

*...Souls who spread
the honor of My mercy
I shield through
their entire lives
as a tender mother
her infant...*

THE GIFT OF MERCY

The Testimony
Urszula Grzegorzcyk

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– URSZULA GRZEGORCZYK

Contact with Author: faustina.sopocko@gmail.com

Translation from Polish: Ewa Olszowa

Consultation – Sister Maria Kalinowska, Sister Dr. Teresa Szalkowska

The Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus

– Father Józef Łągwa SJ

DTP and Prepress: Tomasz Perek

Cover:

A solemn procession through the streets of Vilnius with the first image of Merciful Jesus at ending the National Congress of Mercy organized as a part of celebrating the Year of Mercy (2016).

MY STORY

I

With this testimony I would like to present a true acting of Divine Providence in my life, and a difficult, and at the same time beautiful, service in spreading the Divine Mercy worship. Which, despite many neglect, doubts, human weaknesses and the lack of guidelines on how to act, were realized in a specific place and time. I want to share the experience of how, through the awakened readiness to fulfill God's Will, God can make us capable of performing activities, which amaze us, surpass and surprise us especially then especially when we are when having nothing, we get everything that is needed at a given moment.

*...do whatever is within your power to spread devotion to My mercy. I will make up for what you lack. (...) **Souls who spread the honor of My mercy I shield through their entire lives as a tender mother her infant...** ("Diary" of Saint Sister Faustina, 1075).*

I was born at the beginning of the Second World War (in spring 1940). As a child I experienced hunger, cold, fear of fires and staying in dark spaces. Memories of this nightmare, and above all of post-war poverty, cannot be erased from memory. In our house, which was rebuilt after burning, there was no electricity or any amenities for several years after the war. I had neither toys nor books. On long winter evenings, the whole family would gather around the kitchen stove and one kerosene lamp.

From those times, I remembered my grandmother, who had a designated time and place for daily prayer and reading fragments of the Bible rewritten on the pieces of paper, as well as my grandfather, who strictly ordered his grandchildren to remain calm during this time.

When I was a teenager, my grandmother told me about her extraordinary experience – how she returned to life from the clinical death and how much she did not want to orphan her seven children. During the war, my grandparents also lost their home and for some time we lived together in the countryside. When they moved to another village located quite far away, my contacts with my grandmother were only sporadic.

Influenced by conversations with my grandmother and cordial contacts with the priest, as a teenager I walked 5 km along a dirt road, partly through the forest, to the morning Mass, for the first nine Fridays of the month. An old lady who lived next to the church also participated, and my mother only accompanied me once. I had to cover the same distance to school every day.

Although my parents declared themselves Catholics, after my grandparents had moved out, they no longer lived a deeply religious life. The relationships in our family were not proper enough to serve as an example for children in their adult life. A series of failures in my personal life and the lack of support from the closest people made me to withdraw from religious practices, although the faith in God – inoculated by my grandmother – stayed deep inside me.

In the urban setting, where I started my independent life, I witnessed behavior of people that was totally against my sensitivity. Combining family obligation with work and study, I had to handle everything in that difficult for me time without any help from anyone. Changing the place of residence (Łódź, 1985), significantly improved my living conditions but did not meet my expectations with regard to the new environment. I felt a gradually increasing desire to return to participation in the Church life.

Even though at that time I did not participate in religious services, I often visited various churches including numerous visits to Jasna Góra Monastery.

One evening (in August 1988), in the regional news, I heard information about walking pilgrimage to Jasna Góra that was leaving the following morning (at 6 am). Spontaneously, without any proper preparation, I joined that pilgrimage. Surrounded by the kindness of strangers, for eight days with the pilgrimage I did not experience any scarcities. Prayers and sacrificial hardships of the pilgrimage strengthened my decision to make explicit changes in my life.

Searching for a place for myself, invited by friends, I attended various meetings. That experience turned out to be useful in the prayer for discernment when in 1990 I joined the prayer group of Catholic Charismatic Renewal “Caanan” at the Jesuit Church in Łódź – getting engaged in the evangelization works.

With time, my desire to deepen the spiritual experiences encouraged me to go on a pilgrimage to Fatima. Unexpectedly, that trip became a very difficult experience for me. Traveling in summer time by bus without air condition and without the possibility to open window, was difficult to handle and did not encourage mutual relations among the participants. Furthermore, due to a bad technical condition of the bus, we could not cross the border with Germany. Despite negotiations lasting two hours, the organizers had to change the route.

