

Our joyful observance of our Lord Jesus Christ's victory over sin, death, and hopelessness continues with today's celebration of the Second Sunday of Easter. Today is also designated as the Divine Mercy Sunday. What are the historical roots and meaning of this day of Divine Mercy? **Helen Kowalska** was born in 1905 in Poland. Her family was materially poor and lived deeply their Catholic faith. Already as a youngster, Helen was known for her genuine piety, depth of prayer, and concern for the poor. At 20 she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy and took the name **Sister Maria Faustina of the Most Blessed Sacrament**. In her community, she worked as a cook, gardener, and doorkeeper. Her inner life was very rich as the Lord blessed her with many extraordinary spiritual gifts. Jesus communicated to Sister Maria Faustina that she was to be the apostle of His Divine Mercy in our modern world. The mission entrusted to her was to (1) remind the world and the Church of the truth of God's mercy for every human being, (2) entreat Divine Mercy for the whole world, especially sinners, through the new forms of devotion to the Divine Mercy, and (3) initiate the apostolic movement of Divine Mercy, the followers of which proclaim and beg Divine Mercy for the world and practice the works of mercy. Sister Faustina Kowalska died of tuberculosis at 33. On April 30, 2000, Saint John Paul II canonized her as the **first saint of the New Millennium**. During his homily on that occasion, the Holy Father also announced that the **Second Sunday of Easter** would now be celebrated throughout the entire Church as **Divine Mercy Sunday**. In her *Diary* – a modern spiritual classic – Saint Faustina reported this message of the Savior: “My daughter, tell the whole world about my inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and a shelter for all souls, and especially for the poor sinners. On that day the very depths of my tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of my mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day are opened all the divine floodgates through which graces flow. Let no soul fear to draw near to me, even though its sins be as scarlet” (699). **We observe Divine Mercy Sunday in our parish following the 9:30 AM Mass until Noon with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Confessions, sung Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and Benediction**. For more information on Saint Faustina and this devotion you can visit the official website of our **National Shrine of the Divine Mercy** (Stockbridge, MA) at [thedivinemercy.org](http://thedivinemercy.org). Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world! Jesus, I trust in you!

Every year I field questions regarding the **conditions for obtaining the special indulgence of Divine Mercy Sunday**. To gain *any* indulgence one must be in the **state of grace** (that is, not having committed a mortal sin or having been sacramentally forgiven for any mortal sin committed). In addition, in order to obtain the *plenary* indulgence, one must (1) have the **interior disposition of complete detachment from sin, even venial sin**; (2) have **sacramentally confessed one's sins**; (3) **receive Holy Communion**; and (4) **pray for the intentions of the Pope**. The question always arises regarding the timing of the completion of these actions. Must I do all this on Divine Mercy Sunday itself or is it possible to complete some of them before or after that Sunday? How many days before or after are acceptable? Well, the Vatican office that deals with such questions – the Apostolic Penitentiary – clarified matters with its document *The Gift of the Indulgence* of January 29, 2000. Paragraph 5 of that document says that “it is *appropriate, but not necessary*, that the sacramental Confession and especially Holy Communion and the prayer for the Pope's intentions take place *on the same day* that the indulgenced work is performed; but **it is sufficient that these sacred rites and prayers be carried out within several days (about 20)**

***before or after the indulgenced act.*** Prayer for the Pope's intentions is left to the choice of the faithful, but an 'Our Father' and a 'Hail Mary' are suggested."

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us! Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us!  
Blessed Solanus Casey, pray for us!

*Father Kevin C. Louis, STL*