

COLUMNISTS

Trust opens us to receive God's Mercy

Sundays Readings: (R3) John 20:19-31. (R1) Acts 2:42-47. (R2) 1 Peter 1:3-9.

On a beautiful Sunday morning April 18, 1993, I was with more than 300,000 people who crowded the vast piazza of St. Peter's for the beatification of Sister Mary Faustina. The Holy Father celebrated Mass on the steps of St. Peter's. The Sistine Choir on the pope's right sang the Gregorian chants of the Mass; on his left were seated dignitaries; and in front of him the crowd of us.

After the proclamation of her beatification just before the Gloria of the Mass, a tapestry of Sister Faustina standing before the image of the Risen Christ with red and white rays emanating from his heart was undraped from the roof of St. Peter's to the cheers of thousands.

Sister Faustina was a simple uneducated Polish nun. On Aug. 1, 1925, Sister Faustina had a vision of the suffering Christ, which prompted her to enter the convent of the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy. She was a sister for 13 years and worked as a cook, gardener and porter.

Externally, her life appeared insignificant, monotonous and ordinary. But internally, she enjoyed a mystical union with God that was extraordinary and savored by only a few saints in the history of the church. To her, the supernatural world — Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels, the saints, the souls in



BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

a word
for
sunday

purgatory — were as real as the visible world in which she walked and lived.

To this simple, but saintly sister, God entrusted a special mission. "I am sending you," God said to her, "to all of humanity with my mercy. I do not want to punish mankind but to heal it and draw it ever so close to my merciful heart." He appointed her to be his apostle of mercy to this century.

One of the requests our Lord asked of Sister Faustina was to pray and work toward establishing a feast of the Divine Mercy on the Sunday after Easter. He said to her: "On that day, the very depths of my tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon souls who approach the fount of my mercy. The soul that will go to confession (eight days before or after this Sunday) and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and

punishment" (Diary of Blessed Faustina 699).

It is significant that the Gospel of this Sunday is the one on the institution of the sacrament of penance, for confession is the fount of God's mercy. Jesus told her: "When you go to confession, know this, that I myself am waiting for you in the confessional; I am only hidden by the priest, but I myself act in the soul. Here the misery of the soul meets the God of Mercy. Tell souls that from this fount of mercy souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great there is no limit to my generosity."

Note the great mercy of God offered on this Sunday. Confession eight days before or after will take away not only sins but the punishment due to them. Like the good thief on the cross, the sinner who avails himself of confession at this time gets a clean slate.

Note too that the only limit to his mercy is our trust. His mercy is like a bottomless well. Our trust is like a bucket. How much mercy we can carry away from God depends on the size of our trust.

The message of mercy can be called to mind simply by remembering ABC.

A — ask for his mercy. God wants us to approach him in prayer constantly. Pause to say a brief prayer at the 3 o'clock hour.

B — be merciful. God wants us to receive his mercy and let it flow out to others through us. We have two tongues: one in our head and one in our shoes. No matter what the tongue in our head is saying, it is the tongue in our shoes that really counts. Not what we say, but what we do. We must avoid a NATO personality: No Action, Talk Only.

C — complete trust. God wants us to have complete trust in himself. So pray often: "Jesus, I trust in you!"

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming, N.Y.

Daily Readings

Monday, April 15

Acts 4:23-31; John 3:1-8

Tuesday, April 16

Acts 4:32-37; John 3:7-15

Wednesday, April 17

Acts 5:17-26; John 3:16-21

Thursday, April 18

Acts 5:27-33; John 3:31-36

Friday, April 19

Acts 5:34-42; John 6:1-15

Saturday, April 20

Acts 6:1-7; John 6:16-21

God can be found in the midst of an active life

"It hadn't occurred to me that my whole day could be a prayer," confesses Joyce Rupp in her essay, "Rediscovering God in the Midst of Our Work." It is found in the new *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers* edited by Robert J. Weeks (Paulist Press, 1995). "It was as though I left God in my place of prayer in the morning, blew a goodbye kiss, and said, 'See you when I get home from work.'

"It is not easy to be mindful of the presence of God when I am deeply involved in the marketplace," she says. "How many days did I just run through my calendar, get stuff out of the way, struggle to get people fitted into the hours, press on, hoping to get it all finished, so that I could have time to pray and give attention to my 'spiritual life'?"



BY GREGORY E. AUGUSTINE PIERCE

faith &
work

This is from a woman who spends most of her time writing spiritual books, giving spiritual talks, and providing spiritual direction! I wonder how she would feel if she worked a cash register or pumped gas for a living.

To her credit, however, Rupp has grappled with the issue of finding God in her work, and her reflections may be of great value to the rest of us.

"The discovery of God in the midst of my work happens again and again," she explains. "I need to consistently look with 'attentive eyes' if I am to be open to these discoveries, if I am to stay connected with God in the midst of an active life. I am never finally 'there' in terms of a way or a method or an attitude."

"I gradually discovered that my definition of 'prayer' was very narrow," she continues. "I had limited it to my own solitude and/or time of worship."

Rupp decided that prayer was more an intention of her heart and that she

could "easily pause and re-entr God's loving presence at any time" if her inner disposition is "one of openness and readiness."

"Being mindful of God's presence doesn't always make what we do easy or cozy," she points out. "There will still be some days which seem meaningless or ridiculous to us. The integration of work and spiritual life doesn't take all the pain or frustration away, but it can bring an underlying sense of joy and freedom to one's work."

This is true for those involved in ministry, like Joyce Rupp. But it can be just as true for those working at the check-out counter or gas pump.

Pierce is co-publisher of ACTA Publications, Chicago.



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