclamation of Divine Mercy, to say a propitiatory prayer for sins and to fulfil the works of mercy.

Key words: Message of Divine Mercy; call; trust; conversion; sacraments; answer of love.

The opinion on private revelations in apologetics has been that they are not important for the faithful due to the fact that their content does not add anything significant to the public revelation which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the last Word of Father and brings the full truth about God to the world. However, some theologians of the 20th century began to attribute more significance to private revelations because they found God's revelation in them. According to this approach, private revelations reflect God's interference with the world and the history of mankind (even if it is Mary or some saint who appears, because they appear only upon God's con-

sent) and certain individuals are chosen to spread God's message to others, even to all God's people.

As early as before the Second Vatican Council René Laurentin wrote that private revelations are meant to remind people about Christ of the Gospel who lives, is present and works. He claimed that they are a preface to eschatic times where "the ultimate recovery of all" in the common resurrection will be completed, in which all that is sensual and visible will be fully embraced by God's grace.¹ Thus he admitted that private revelations let the Christian come back to Christ of the Gospel in a living, existential way and that they enliven her or his hope for encounter with Christ at the end of her or his life.

This standpoint about private revelations is reflected in the Catechism of the Catholic Church in which we can read that "it is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history."² The stress on the experiential moment of Christ's definitive revelation is extremely important for spiritual theology which looks for ways of deepening spiritual life of the whole Church and its individual members—in which process private revelations may be helpful.

This paper is aimed at showing the value of revelations granted to Saint Sister Faustina and the call for the Church and the world of our times included therein. The "work of mercy", which was initiated with these revelations in the Church by placing the image of the merciful Jesus in the window at the Gate of Dawn in Vilnius on the first Sunday after Easter, was bound up, as requested by Christ, with the 1900th Jubilee of the Redemption of the world.³ It was not only an external coincidence but a deep internal bond: "On the cross—reminded Jesus in His words directed at Sister Faustina—the fountain of My mercy was opened wide by the lance for all souls—no one have I excluded!" Next, Jesus instructed her as follows: "My daughter, write that the greater the misery of a soul, the greater its right to My mercy; [urge] all souls to trust in the unfathomable abyss of My mercy, because I want to save them all" (D. 1182). This work of mercy is thus anchored, on the one hand, at reminding the world of the 20th century about the source of redemption springing from the saving Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross and, on

¹ René LAURENTIN, *Lourdes. Documents authentiques*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1957), no. 99.

² No. 67 (Poznań: Pallottinum, 1994), 31.

³ *Diary of Saint M. Faustina Kowalska (hereinafter referred to as Diary or D.)*, no. 89 (Stockbridge, 2005).

the other hand, at calling people to come closer to Him with trust so that they can be saved.

1. TOWARDS THE SOURCE OF DIVINE MERCY IN THE CHURCH—SACRAMENTS

Sister Faustina experienced her relation with God within the Holy Church which, as she confirms, “assured her of the truths of faith and watched lest she wandered” (D. 1489). Principally, she perceived the Church as the Mystic Body of Christ which is ontic in form—the organism with Christ as the Head (D. 481) and the faithful members as its living members (D. 1363). Saint Paul used this phrase to express both the living bond between the baptized and God within Christ (1 Cor 12:12-27) and the existential bond of all the faithful who experience their unity with Christ owing to the Holy Spirit. This Spirit, being an internal principle of such a Church’s unity and the source of gift for its members, makes it possible for every faithful to bring their individual gifts for the sake of building the community Church (1 Cor 12:12–30). Various functions, tasks and charisms realized by apostles, prophets, teachers and other faithful contribute to keep the whole ecclesial body alive. However, Sister Faustina looked at her bond with the Church also from a different perspective—her monastic vocation. She wanted to give such the answer to Christ’s merciful love which would make her capable of being the most useful for the Church (D. 1363).

Her references to the Church as the Mother were even more frequent. This term stems from Saint Cyprian who stated that “he can no longer have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother.”⁴ Motherhood of the Church (Latin: *Ecclesia*) is firstly represented by the fact that it constantly gives birth to new members through God’s word and holy sacraments. Secondly, it facilitates their spiritual growth. In the first case, it expresses an essential causality of becoming a Christian; in the second case, somewhat a mediation for the sake of spiritual growth and apostolic fruitfulness. Principally, Sister Faustina means that the Church’s role is to educate the faithful and lead them to the fullness of Divine life (D. 197; 749). Similarly to the function of generation for a life of faith, which is combined by Sister

⁴ *De unitate Ecclesiae*, 6.

Faustina with the sacrament of baptism, the function of growth in holiness and apostolic fruitfulness is combined with the sacraments of penance and Eucharist exercised by the ministers of the Church.

These qualifications of Church mentioned in the Diary of Saint Faustina and their relationship with the sacramental character of the Church may seem insufficient, in particular nowadays, when it is described as the common sacrament of salvation, as People of God who are the extension of the history of the chosen nation, with Jesus Christ as the final destination of its journey, or as the community, communion between the people stemming from union with God in Christ with the power of the Holy Spirit by means of faith, hope and love. However, all mystics experience the reality of the Church and grace streaming from its sacraments to a greater extent than they can express it. A similar case was that of Saint Sister Faustina.

1.1. Through the image of merciful Jesus to holy sacraments

The work of mercy which is fulfilled in the Church by God by the mediation of Merciful Christ appearing to Sister Faustina was initiated in the revelation on February 22, 1931. The Saint describes it as follows: “In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand [was] raised in the gesture of blessing, the other was touching the garment at the breast. From beneath the garment, slightly drawn aside at the breast, there were emanating two large rays, one red, the other pale. In silence I kept my gaze fixed on the 36 Lord; my soul was struck with awe, but also with great joy. After a while, Jesus said to me, Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You. I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and [then} throughout the world. I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish. I also promise victory over [its] enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death. I Myself will defend it as My own glory” (D. 47–48).