Standing at the border checkpoint with pilgrims patiently waiting for the problem to be solved, I considered resigning from the further traveling. In the meantime, a bus arrived to the checkpoint. From the bus exited a man with a big cross on his chest. I was convinced that it was a catholic bishop accompanying other pilgrims. He came to our group, and even though I was standing in the middle, he approached me and without saying a word gave me the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary Rosa Mystica. It turned out that only I was familiar with that image in our group (beside the priest), and in my purse I had a medal with it. I already knew that it was not the kind of pilgrimage I expected, but rather a tourist trip. After that happening, I tried to adjust to the situation trusting in the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We visited various beautiful places, but the bad memories from that trip including vulgar conversations of irreligious drivers discouraged me from any pilgrimages for a long time.

Taking part in organization of various prayer meetings as an animator, I came to the conclusion that I was at the right place and did not need to search for spiritual experiences anywhere else.

With the leaders of our group – Bogusław and Anna Klimowicz – we organized trips to Catholic Charismatic Renewal meetings at Jasna Góra and to the meetings with the Holy Father during his visits to Poland. These were one-day trips, organized without any problems. We were also going to several-day retreats of Polish and German families at Duszniki Zdrój.

At the meeting of the animators, father Andrzej Batorski, SJ – at that time the chaplain of our prayer group – told us about the apparitions of Our Lady in Medjugorje. He desired to go there because the pilgrimages were organized despite the war in the region. Soon, father Batorski went to study in Rome and could not go to Medjugorje. But the desire to travel stayed in our group and constantly someone was reminding us about it. After my experience with the trip to Fatima, I did not think about it for a long time.

At the families retreat in Duszniki Zdrój, my friend Bogusława Rolkiewicz resumed talks about the trip to Medjugorje. I told her that if she found a bus with a religious driver, we could go there. I was sure that it was impossible.

When we returned from the retreat, Bogusława gave me a phone number of a driver, assuring me that he was a religious person and he had already visited Medjugorje several times. The news about the driver caused a huge confusion in the group – everyone wanted to go but at different time. Together with the leader, we made a decision that we would accept the date proposed by the driver. We had three weeks to prepare for the trip.

I had no idea how such foreign trip should be organized. With the driver, who was also the owner of the bus and lived 400 km away from us, we agreed on paying for the pilgrimage when he arrived at Łódź. I collected the money from the participants and on the day of our trip I was anxiously waiting for the driver.

My anxiety disappeared when I saw the bus with the emblem of the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary Rosa Mystica on the door pulling in to the square in front of the Jesuit Church. There were more surprises because it turned out that inside the bus was also the statue of the Rosa Mystica that was accompanying the driver, Mr. Tadeusz Szymański, on every trip. But the biggest surprise for all was that Mr. Szymański turned out to be not only a religious but also very talented man. Gifted with a beautiful voice, he enriched our entire trip with singing religious songs. The spiritual care over the pilgrimage was provided by father Eugeniusz Śpiołek from the Piarists order in Łowicz.

The trip to Medjugorje* in the autumn 1995 was our first foreign pilgrimage. It was a time of war in that region. Both organizers and participants had to face many inconveniences with regard to accommodation, food, and mutual acceptance.

Anna and I were very busy; all the time someone needed something from us. It was a very difficult experience for us. Two hours before our departure from Medjugorje we wished to spend a while alone, in silence. Surprisingly, that desire suddenly came true as everyone walked away somewhere. We decided to spend that time separately on Apparition Hill. For me, it was the time of grace which changed my entire life.

Climbing just several dozen meters up the rocky path to Apparition Hill I felt very tired and sat down on a stone to rest. Then, something strange happened as for a moment I lost the sense of reality. I was not able to control the floods of tears spontaneously running down my face.

I saw – like in a movie – my entire life, the time I irretrievably lost taking care of material things, and various events where the good intentions were destroyed by my negligence. Since childhood I had a natural gift of compassion and helpfulness for others. But in my adult life I did not understand that only the selfless help has a value, and I should not resent those whom I helped for their lack of appreciation.

It was an extraordinary experience. I had the impression that everything was happening simultaneously. That experience cannot be recreated or explained precisely. Because of that experience I felt a great sorrow and a desire for change. Then, there came a peace and a feeling of relief as I had never felt before. Little did I know that I would be granted a grace of spreading the Divine Mercy worship, and without that gift of inner peace, patience and persistence, I would have not been able to continue with that service.

