



A TIME magazine issue in 1984 presented a startling cover. It pictured a prison cell where two men sat on metal folding chairs. The young man wore a black turtleneck sweater, blue jeans and white running shoes. The older man was dressed in a white robe. They sat facing one another, close and personal. They spoke quietly so as to keep others from hearing the conversation. The young man was Mehmet Ali Agca, the pope's would-be assassin (he shot and wounded the Pope on May 13, 1981); the other man was Pope St. John Paul II, the intended victim. The Pope embraced his enemy and pardoned him. When the Pope left the cell, he said, "What we talked about must remain a secret between us. I spoke to him as a brother whom I have pardoned and who has my complete trust." That event happened 33 years ago. One individual is a saint and the assassin is now a baptized Catholic. Trust and mercy go together like a glove and a hand. We are living in an age in need of mercy. The messenger of that mercy was St Faustina. This example of God's Divine Mercy, the same Divine Mercy whose message St. Faustina witnessed and St Pope John Paul promoted.

On October 5, 1938, a young religious by the name Sister Faustina (Helen Kowalska) died in a convent of the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Cracow, Poland. She came from a very poor family that had struggled hard on their little farm during the terrible years of WWI. Sister had had only three years of very simple education. Hers were the humblest of tasks in the convent, usually in the kitchen or the vegetable garden, or as a porter. Yet God chooses the weak and makes them strong. How often do we overlook the simple people doing saintly tasks!

On February 22, 1931, Jesus Christ mystically appeared to this simple nun, bringing with Him a wonderful message of Mercy for all mankind. Saint Faustina tells us in her diary under this date: *"In the evening, when I was in my cell, I became aware of the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand was raised in blessing, the other was touching the garment at the breast. From the opening of the garment at the breast there came forth two large rays, one red and the other pale. In silence I gazed intently at the Lord; my soul was overwhelmed with fear, but also with great*

joy. After a while Jesus said to me, 'paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the inscription: Jesus, I trust in You.'"

Some time later, Our Lord again spoke to her: "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 depths of My most tender Mercy at that time when My agonizing Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross....Fortunate is the one who will dwell in their shelter, for the just hand of God shall not lay hold of him."

The whole image is symbolic of the mercy, forgiveness and love of God. But why do we need mercy? If someone believes that they are well they seek not a doctor. If someone lives too comfortably they seek not to pray. If someone is indifferent to God's Presence they do not believe in hell. Such people do not therefore seek his mercy. So for our cynical times, God revealed to this humble nun, as he also did to the children of Fatima, the reality of hell so as to convince them of the importance of forgiveness and the need for mercy.

"I, Sister Faustina Kowalska, by the order of God, have visited the abysses of Hell so that I might tell souls about it and testify to its existence... But I noticed one thing: that most of the souls there are those who disbelieved that there is a hell." (Diary 741)

We are all need of mercy. Thomas who doubted the presence of Christ, was challenged by the wounds of the Lord, his marks of suffering. Why? Because we are all wounded, wounded by sin, wounded by others. It is in his wounds that we are healed. Only through his wounds do we encounter his mercy. This mercy is not to be talked about but lived. The ABC of divine mercy is: A ask for mercy, B be merciful and C complete trust in God.

We all have scars from our own wounds, our 'nail marks', but from them he lead us to his glory. Only then will we say in the words of Thomas: My Lord and my God.