The image which Sister Faustina was supposed to paint in accordance with the revelation and which was painted by the painter E. Kazimierowski in Vilnius shows the resurrected Jesus, which can be assumed based on His white garment. Rev. Michał Sopoćko saw in it the resurrected Jesus at the moment of appearing to disciples in the Cenacle when He said “Peace be with you” and establishing the sacrament of penance, i.e. the sacrament of

Divine mercy (John 20:19 and further).⁵ However, the puzzling thing is that Jesus' gaze from this image is—as Jesus declares himself—like a “gaze from the cross” (D. 326), which means it is a gaze marked by grief and pain. The reason for this pain, great suffering which “is tearing at His insides”, is indifference or “distrust on the part of souls” [toward Jesus—Author's note], including that of chosen souls,⁶ despite [His] inexhaustible love for them”, having little faith in His kindness, mercy shown on the cross (D. 50). “Oh, how much I am hurt by a soul's distrust!” (D. 300), says Jesus. We need to note that Divine love in Jesus Christ tends to be vulnerable. His heart is the Heart of the incarnate Word, The One who in the Revelation to Saint John was called Lamb which was slaughtered and still alive (Rev 5:12).

Taking into account the lifestyle of people living nowadays who are addressed by the merciful Jesus by means of his apostle, we may assume that contemporary people show indifference toward God because they place themselves and their affairs in the center of their lives. In most cases, they distrust Jesus because they trust themselves too much, rely on their own wisdom and scientific, technical and IT achievements, so that they close themselves in the temporal domain. Without the reference to God, people lose the sense of sin and thus distrust Divine mercy. As a consequence, they don't ask for it. However, they still cannot find fulfillment. Instead, they feel frustrated and disappointed. Jesus' gaze and message from the image showing His merciful heart is directed to this indifferent human who distrusts God (D. 50; 177).

Even the first, quick look at this image is enough to perceive its dynamics: the resurrected Jesus addresses the contemporary people, in particular sinners, who are in danger of losing salvation, and Sister Faustina is the way to send this message. A special dynamics is given to this image by the fact that Jesus desires the salvation of all souls passionately (D. 186), saying the following words: “The flames of mercy are burning Me—clamoring to be spent; I want to keep pouring them out upon souls; souls just don't want to believe in My goodness” (D. 177). The Lord Jesus mentions repeatedly the flames of “mercy” (D. 50; 1074) or “flames of compassion” (D. 1190) which burn Him. Thus He shows how big His love towards people is. Pity and compassion arise in the Heart of Savior because He, as our Brother, treats

⁵ Michał SOPOČKO, “Kult Serca Jezusowego a kult Miłosierdzia Bożego” [The Cult of Jesus' Heart and the Cult of Divine Mercy], *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 49(1957), 3:453–454.

⁶ This refers to those who are called to live a monastic life.

our misery as His own and thus grieves over it.⁷ His Heart is “the ardent fire of love” radiating towards people with the aim to help them permanently, to save them. On the outside, this merciful love shows only its rays; inside it is like a burning fire. “Oh, how great is the fire of purest love which burns in Your Most Sacred Heart!” (D. 304), writes Sister Faustina.

This confession made by Jesus shows His complaint about the human who misunderstands freedom and rejects God’s goodness and merciful love. This complaint was based on the fact that the human sticks to sin and does not want to embark on a way of real freedom which consists in accepting the gift of redemption from Jesus, which means victory over all evil for the human person. This message about mercy which is the result of revelations to Saint Faustina was interpreted by John Paul II in the perspective of the 20th century and a “dramatic accumulation of evil” which took place along this time, i.e. World War II and cruelties which were brought by totalitarian systems. The pope says that “it seems that Christ wanted to show us that the Divine mercy puts finally an end to the evil with reference to which the human person is the perpetrator and the victim.”⁸ Mercy offered by God to the sinful and lost man should be understood both in the perspective of a personal history of redemption and as that happening in the common history.

Even the figure of Jesus from the image, shown in relation to the human looking for a deeper sense of life may provoke reflections and questions regarding the right meaning of this image and draw attention to God. The characteristic of all saint pictures is that if their content is read, they refer the one who looks at them to the transcendence, to God. Their influence on the mentality of people and their power to change it is much stronger than that of notions. Nowadays there is no need to discuss the necessity of contact with a religious image for people as they are exposed to the stream of multiple pictures from television, Internet, illustrated magazines and advertisements. Many of them are superficial, even negative and they also influence the moral and spiritual attitude of people. Jesus demands reverence for this image and promises “victory over enemies”, in particular in the hour of death, for those who will fulfill this demand and expects that the faithful turn to Him through this image and that they are subject to his saving action. In this respect, it is not only the private reverence for this image, but also in-

⁷ SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, STh II-II, q. 30, a. 2.

⁸ JOHN PAUL II, *Pamięć i tożsamość. Rozmowy na przełomie tysiącleci* [Memory and Identity. Conversations at the Dawn of Millennium] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2005), 61.

cluding it in the liturgy of the Church, in particular in the Feast of Divine Mercy. Jesus wants to bless and grant grace to those who address Him with faith and full trust: “By means of this image I shall be granting many graces to souls; so, let every soul have access to it” (D. 570). The right hand of Jesus, ready to bless people, confirms this desire.