* Medjugorje – a town in Bosnia and Herzegovina, located 25 km south-west from Mostar. Since 1981 a famous place of prayer for pilgrims from all over the world. “It is one of the most lively places of worships and conversions in Europe with healthy spirituality” – abp Henryk Hoser, SAC.

In a burst of excitement, I undertook to organize a trip to Medjugorie for everyone who would turn to me about it. I wanted to share with others the happiness which I experienced. That decision came as a surprise also to me, but I did not feel fear or anxiety anymore.

I entered into the many years period of pilgrimages. It was surprising that for many years the number of people who wanted to go was equal to the number of seats available in a bus. Nobody was turned down. Initially, I was helped by the different prayer animators and also by the nuns who participated in the pilgrimages. Over time, that service was taken over by one the animator of our prayer group – Halina Kocik. The program of the pilgrimages included always retreat on the way – always under the spiritual supervision of the priest. It lasted until I had an explicit feeling that I was to end that period of my service.



Retreats during the trip to Medjugorie

The spiritual formation created in our prayer group resulted in my long-lasting service for the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus. Regardless of that, my relationship with the prayer group continued.

One day in the fall of 1996, while staying in the countryside, I wanted to participate in a Holy Mass. It was too late to return to Łódź. I went to a new nearby church in Andrespol. There was no mass at that time. I stayed for a while to pray. I saw that the church inside was still under construction. I felt the need to make an offering and started to think what it could be. I noticed an altar with a very modest image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The thought about funding the new image raised my doubts. Perhaps for parishioners the image in the altar had a spiritual meaning that I was not aware of and my offer could have offended someone. Upon returning home, I tried to forget about it.

The call to present a votive offering kept coming back to me. I spoke about it at the animators meeting. Following the discernment prayer, Halina Kocik said that my idea about the image was probably good, but it should have been the image of the Merciful Jesus. I accepted that without any doubts because I already had a small image of the Merciful Jesus. I did not know yet the promise of special graces associated with that image, but because of the circumstances in which I received it, it had a very special meaning to me.

I got that image of the Merciful Jesus at the administrative office along with my mom's death certificate and the photograph from the destroyed id document of my mom. She died at the Kopernik Hospital in Łódź in December 1981, a few days after introduction of the martial law. My mom received that image from father Kazimierz Kraśniewski (Jesuit), with a note about receiving the last sacrament. I was not living in Łódź at that time.

At numerous occasions – when I was coming to visit my sick mom, and already earlier during my two visits at that hospital – at the hospital chapel I met a priest who seemed as a holy person. It awakened in me a desire to meet him in person to ask for help in putting in order my – very tangled then – life. When I was already participating in the prayer meetings at the Jesuit Church, it was only after a longer period when I realized that it was the same priest who became a very important person in my life.

Following discussions in our group, I went to father Marian Górką, the parish priest in Andrespol, with an offer of a gift of the image of the Merciful Jesus. The priest said that he had already considered getting such an image, but he was thinking it should be a copy of the first image painted by Eugeniusz Kazimirowski.

That was the first time I heard about the existence of the image of the Merciful Jesus in Vilnius. Not knowing that image, I did not understand the doubts of the priest. We decided that he would make a decision about the size of the image and call me to inform me about it. I waited for that information for a long time (we had no cell phones at that time), and I came to the conclusion that he gave up on the gift.

Yet the desire to fulfill the undertaking kept coming back. Wanting to solve the problem, I ordered from the painter I knew, Mrs. Jadwiga Szmidt, the copy of the Adolf Hyła image displayed in Cracow-Łagiewniki.

A month later, when the image was ready and I still had not heard from the priest, I started to look for a place to display the image. It was my internal problem arousing numerous doubts. Wherever I went to a church, there already was the image of the Merciful Jesus.

I had that spiritual dilemma for a long time when one day, in the late evening, I got a phone call from a stranger – Mr. Andrzej Puchalski, who was interested in a pilgrimage. During our conversation he suggested a need of taking the image of the Merciful Jesus to Medjugorie. That idea was gladly accepted by our group and this convinced me to make efforts to get the image over there.

In difficult situations, I often recalled someone I knew, whom I could ask for help. This time I turned to the head of the Brothers Hospitallers of Saint John of God in Łódź, brother Franciszek Salezy Chmiel. I knew that he was in touch with the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy and he was once interested in a trip to Medjugorie. He was not surprised by my visit. He joked that a day earlier when he was praying, a piece of paper with my phone number had fallen out from his breviary.

