

"His Mercy is from Age to Age".

Welcome to this year's Conference of Divine Mercy the theme is taken from Saint Luke's gospel and is referred to as "The Canticle of Mary". This line is taken from Lk1:50 and the canticle is not just an answer to Mary's cousin Elizabeth who said: "***And how dose this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?***"(Lk1:43) But is a reflection on the nature of God. Mary rejoices in the Mercy of God that is coming to the world through the birth of her Son and on how this is going to be universal and from age to age. This will be accomplished through the redemption of Christ and brought about through the power of God. Mary also tells us that this promise made through the prophets is now being fulfilled.

Mary's song points us to the Might of God, who puts down the proud and arrogant, in mind and heart and raise up the humble. The rich are sent empty away. Reflecting on the rich we must be careful least we make the mistake of excluding them from the kingdom of heaven. After all, we need only think of Joseph of Arimathea who gave Jesus a burial in his own tomb(Jh19:38ff). However, there is a relationship between the words rich and poor that needs a little explanation. A person may be rich in mercy, gentleness, patience, generosity, truth, and love of God and neighbour, and others may be poor in all these qualities. In the instance that Mary speaks of the rich, are admonished to share from their good fortune in order to experience the poverty of those less fortunate. In this way they share in the blessing of God and the redemptive work of Christ. Perhaps a good way to reflect on this is to ask the question: What is it that I am rich or poor in and how much do I share?

Certainly, if we apply Mary's reflections to our own country and the events of the last year, we could make many comparisons about the way in which we have been rich or poor. However, now that the Celtic Tiger has lost its roar, there is one question that may go overlooked: How much good has the prosperity brought with it? There are many times in the gospel where these two values poverty and riches are shown to be interchangeable. People sometimes become rich in one thing only to become poor in another. Next year we are being warned by the experts that things are going to be even bleaker. Many are worried about jobs, mortgages, health, drugs, crime and the list seems as endless as it did at the time of Mary. However, it is Mary's song that reminds us of the truth that God is merciful from age to age.

This eternal truth that Mary declared to the world with the birth of Her Son is shared in a different way by Saint Faustina Kowalska a mercy nun living in Poland between 1905-1938. Through her mystical writings Christ revealed to her deep understanding of His mercy and brought her to perfection in the charism of her order divine mercy. In addition to this her writings contain a

unique message for humankind. The central theme of which is a deep trust in God's mercy. She was also asked to have painted an image of Jesus with His right hand extended in Blessing and with blue and red rays emanating from His heart representing the blood and water shed for humankind on the cross. The inscription "Jesus I Trust in You" was to be inscribed on the painting. This image was to be venerated and was accompanied by a special feast day to be known as Divine Mercy Sunday. On this day special prayers were to be said The Chaplet of Divine Mercy, The Three O'clock Prayer. There were many promises attached to the devotions among the most unique is the promise of complete remission of sins and punishment due to them for those who would receive Holy Communion in a state of grace on Divine Mercy Sunday.

As wondrous as all these graces are the devotion itself requires more than just a recitation of the prayers, since they are given by Jesus to aid us in coming to a deeper relationship of trust in the mercy of God. As we have seen all our wealth and prosperity, fade very quickly the problems of poverty, crime, drugs, social deprivation still remain with us. We think we all know the answer to our problems encourage our young off the streets; rebuild our communities with a sense of values where people are respected for who they are rather than what they have or have not; care for the sick and old; lead by example rather than do as I say. In spite of our good intentions to build the perfect world or have a super economy recent experience has shown us that our own efforts have not been to good.

Perhaps it is time to reflect on Jesus' words to Saint Faustina "***Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to my mercy***"(Diary 300). So what must I do? Well! Jesus gave Saint Faustina three ways of exercising mercy by deed, by word, by prayer. The first thing to remember is that these three words can not be separated from each other they all form part of one action and are the fullness of Mercy that is brought about by intimate relationship with Jesus based on trust. The person living these words shows unquestionable love for Jesus. It is only when people act in this way that a new vision of society begins to emerge its called the kingdom of God.

When we begin to practice trust in God's mercy in deed,word, and prayer and when we become steeped in this, the kingdom of God becomes a reality among us. The Holy Trinity abides in such a person :"***Who ever loves me will keep, my word and my Father will love Him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him***"(Jh14:23). Our Society will only change when we ask God for the mercy to live as part of His kingdom.

Saint Faustina was given the mission to prepare the world for the second coming of Jesus, Our Lady confirmed these words to her: "***I gave the Savour to the world; as for you, you have to speak to the world about His great mercy***

*and prepare the world for the Second Coming...*" (Diary 635). The Church's mission is to proclaim the mercy of God until the return of its founder. In this way Saint Faustina shares the Church's prophetic role. Since the mission of the church and Saint Faustina are the same it follows that every Christian has the duty and obligation to practice mercy. All who do so call down upon themselves and the world the blessings of God who is rich in mercy.

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