„The two rays—says Jesus—denote Blood and Water. The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls... These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross” (D. 299).

The note about the Jesus’ Heart opened by a lance makes it necessary to look back at the historical context of this event described by Saint John. The Fourth Gospel abounds in versatile symbolic which shows bonds between all that is seen and the immaterial, spiritual, Divine world, revealed by Christ.⁹ The signs showing this deeper reality, i.e. the glory of Jesus (John 2:11) were supposed to lead those who see them to believe in Jesus who is the Son of God, the Messiah, sent to the world (John 9:35–38; 20:30–31). From the Evangelist’s description of the above scene we find out that when Jesus died, the soldiers “[...] did not break His legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out” (John 19:33–34). This is supplemented by the words of personal testimony given by the beloved disciple standing at the cross of his Master: “He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth” (John 19:35). The Evangelist assures strongly that the two facts are true: the first—that the Roman soldiers did not break Jesus’ legs as he was already dead, and the second—that one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side, and at once blood and water came out. And with reference to the second fact, he cites the prophet Zechariah: “They will look on the one whom they have pierced” (Zech 12:10).¹⁰ It is worth noting that

⁹ Donatien MOLLAT, *La parole et l’Esprit. Exégèse spirituelle*, vol. I (Paris, 1980), 121.

¹⁰ The Prophet announces the end times here, in which Judah will win and Jerusalem will gain a special position. “And on that day—says God through the prophet—I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, when they look on the him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo” (Zech 12:9–11). Then God will raise up the spirit of conversion in his people so that they will mourn over their sinful past and for the Mysterious King-Shepherd “whom they have pierced”

the Evangelist uses the plural verb in this place, “will look”, and uses the future tense. When he uses “look”, he does not mean only the soldiers present at the Jesus’ cross or the Jews who crucified him, but to all sinners. Thus the attention of the faithful is drawn to the pierced Jesus’ side through which the eternal source of salvation is opened.

When the resurrected Jesus shows Himself to Sister Faustina as the source of pale and red rays, he refers to “the very depths of [His] tender mercy”, and the moment of gushing forth this source is the time of his Passion. Its culmination was the death of Jesus, confirmed by piercing his side, combined with offering new life to the world by the incarnated Son of God, in accordance with the words written in the Gospel of John: “one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out” (John 19:34). The phrase “at once” seems to reflect the simultaneousness of the gift of new life for the world with the moment of Jesus’ death. In this place the Evangelist does not mention the pierced «Heart» but a pierced «side» of Jesus, because he refers to the paschal drama. Whereas Jesus Christ, when talking to Sister Faustina as the resurrected, spiritualised Jesus living an upper life, refers to His pierced «Heart» on the cross, because he sees it from a different viewpoint. He talks about His love which reached its peak on the cross. Sometimes Jesus appeared to Sister Faustina on the cross, as e.g. on July 15, 1937, when she saw the Sacred Blood flowing from His hands, feet and side and she heard the following words: “All this is for the salvation of souls. Consider well, My daughter, what you are doing for their salvation” (D. 1184). This happened when He wanted to make her similar to

who is probably the future Messiah announced by the prophet. Ignace de la POTTERIE, “«Volgeranno lo sguardo a colui che hanno trafitto». Sangue di Cristo e oblatività (Gv 19, 37)”, in *Il mistero del Sangue di Cristo e l’esperienza cristiana*, ed. A. Triacca, vol. 1 (Rome: Edizioni Pia Unione Preziosissimo Sangue, 1987), 18. The prophet’s announcement regarding Jerusalem is supplemented by the prophet in 13:1 “On that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity” and in 14:8–9: “On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And the Lord will become king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one.” According to de la Potterie, there is justification for the reference of these three fragments (Zech 12:10; 13:1; 14:8–9) to Jesus on the cross. The flow of rivers of living water announced by Jesus (John 7:38), and this He said about the Holy Spirit (John, 7:39), coming from the interior of Jesus was accomplished on the cross when His side—the new Temple—was opened. The direction of waters flowing to the east and west announced the universality of salvation in Jesus Christ which may be confirmed by the superscription written over the Crucified in Greek, Roman and Hebrew. *Ibid.*, 19.

Himself in his Passion. He recommended her the following: “[when] it seems to you that your suffering exceeds your strength, contemplate My wounds, and you will rise above human scorn and judgment” (D. 1184). Therefore Sister Faustina was contemplating Jesus’ side and other trails of His Passion. However, she saw Him much more often as the resurrected, worshipped Lord. When she was looking at Him, she did not see physical blood or water but “two large rays, one red, the other pale.” Water and Blood flowing from the Body of the resurrected Jesus have a spiritualised form of rays.¹¹

The deeper, theological-spiritual dimension of the image can be reached if we take its symbolic character into account. The image discussed, with regard to the message given in its central part, Jesus’ Heart, expresses a more important content than one can grasp at the first glance. We need to note the perceivable double symbolic movement in it: the one towards the Heart, pointed by the left hand of Jesus, and the one in the reverse direction, pointed by the two rays coming from the Jesus’ heart and directed at people. With the biblical interpretation in mind, the heart means home for a conscious, reasonable and free personality of a person, the place in which decisions are taken, the habitat of the unwritten law (Rom 2:15) and mysterious activity of God.¹² This is also true for the Jesus’ heart, coessential with the Word of God, which is home for Divinity and a symbol of divine and human love of Jesus for God and people.¹³ The Lord Jesus talks about “the very depths of [His] tender mercy” (D. 299) because the heart is a symbol of the spiritual inside of a person, person’s love.