He expressed interest in the idea of taking the image to Medjugorie and he was willing to help to implement it. He organized for me a two-day stay in Cracow so I could spend some time at St. Faustina's tomb to discern the implementation of that undertaking, supported by prayers of Sisters. I had the feeling that the image should be taken to Medjugorie and displayed *where it would be gladly accepted and surrounded by prayer*.

The Franciscan parish in Medjugorie, which we approached to give to the image to, agreed to take it but proposed to place it in storage. We could not agree to that. Father Franciszek suggested praying for nine days the Chaplet of Divine Mercy for direction. Then, during my next trip to Medjugorie, he asked me to visit all chapels to find a clear sign of the place to display the image. It was a very difficult task for me as I could not imagine how it would happen and whether I would be able to recognize such a sign.

My pilgrims were staying next to the "Blue Cross" at the bottom of the Apparition Hill and near the "Oasis of Peace"*. Here was located the chapel of perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Feeling the psychological burden of the task that was entrusted to me, I went in my spare time to pray at the chapel in the "Oasis of Peace". When I entered the chapel, I was surprised by the rays of light coming out of the Tabernacle reflecting straight on the entrance. The unusual occurrence made me curious and forced me to move forward. When I was approaching the Tabernacle, I saw a tiny image of the Merciful Jesus placed on it. It was the version of the image that was distributed in Italy. The rays streaming out of the Heart of Jesus were presented on the image as straight lines. It was very strange as earlier that day I was there with the pilgrims to show them the place for prayer and no one noticed anything. I stayed in the chapel for some time to pray and contemplate if what I saw was the sign that I was supposed to recognize.

* The community "Oasis of Peace" was recognized by Church as the "Public Association of the Faithful" and it operates in compliance with all obligations and rights under the rules of the Church.

The memory of the event in which I participated a few months ago reassured me of this and made me realize that the Lord Jesus had already prepared everything earlier.

The recollection was on the retreats conducted by the multinational group of brothers from the community "Oasis of Peace" with the superior general from Italy father Gianni Sgreva, CP, who came at the invitation of father Ryszard Grefkowicz, to his parish.

The group came to Łódź to visit places related to life of sister Faustina. They also wanted to visit the place where she was born. The group leader Anna Klimowicz, acting also as a German interpreter during these retreats, knew that I had just visited that place a few days earlier and she asked me for help to organize a visit for them. Late evening, with the help of Andrzej Puchowski, we were able to organize the trip to Świnice Warckie. Warmly welcomed by the parish priest Stefan Spsychalski, while visiting around midnight the house of Saint Sister Faustina, accompanied with guitars, under the sky full of stars, everyone in his or her own language started to sing and pray with the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

The Marian Community "Oasis of Peace" has been recognized by the Church as a "public association of believers" and conducts its activities in accordance with all the obligations and rights resulting from the norms of the Church Law.

We calmly awaited the response to the request sent for the acceptance of the image to the Superior General of this Community in Italy. His answer surprised us with its content - *we will gladly welcome the painting to our chapel and it will be surrounded by prayer.*

It was the time of the approaching Easter so we made efforts to bless the image by cardinal Franciszek Macharski. It happened in Krakow on the Feast of Divine Mercy (1997).

During the next pilgrimage, I agreed with the supervisor of the Community "Oasis of Peace" in Medjugorje on the date of transferring the image. I was accompanied by the French interpreter whom I met earlier. The conversation happened in a joyful atmosphere. It turned out that on that day was her birthday (April 25), and a day earlier – my birthday. We considered that concurrence as a gift from heaven.



Chapel in the "Oasis of Peace"

Two days later, with the feeling of relief and joy, I went to the "Blue Cross" to thank God for everything that happened. Being alone, I could pray and quietly analyze the entire course of the rousing events with regard to the image. I was happy about the successful completion of the task, having no idea that it was just the beginning my long-term service.

While contemplating, I understood that it was not all I was supposed to do. I was to start editing and distributing in all possible languages the brochures with information about the promises of grace of mercy for the dying with the excerpt from the *Diary* of Saint Sister Faustina. I had the impression of seeing that text which I later looked for in the *Diary*. It was the fragment:

...At the hour of their death, I defend as My own glory every soul that will say this chaplet [to Divine Mercy], or when others say it for a dying person - the indulgence is the same. When this chaplet is said by the bedside of a dying person, God's anger is placated, unfathomable mercy envelops the soul...

