

+ MAUNDY THURSDAY: IN CENA DOMINI

April 2, 2026

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Before the festival day of the pasch, Jesus knowing that his hour was come, that he should pass out of this world to the Father: having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end (Jn 13:1)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

My very dear sons,

Spiritually gathered together with the Lord and His Apostles in the Upper Room of Jerusalem, we begin this evening the celebration of the Passion of Christ. There could not be a more solemn moment: Holy Thursday, Maundy Thursday, opens the Sacrum Triduum, the three-day liturgical reenactment of the saving Sacrifice Christ accomplished upon earth in order to redeem us from the power of the Prince of this world. We must be attentive to every gesture, to every word, for this sacred drama speaks of something of critical importance for our lives. Let us not run away in terror, but remain with the Lord, if we can.

In recent times the Church has paid special attention to the theme of Divine Mercy, following the revelations of Saint Faustina Kowalska, the Apostle of Divine Mercy. Never before was Divine Mercy so accessible to all the faithful, and never before, without doubt, did the world stand in such great need of God's mercy. It is the story of our times.

Truly, mercy is there for the taking. One need but consider any one of the numerous affirmations Our Lord made to Saint Faustina during her lifetime as proof of this.

Once the Lord said to me, Act like a beggar who does not back away when he gets more alms [than he asked for], but offers thanks the more fervently. You too, should not back away and say that you are not worthy of receiving greater graces when I give them to you. I know you are unworthy, but rejoice all the more and take as many treasures from My Heart as you can carry, for then you will please Me more. And I will tell you one more thing—take these graces not only for yourself, but also for others; that is, encourage the souls with whom you come in contact to trust in My infinite mercy. Oh, how I love those souls who have complete confidence in Me—I will do everything for them. (*Diary*, 294)

As this and so many other passages from Saint Faustina's *Diary* bear witness, there is no lack of Divine Mercy to be distributed to souls who thirst for it. No one on earth is excluded. Or is there not one exception?

Is there not one person, to whom, despite it all, Divine Mercy was refused? I am not thinking here of Judas, although his tragic fate might suggest the case of a man whom Divine Mercy never touched. In fact, Divine Mercy was surely offered to him, an opening was given to him at the Last Supper, even if he declined the gift and left to perform his deadly treason. God surely tried to give Judas mercy

No, I am thinking, rather of Our Lord himself. As God he was in no need of Divine Mercy, but as man, in his human nature, he certainly needed His Father's aid at the supreme moment of the Passion. And yet, as the words he will utter on the Cross attest, Divine Mercy seems to have suffered an eclipse: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"¹ Where was Divine Mercy at that moment? How could the Father promise the treasures of his mercy to

¹ Mtt. 27:46.

all and yet not bestow this benefice upon his only Son, his well-beloved Son, struggling in his sacred humanity in the grips of death?

There may be no answer to this terrible question. Over the centuries the Saints have contemplated the earth-rendering cry drawn from the Son of Man at his great hour, knowing that God could not entirely abandon his Son, but having to admit, nevertheless, that the darkness of Jesus' terrible expiration on the Cross seems utterly complete. Is it possible that there was and will be mercy for everyone, except for the Lord at his final Hour?

In fact, in reading the Gospel passage, in considering the scene closely, we do perceive a ray of light, a glimmer of divine mercy shining for Jesus in his suffering human nature. It is the Gospel according to Saint John in particular that shows this. "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen."² The presence at this hour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, accompanied by Saint John and the holy women, was surely the signature of Divine Mercy. Mary's being there, in that horrible place of execution, was not only a sign, but an altogether special sign, an extraordinary sign of Divine Mercy. Some spiritual authors have underlined the fact, however, that seeing his mother suffering so greatly at the foot of the Cross must have *added* to Jesus' own sufferings. This is true, of course. Nevertheless, how could this perfect Son not be touched in his Heart by the loving presence of his mother? Even the Lamb of God, slaughtered by His enemies for the sins of the world, was thus, in a certain way, the object of mercy. Truly God's mercy is an infinite ocean.

And so, although there is precious little we can do to console Our Lord in the grips of His Sacred Passion, the Passion of a God-Man, nevertheless, by our prayer and personal sacrifices we can belong to the holy band of followers surrounding Our Lady at the foot of the Cross. Thus we too can be instruments, although in rather indirect way, of the Father's mercy toward His Son. Spiritually we can belong to that precious ray of Divine Mercy: we can belong to the mercy of the Compassion. God's mercy for His Son during the Passion was the Compassion of Mary.

A disciple and friend of St. Bernard, Arnold of Chartres, sheds light on Mary's offering in the sacrifice of Calvary. He distinguishes in the Cross "two altars: one in Mary's heart, the other in Christ's body. Christ sacrificed his flesh, Mary her soul". Mary sacrificed herself spiritually in deep communion with Christ, and implored the world's salvation: "What the mother asks, the Son approves and the Father grants" (cf. *De septem verbis Domini in cruce*, 3: PL 189, 1694).

So, let us not lose the occasion, but spend some time before the Altar of repose this night, meditating on the terrible trial that has come to the Son of Man. Like Our Lady, we will follow events with our minds and hearts. Like Saint Peter and the others, we may fall asleep, but, perhaps, we can keep watch for just one hour. In any case, our hearts will be vigilant through the night. "I sleep, but my heart watcheth."³

He came back and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Had you not the strength to keep awake one hour? You should be awake, and praying not to fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'⁴

O Most Sorrowful Virgin Mother, the one Pope Saint John Paul II referred to as "Co-redemptrix", pray for us. Amen.

² Jn. 19:25.

³ Cant. 5:2.

⁴ Mk. 14:37-38.