In Saint Augustine’s view, the Church was symbolically announced by the image of Eve created from the Adam’s side. And the Church was created from the side of the sleeping Husband, i.e. Jesus Christ. The holy sacraments also gushed forth from the Savior’s side.¹⁴ As the visible signs which pro-

¹¹ Jacek SALIJ OP, “Teologia obrazu Pana Jezusa Miłosiernego” [Theology of the image of the Merciful Lord Jesus], in *Wobec tajemnicy Bożego miłosierdzia (Powołanie człowieka 8)* [Facing the mystery of Divine mercy (The call of the person 8)], ed. L. Balter S.A.C. (Poznań: Pallottinum, 1991), 218.

¹² Jean de FRAINE SI and Albert VANHOYE SI, “Serce” [Heart], in *Słownik Teologii Biblijnej* [Dictionary of Biblical Theology], ed. X. Léon-Dufour, trans. and compilation: K. Romaniuk (Poznań–Warszawa: Pallottinum), 871.

¹³ Cf. Litany to the Most Sacred Heart of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁴ SAINT AUGUSTIN, “Objaśnienie Ps. 103 (4), 6”, [Explanation to Ps. 103 (4), 6] in Id., *Objaśnienia Psalmów, Ps. 103-123* (Pisma Starochrześcijańskich Pisarzy vol. XLI) [Explanation of the Psalms, Ps. 103–123 (Works of Early Christian Writers)], vol. XLI, trans. J. Sulowski (Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1986), 61.

vide the invisible grace—according to Saint Thomas Aquinas—they extend the humanity of Christ in the Church.¹⁵ According to the explanation which Sister Faustina heard, the pale ray coming from the Heart of Jesus in the picture “stands for the Water which makes souls righteous.” Thus it is a symbol of Holy Baptism, i.e. sacrament granted in the name of the Holy Trinity in which pouring water onto a person makes this person justified, dead to sin, and gives this person a new life in Christ (Rom 6:11) as a member of the Church. Thus the baptized person is granted the gift of the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8; John 1:33), water becomes also the symbol of the Holy Spirit who comes from Jesus dying on the cross (John 19:30). His activity is effective in all sacraments. The pale ray is also a symbol of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation as the sinner will have the sins forgiven and will be reconciled with God and the Church (1 Thess 1:9; Luke 24:47). “The red ray [in the image] stands for the Blood which is the life of souls.” In the Gospel of John, Blood is the “symbol of the oblatory obedience of Jesus to His Father and His saving love for us,”¹⁶ offering His life, i.e. it is a symbol of the Eucharist in which the Christ’s paschal mystery is made present.

1.2. Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation: the call to accept the gift of Divine Mercy

Although Eucharist takes the central place in the spiritual life of Sister Faustina, the great importance in the message of mercy, given from Jesus and referring to all people, in particular to “poor sinners”, is given to the conversion to God and to penitence, the sacrament of penance. If Sister Faustina was chosen by God to tell the world about His mercy, does not it mean that the Saints are those who know best the “sin of the world”? They know how high price was paid for the redemption of each person, as they cooperate willingly with Christ for the salvation of others (D. 324).

What does the appearing Lord Jesus recommend to do in order to overcome the sin of the world, consisting in hatred toward God (D. 48), distrust to His goodness, indifference to His presence and grace? If we take into

¹⁵ Servais Théodore PINCKAERS, *Życie duchowe chrześcijanina według św. Tomasza z Akwinu i św. Pawła* [Spiritual life of a Christian according to Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Paul], trans. A. Fabiś (Pallottinum, 1998), 245.

¹⁶ Ignace de la POTTERIE, “«Volgeranno lo sguardo a colui che hanno trafitto». Sanguine di Cristo e oblatività (Gv 19, 37)”, paper quoted, 27.

account the fact that the lack of faith manifests itself in rejecting God's truth or distrusting it seriously, and hatred—in rejecting the goodness of God by a person,¹⁷ we see the sins against the Divine virtues, which point to the impudence of people who count on themselves and on their own strength. In order to tear the person out of these sins, Lord Jesus reminds us through Sister Faustina about the God's work of redemption, from the depths of which the Resurrected calls on people to open to His goodness and mercy. "My Heart overflows with great mercy for souls, and especially for poor sinners. If only they could understand that I am the best of Fathers to them and that it is for them that the Blood and Water flowed from My Heart as from a fount overflowing with mercy" (D. 367). As the Lord Jesus describes Himself as "the best of Fathers". He wants to rectify the falsified image of God in the contemporary people and change their attitude towards Him. He shows God as the Father of mercy and demands that the people embark on the way of conversion and openness to the grace which He served for them when He offered Himself on the cross in order to fulfill God's justice and propitiate Father. God's Mercy towards sinners is so great that Sister Faustina repeatedly calls Him "ocean of mercy" (D. 1319). He is so widely open for sinners that He pursues them along all their paths, and His Heart rejoices when they return to Him (D. 1728). At the same time, mercy is capable of renewing the person to the depths of their essence, regardless of how deep they fell or how much moral regression they have undergone. "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" (D. 1448). The wonder of Divine mercy is that even the person enslaved by the sin to the greatest extent, who can be described symbolically as a decaying corpse, may be raised from the dead to the life of grace, if only he or she turns trustfully to Christ. Jesus died for our sins (1 Cor 15:3) and thus reconciled us with God (Rom 5:10) so that every sinner can be granted the grace of new or more complete life from the source of redemption and experience the joy of being the adopted son of God. As the sinner is not treated here with severe justice but with mercy, the sacrament of penitence is called symbolically "the tribunal of mercy." We can see here a close relationship between this sacrament and God's saving work reaching its fulfillment in passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

¹⁷ THOMAS AQUINAS, STh II-II, q. 20. a.3.