("Diary" of Saint Sister Faustina, 811).

That experience greatly surprised me, because I never had any interest in editing or publishing and I had no idea how to do it. I was confused but even more scared and thought that it was not possible and by no means could regard me. I returned to my quarters, where two friends from Cracow were waiting for me – one was the interpreter of Italian language and the other of French.

Concerned about my appearance, they asked what happened that I was returning in such a bad state. Since they were people I knew before, I told them about my experience. Two days earlier one of them accompanied me as an interpreter in the “Oasis of Peace” when I agreed on the delivery time of the image of the Merciful Jesus.

When I was thinking that all of that was unreal, my friends calmed me down saying that in Cracow there were such brochures ready for purchase and they could be brought to Medjugorje. They offered their help – which calmed me down for some time.

I talked about my experience with a couple of priests. They all agreed that it was a wonderful idea and should be continued. One of the confessors, who had been in Medjugorje for a long time, encouraged me to carry out this difficult task, adding that the information about the promise of graces of God's Mercy for the dying should also be disseminated in other Marian Shrines.

Thinking for a long time that I was to find someone who would start editing such brochures, I talked about it with many people. I knew already that in Cracow there were no brochures or images with information about the promise of graces for the dying through the Chaplet to Divine Mercy and no one else prints such brochures.

At one of the next pilgrimages, while walking with a group to the Apparition Hill, I commended to Our Lady the problem of my helplessness in completing the task entrusted in me. Suddenly, a calm dialogue came up in my mind. I understood that it was a task for me and that I was to start working on it.

My thoughts focused on what would happen to the pilgrims whom I had committed to bring to Medjugorje. I clearly understood that my declaration of that difficult service was accepted because it was needed for my spiritual growth – literally: *so I could learn to accept people as they were.*

I left the group of my pilgrims with the priest at the Apparition Hill feeling a great need for isolation, to be alone with my thoughts and to analyze what I had experienced. I went to the “Blue Cross” and with inner peace, fully aware of the lack of predispositions, I expressed my readiness to start the task.



After that time, only the previously scheduled groups of pilgrims went to Medjugorie because my phone stopped receiving requests for the pilgrimage. I limited my trips to delivering the brochures and images to Medjugorie.

Thinking back about the church in Andrespól, out of curiosity, I went to the priest Marian Górká to learn why he had not taken the offered gift. It turned out that he thought that it was me who gave up as he had tried to get in touch with me but with no success. Without giving much thought to that misunderstanding, I also funded a painting for this church.

Thinking about my own helplessness and psychological burden of the growing doubts, I organized a pilgrimage to Italy. At the visited sanctuaries, and most of all at the relics of Father Pio and St. Francis and St. Clare, I asked for help and protection. At Fathers Pio's, each pilgrim could pick a card with a message.

Mine included three words: *Misericordia, Misericordia, Misericordia.*

With the prayer group "Canaan" I went for the Hour of Grace (on December 8) to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Fatima in Zakopane. On my way there, at the tomb of Saint Sister Faustina in Cracow Łagiewniki, I renewed my readiness asking Lord Jesus for the grace of humility and understanding of what I was supposed to do, so that it would be in accordance with His Will.

I returned from these pilgrimages stronger and ready to work. I asked for help from father Józef Janiec, head of the Publishing House of the Łódź Archdiocese, who gladly gave me some tips. My problem was that I did not have a computer and I did not know how to use one.

At one of the prayer meetings, I was approached by a young man – Maciej Kubiak. He knew that I was organizing pilgrimages and he offered to help me. He said that he had a lot of time and wanted to get involved in something gratuitously. We did not know each other earlier and he did not know that I was supposed to do something else besides organizing pilgrimages. It turned out that he was a graduate of Polish language studies and worked in printing industry. He knew English and could also communicate in three other languages.

Mr. Kazimierz Stępień also offered his help and on his own initiative installed at my home internet connection and gave me a computer with some initial instructions how to use it.

Maciej was helping me for a long time in preparing materials for printing and during trips when I needed an interpreter. Indispensable was his negotiations skill in English at the main telecommunication office in Lithuania. The negotiations regarded a permit to organize the first broadcast from Vilnius for "Radio Maryja" in 2002 – the broadcast of the finale of the nine-month Novena at the Church of the Holy Spirit (more information will follow). At that time, going through all the required formalities was very difficult and it seemed to be humanly impossible.