In order to receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation in a dignified and fruitful way, it is necessary to have trust in merciful God, be humble, open and sincere towards the confessor in whom Christ Himself awaits a sinful person and acts in their soul through His Spirit (D. 113; 1602).

It is also important to be grateful for the gift of forgiveness and other graces. Jesus complained to Sister Faustina in particular about the ingratitude of chosen souls which, due to monastic consecration and living in accordance with the vowed evangelical counsels, are called to have a closer relationship with God. He said the following to her as though she was the representative of these souls: "I will reveal to you a secret of My Heart: what I suffer from chosen souls. Ingratitude in return for so many graces is My Heart's constant food, on the part of [such] a chosen soul. Their love is lukewarm, and My Heart cannot bear it; these souls force Me to reject them. Others distrust My goodness and have no desire to experience that sweet intimacy in their own hearts, but go in search of Me, off in the distance, and do not find Me. This distrust of My goodness hurts Me very much. If My death has not convinced you of My love, what will? Often a soul wounds Me mortally, and then no one can comfort Me. They use My graces to offend Me" (D. 580). Ingratitude of people toward God depends undoubtedly on how much they owe to Him. One's ingratitude to the other person for a small thing is not as significant as ingratitude for saving one's life. In the context of this sacrament, ingratitude of a person after being forgiven increases proportionally to the gravity of sins committed against God. The person who does not feel gratitude in their heart for the graces received from God feels a lukewarm love. The one who thanks God for these graces, grows in their love to Him and in their consequences, such as growing desire to be united with God, contemplating His Passion and «consoling» Him in it, "sweet intimacy [with Him] in their own hearts", reverence (Ps 69:10), etc. This is what Jesus wants for the «chosen souls» whom He wants to draw to a closer relationship with Him and regrets that they failed to deepen His passion and to discover His great love in it and the goodness resulting for the people from all His paschal mystery.

1.3. Eucharist and Eucharist adoration—the call for unification with the Crucified and the Resurrected

The message about the Divine mercy given to Sister Faustina should not be narrowed down only to completing a certain task. It is joined with her spiritual maturation to the increasing understanding of God's demands and to community with Him, based on the increasing openness to His grace. Undoubtedly, the greatest source of Divine grace is Eucharist, which includes Christ Himself, the One who gives this grace. What theology of this sacrament may be implied from the revelations given to Sister Faustina, so that, in the next step, we can define the resulting call for the people today, the call which was understood radically by the mystic?

We can understand it partially thanks to the vision of the Cenacle given to Sister Faustina on August 15, 1936. The moment of the vision when she was most deeply moved was when "Jesus raised His eyes to heaven and entered into a mysterious conversation with His Father. [...] His eyes were like two flames; His face was radiant, white as snow; His whole personage full of majesty, His soul full of longing. At the moment of Consecration, love rested satiated – the sacrifice fully consummated" (D. 684). This vision of Christ from the Cenacle is consistent in terms of contents with the beginning of the high priestly prayer of Jesus according to the fourth Gospel (John 17:1). In this prayer Jesus asks His Father that He, in the coming hour of passion and death which closes his earthly redemptive mission, glorifies Him with the glory of resurrection and adoration so that He can "give eternal life to all" people (John 17:2). This is not about coming back to the state which the Son of God had before Incarnation but about raising Him to participate in the heavenly glory in His humanity. This prayer was said during the Last Supper with enormous commitment, fervent love for Father and apostles, with readiness to make Himself a sacrifice for all (John 13:1). Jesus' eyes like "flames", the mirror of the soul, and face "radiant, white as snow" were the symbol of this pure and ardent love. This scene seems to announce the heavenly feast and the participation of the redeemed, entered into the internal relation between the Divine Persons. This is why Sister Faustina writes that "it is only in eternity that we shall really understand that moment." (D. 684). Believing that the sacrifice of Jesus was "fully consummated" in the Cenacle, Sister Faustina seems to stress Jesus' perfect obedience and love towards Father as the decisive moments for the «hour» of redemption. What will happen the following day is only "the external ceremony of death"—"external destruction" (D. 684). What is the meaning of these words? They mean that

the proceedings against Jesus, His passion and corporeal death imposed on Him are only something external in relation to the fact that God conceived and implemented the plan of salvation for people and that Jesus is the self-sacrifice who realizes this plan of love voluntarily, committing Himself into the hands of Father (Luke 23:46). Although many people thought that Jesus dies on the cross like a criminal, He accepted the death imposed on Him with pure love in order to save the world.

Sister Faustina shows Holy Mass as the great mystery of faith, the sacrifice of love during celebrating which the incarnated God becomes our gift. She sees “the [open—Author’s note] fountain of life gushing forth [...] for each soul” (D. 914). She sees it in close relationship with the Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection.

She noted the following words on February 2, 1937: “[...] today during Holy Mass I saw the Crucified Jesus. Jesus was nailed to the cross and was in great agony.” And she adds: “Oh, what awesome mysteries take place during Mass!” (D. 914). The sacrificial character of Holy Mass and its relation to the Christ’ offer on the cross was stressed strongly by the Council of Trent, which answered the charges formulated by Martin Luter and other Protestants. They claimed that the words about Christ, included in the Letter to the Hebrews, “offered once to bear the sins of many” (Heb 9:28), exclude any other saving offer in the Church, including the offer of Holy Mass.¹⁸ The Council of Trent justified the presence of the “visible offer” of Christ in the Church by the eternity of His Priesthood and the demands of the human nature. It was stated that Christ left the “visible offer” to the Church in order to “render the bloody offer present, although completed on the cross once, to be the permanent remembrance and provide us with its saving power of absolving sins which we commit every day.”¹⁹ However, when it comes to the relation between the offer on the cross and the offer of Holy Mass, the Council of Trent stated that “the same Christ who has been offered (Heb 9:27) bloodily on the altar of the cross is present and offered in the Divine Offer which takes place during Holy Mass in the bloodless way.”²⁰ The teachings of the Council of Trent about the sacrificial character of Eucharist

¹⁸ Edward OZOROWSKI, “Nauka Soboru Trydenckiego o Eucharystii” [Studies of the Council of Trent on Eucharist], *Studia Theologica Varsaviensia* 26(1988), 2:22.

¹⁹ Denz. 1739, *Breviarium Fidei. Wybór doktrynalnych wypowiedzi Kościoła* [Breviarium Fidei. A selection of doctrinal remarks of the Church] (hereinafter referred to as: BV), 319, compilation: S. Głowa and I. Bieda (Poznań: Księgarnia Św. Wojciecha, 2001), 412.

²⁰ Denz. 1743; BF 321.

were consolidated in the Church and confirmed among others by Pius XII in his Encyclical *Mediator Dei* in 1947.²¹

Mystics are granted the grace of a special participation in Eucharist, which enables them to experience its sacrificial dimension. They are aware of being present in Golgotha next to the cross of the Savior. Sister Faustina describes that she experienced the passion of Christ in her body in an invisible way many times (D. 759; 964; 1512) and was encouraged by Him not only to contemplate His passion but to unite with Him in these sufferings in order to save the sinners. Although the offer of Christ was sufficient to save the world objectively (cf. Heb 10:14), the participants of the mystic Body, based on their relationship with Christ, its Head, are called to undergo internal change and to offer their bodies “as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [their] spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1), i.e. to become similar to Him in sacrifice. Both the Church and the single soul are not only the passive recipients of redemption but as being wedded by Christ on the cross, are called to answer to His sacrificial love. Before the Christian is enabled by God to sacrifice themselves for the salvation of others, their answer to Divine love and sacrifice are the thanksgiving to God for His selfless sacrifice of the Son and the adoration of God in gratefulness for this sacrifice. Only then can the Christian be strengthened by the Holy Spirit and enabled to be similar to Christ in sacrifice. “Sacrifice is rather an answer of the creation which was granted grace to the Divine grace by means of the grace.”²² Sister Faustina was convinced that “where there is genuine virtue, there must be sacrifice as well [and] one’s whole life must be a sacrifice” (D. 1358). When she experienced her misery and nothingness, she knew well that “if God demands a sacrifice, He does not withhold His grace” (D. 1341). She knew also that not everyone is able to receive the Divine grace and this is why not everyone is granted it fully.

In 1934 when she was ill and thought about her death, she was asserted by Christ that she would not stay on earth for long and was instructed that He wanted her “last moments to be completely similar to [His]” because “when [He] was dying on the cross, He was not thinking about Himself, but about poor sinners, and He prayed for them to Father.” This revelation made it possible for her to understand, that “there is but one price at which souls

²¹ Denz. 3847; BV 341.

²² Gerhard Ludwig MÜLLER, “Ofiara eucharystyczna—wspólnota z ukrzyżowanym i zmar-twychwstałym Chrystusem” [Eucharistic Offer—community with the crucified and the resur-rected Christ], trans. S. Śledzianowski, *Świdnickie Studia Teologiczne*, 4(2007), 4:26.

are brought, and that is suffering united to [Jesus'] suffering on the cross" (D. 324). It attributes infinite value and perfectness to the small human offering, which would be impossible on its own (D. 1512).

Before God demanded the deepest participation in His Sacrifice from Sister Faustina, He pervaded her with His presence and pulled towards Him. The Saint admits that she often experienced special unity with Christ during Eucharist. "I see the Lord in my soul; I feel His presence which pervades my being. I sense His divine gaze; I have long talks with Him without saying a word; I know what His divine Heart desires [...]" (D. 411). Sometimes she experienced the grace of union with God in her soul, seeing His greatness and unimaginable sainthood compared to her own nothingness (D. 471). She improved constantly her understanding of Christ's presence in Eucharist and in the priest who celebrates it, and the visions of the Child Jesus were very helpful in this respect (cf. D. 447).

One of her confessions about the experience of mystic rapture after taking Holy Communion shows the profound acting of God's grace in her soul. Sister Faustina writes the following: "Trembling with joy in the embrace of the Creator, I felt He Himself was supporting me so that I could bear this great happiness and gaze at His Majesty" (D. 439). The fruit of this extraordinary experience was the feeling of strength and courage to do God's will in everything and with great ease (D. 439). In particular, this experience predisposes the mystic to sacrifice herself to God, in union with Christ, with gratitude and love. The experienced Eucharist and Communion embrace her in the deepest action of self-sacrificing of the incarnated Son to Father. Sister Faustina (of the Blessed Sacrament) experienced many ecstasies during Holy Communion. Once, when she was preparing herself to take it, she heard from Jesus that "eternal life must begin already here on earth through Holy Communion. Each Holy Communion makes you more capable of communing with God throughout eternity" (D. 1811).²³

²³ According to Saint Thomas, Holy Mass encompasses the past as it is the remembrance of the death of Jesus; the presence, as it is a sacrament in which the Church worships the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; and the future, as he is the announcement of saving spiritual fruits received now and in eternity. James A. WEISHEIPL, "Tomasz z Akwinu. Życie, myśl i dzieło" [Thomas Aquinas. Life, thought and work]. *W drodze* [Poznań] 1985, 235. Also the contemporary theology accepts the view that Eucharist is a „sacramental realization and essence of all Christian mystery of salvation”, showing more than in the past that Jesus Christ is the foundation and rule for its understanding. Walter KASPER, "Jedność Eucharystii i wielość jej aspektów" [Union of Eucharist and multiplicity of its aspects], in *Eucharystia* (Collection *Communio* 1) (Poznań-Warszawa: Publishing House: Pallottinum, 1986), 23, 38.

This is the way through which she was led by God to let His will be fulfilled in her. In 1937, she heard the words which called her to offer herself totally and definitively to God. “I demand of you a perfect and whole-burnt offering; and offering of the will. No other sacrifice can compare with this one. I Myself am directing your life and arranging things in such a way that you will be for Me a continual sacrifice and will always do My will. And for the accomplishment of this offering, you will unite yourself with Me on the Cross. I know what you can do. I Myself will give you many orders directly, but I will delay the possibility of their being carried out and make it depend on others. But what the superiors will not manage to do, I Myself will accomplish directly in your soul. And in the most hidden depths of your soul, a perfect holocaust will be carried out, not just for a while, but know, My daughter, that this offering will last until your death. But there is time, so that I the Lord will fulfill all your wishes. I delight in you as in a living host; let nothing terrify you; I am with you” (D. 923). This demand made by Jesus, His orders to Sister Faustina and leading her life may be understood only if her consent to the third degree of God’s will is assumed, i.e. allowing God to dispose of oneself freely (D. 444).²⁴ Sister Faustina answers willingly to all demands of Jesus-Bridegroom Whom she had earlier offered herself (D. 239). She writes the following: “The pure offering of my will burn on the altar of love” (D. 957). She offers herself for sinners, accepting “agony under the yoke of God’s justice” and a great “interior desolation” (D. 927). Her suffering is not a permanent state because the Bridegroom sometimes gives her rest “near His sweetest Heart.” Saint Thomas Aquinas perceives the voluntary offering of oneself as a holocaust to God as the peak of the monastic life.²⁵

²⁴ Two earlier degrees are: 1) external observance of God’s commandments and monastic rules and statutes 2) accepting interior inspiration from God and carrying them out faithfully. Ibid.

²⁵ SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, “O doskonałości życia duchowego”, 12 [On the perfectness of spiritual life, 12], trans. J. Salij, in Id., *Dzieła wybrane* [Chosen works], compilation: J. Salij (Kęty: Publishing House: Antyk, 1999), 394. Thomas Aquinas refers to the discernment made by Saint Gregory between the burnt offering and offering. The offering is when one offers some of his possessions to God, but not everything, whereas the burnt offering assumes offering everything one possesses and the self too, one’s thoughts, will and the essence of one’s life. Ibid.

2. THE CALL TO PROCLAIM DIVINE MERCY, PRAY AND DO THE DEEDS OF MERCY

Jesus expects from Sister Faustina, who is not only the secretary of Merciful Jesus who writes exactly each word of His message but is also His apostle, that she also tells the world about the great Mercy of God, about His love (D. 1074). Her voice cannot reach many people and thus she plays rather an initiating role of this evangelic preach. Jesus instructs her in many revelations that she goes to priests and encourages them to proclaim the truth about the mercy of God, or directs this desire to priests through her. They should tell others about the mercy of God in the way which would not discourage the sinners from approaching Him in order to be granted forgiveness (D. 50). They should speak about His mercy “using the strongest words”, because every word falls short when it comes to describing His full nature (D. 491). Empathizing with the “aching mankind” they should encourage people “to snuggle close to [His] merciful Heart” so that they can be filled with internal peace (D. 1074). All these who experience Divine Mercy, are invited to praise Him and proclaim Him to others. The reward for this is the experience of mercy in the hour of death during which the eternal fate of the person is decided.

Sister Faustina knows from the Merciful Jesus that many souls are drawn to God by the image drawn at His command (D. 1379), and that they will attain salvation through this work (D. 1300).

Each apostle of mercy is supposed to be only an “obedient instrument” of the Merciful Jesus in proclaiming His mercy. The work of mercy itself, as Jesus told Sister Faustina, “is His; there is nothing of you in it” (D. 1667). No apostle, using their own knowledge, eloquence or impact, is able to change the heart of the person who is indifferent toward God unless the acting of Divine grace is revealed through him. This is why the true apostle should look for the enforcement of spiritual attitude in the prayer and should experience this prayer with the apostolic zeal. First, the apostle should grow in trust to the Merciful Jesus. This is what the ejaculatory prayer is for: “O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You!” (D. 84). If this prayer for a sinner is said faithfully with the repentant heart, the sinner will be, as per Christ’s assurance, granted the grace of conversion.

In a way, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is an extension of liturgical prayer. If the adoring person sees through their faith the adorable Lord’s

face, they are pleasing God (D. 1420). Jesus told Sister Faustina that He wanted this form of prayer for obtaining mercy for the world to be practiced in the Congregation of Merciful Jesus which was to be established (D. 1070).

The prayer particularly recommended by Christ is the chaplet of the Divine Mercy. Assuming that we know its content, let us only point out the fact that it consists in offering to God the following: “the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved son, Our Lord Jesus Christ”, entire Christ “for our sins and those of the whole world”, and a repeated supplication: “For the sake of His sorrowful Passion have mercy on us and on the whole world” (D. 476). If this prayer is connected with a deeper contemplation of Jesus’ Passion, it becomes a supplication to God with the “voice” of His Son. This is how the Saint wanted to pray it, believing that the prayer is an offering which is the most valuable gift from a person and that is the most pleasant for God. This prayer “stirs the very depths” of God (D. 848), mitigates His anger and may be particularly efficient in case of the conversion of people who are far away of God, in particular in the hour of their death (D. 835). Jesus instructs Sister Faustina to contemplate His passion and agony on the cross at three o’clock, i.e. “the hour of mercy for the whole world” and promises that “will refuse nothing to the soul that makes a request of [Him] in virtue of [His] Passion” (D. 1320). The notion of the hour of mercy is close to the John’s understanding of the hour of Jesus (John 7:30; 8:20), “his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father” (John 13:1), the hour of Passion in order to save the world and the hour of glory (John 12:23).²⁶

Sister Faustina was urged repeatedly during prayer to act (D. 865) because the answer to the mystery of Divine Mercy revealed in the Person and in the works of Jesus must be given not only internally, but also through external action if it is necessary in a given circumstance. Jesus demands that all deeds of mercy raise out of love for Him (D. 742), which urges the apostle to revise the motivations for actions constantly and cherish the internal bond with Christ. Based on the analyzed message of Divine mercy, the basic condition for the authentic fulfillment of the deeds of mercy is becoming merciful like Christ, owing to the submission to the Holy Spirit, and be the mirror of the Jesus’ mercy (D. 1242; 1446 1695). Being merciful is more important than doing merciful deeds. The second thing is a consequence of the first

²⁶ René MOTTE, “Godzina” [Hour], in *Słownik Teologii Biblijnej* [Dictionary of Biblical Theology], 294–295.

one, *operari sequitur esse*. The deeds of mercy for the soul are demanded by God from everybody as they can be practiced by everyone (D. 1317), whereas the demand to do deeds for the body depends on the physical and financial capacity of the person. However, also these deeds, even very small ones, are pleasant for God and meriting for the person when that person's great love to God may change small things into big ones (D. 302). Both the first and the second type of deeds, done in the spirit of selfless love of neighbor, are accompanied by the Jesus' promise of experiencing the Divine Mercy on the day of judgement (D. 1317).

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This overview of the message of Divine Mercy given by the Divine Jesus to Saint Sister Faustina makes it possible to stress its call directed by means of this mystic to each Christ's disciple, and even to each person. Its essence is in the truth of the Divine Mercy shown in the work of redemption and available in holy sacraments, in particular in the sacrament of penance and Eucharist. The image of Merciful Jesus directs the contemporary human to these sacraments through the visible symbols of Blood and Water. The extraordinary acting of the Divine grace in the attitude of Sister Faustina shows that these sacraments may be the "place" of a real meeting with the merciful Savior, the King of mercy. It is then that Mercy fulfills the bottomless abyss between the Creator and creation (D. 1576).

This message includes a multiple call: the call for trust in the goodness and love of God revealed in Christ, in His endless mercy; the call for conversion and openness to the changing Divine grace coming from the loving Heart of Jesus; the call for prayer, in particular the prayer of trust, trust in God; the call for the prayer of suspension and imploration for the sinners; the call for penitence and making sacrifices which support the prayer of supplication; the call for expiatory acceptance of suffering; and, finally, the call for self-offering to God for the saving of the world with the crucified Christ in the glorification of God for His merciful love for the world. These are calls which were answered radically by Saint Faustina, assisted by the extraordinary grace of the Holy Spirit. Her life becomes invitation for everybody to answer willingly to the goodness and mercy of God.

The mystery of Divine mercy revealed in the analyzed message becomes more comprehensible when its certain aspects are shown in the light of John's Gospel.

The appearing King of mercy calls for trust in the Divine Mercy and announces the second coming to the world as the just Judge (D. 83) as the One who closes the human history and judges all. Thus this revelation resembles the fact of saving the world and the still ongoing period of grace, mercy, which should be perceived with reference to the King of mercy. Simultaneously, it announces the eschatic times. Thus it becomes a specific indication for the contemporary people as to how they should develop their relation to God and others.

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WEZWANIE ZAWARTE W ORĘDZIU O MIŁOSIERDZIU BOŻYM PRZEKAZANYM ŚW. FAUSTYNIE – WYMIAR TEOLOGICZNO-SYMBOLICZNY

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Artykuł jest analizą orędzia przekazanego Kościołowi za pośrednictwem św. Faustyny pod kątem zawartych w nim wezwań Bożych. Najpierw, na podstawie obrazu Jezusa Miłosiernego, jest odczytane wezwanie do ufności w dobroć i Miłosierdzie Boże, do skruchy, nawrócenia i do przyjęcia daru przebaczenia grzechów w sakramencie pokuty i pojednania. Następnie zostały objaśnione sakramenty św. w odniesieniu do tajemnicy Odkupienia. Z Mszy Świętej, jako Ofiary uobecniającej w sposób bezkrwawy Ofiarę krzyża, wynika wezwanie do jednoczenia się jej uczestników z Jezusem ukrzyżowanym i zmartwychwstałym. W ostatniej części autor analizuje wezwanie do głoszenia światu orędzia o Miłosierdziu Bożym, do modlitwy przebiegalnej za grzechy i do pełnienia uczynków miłosierdzia.

Słowa kluczowe: Orędzie Miłosierdzia Bożego; wezwanie; nawrócenie; sakramenty; odpowiedź miłości.