I knew that Maciej had some personal problems but I never asked him about them. After a longer stay in Medjugorie, he felt a need to bring stability to his life. In Medjugorie he met his future wife – they live in Italy and have three children.

Despite various situations, including the unpleasant ones, the participants of the pilgrimages left me with wonderful memories, always strengthening my faith with amazing testimonies of God's work in their lives. These testimonies constituted the most wonderful prize for the incurred efforts of pilgrimages – since they were confirming the presence of God in completing that mission.

My contacts with pilgrims shaped also my service. Two participants of the pilgrimage to Medjugorie – Izabela and Ireneusz Otulski – were the ones who told me about the circumstances of the painting of the first image of the Merciful Jesus in Vilnius. They also told me about the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus – founded by the father Michael Sopoćko*. This knowledge encouraged me to become more interested in the contents of the Diary of St. Faustina.

To start spreading Divine Mercy worship, it was necessary to obtain the consent of the church authorities. I tried to re-establish my contacts with the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus**, but my numerous planned trips to Cracow did not work out for various reasons beyond my control.

*Father Michael Sopoćko, confessor and spiritual director of Saint Sister Faustina, was directly connected to the secret of apparitions of the Merciful Jesus. God gave him a very important task – completion of the mission entrusted in sister Faustina. He devoted almost his entire life to this task.

**The Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus founded in 1947 by the Blessed Father Michael Sopoćko as an answer to the request of Lord Jesus – is a multinational contemplative-active community spreading the Divine Mercy worship. Through their apostolic work at a few dozen convents in Poland and abroad, the Sisters respond to the current needs of the Church, e.g.: they run hospices, pro-life houses, conduct retreats and catechizations. The Congregation is a Religious Institute by papal right.

Considering the earlier information, together with father Ryszard Grekiewicz and with the leader of the prayer group Anna Klimowicz, we went to Gorzów Wielkopolski to establish connection with the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus. We were sincerely received by sister Helena Świątek, acting superior of that convent. She introduced us to the history and charism of the Congregation.

I told sister Maria Kalinowska, the Mother Superior of the Sister of the Merciful Jesus, about what encouraged me to make the decision to work on the publication of the brochure with the information about the promise of graces connected with the new forms of Divine Mercy worship, and especially the promise of the grace of mercy for the dying.

Sister Maria accepted my proposal with understanding and kindness. Upon obtaining by the Congregation the *imprimatur* from the Curia of the Szczecin Diocese (with a significant date of November 16, the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy), in 1998 I started printing the brochures and images of the Merciful Jesus for evangelization needs. I copied the image from the photography given to me by sister Maria, taken a few years earlier by the Rev. prof. Stanisław Świdziński. In the edited brochure was also information about Blessed Father Michael Sopoćko. I always consulted the content and the graphics of the printouts with sister Maria. For me, it was a very difficult time as every effort was needed to make sure that the information was provided in a simple and comprehensible for everyone way and translated into several foreign languages.

The confidence that sister Maria placed in me was something special in my life. It was an impulse for growth of my sensitivity to the need to share with others all that I received from God without any own merits.

The images in various languages are gladly accepted and distributed by the Community "Cenacolo" in Medjugorie. When I was participating in the pilgrimages, I had the consent of the Franciscans to leave the packages with the images in the sacristy of the St. James church so the priests from various countries could take them to their parishes. I had a special place in the "Oasis of Peace" chapel where brochures and images for pilgrims were placed.

The brochures displayed at the “Oasis of Peace” caught the attention of young Julián Gonzales, of Italian-Argentinean origin. In Medjugorje he tried to discern the God’s plan for his future. After reading the brochure in Spanish, he felt an exceptional closeness to Fr. Michael Sopoćko, so much so that over time he wanted to adopt him as a role model in his priestly life. After a short time, he started studying at the seminary, first in Italy and then in Vilnius, where he was ordained a priest - he became the initiator of the Community of the Brothers of Merciful Jesus.

While visiting a friend in Poland, Julian learned who was bringing these brochures to Medjugorje. He wanted to meet me to tell me how that event helped him to recognize his vocation to the priesthood and that because I contributed to that significantly, he wanted to thank me.



Fot.: Osservatore Romano

Although not very often, I keep in touch with Father Julian, who is the current superior of that Community. One of the nice surprises resulting from our contacts was an unexpected gift – the photography from the St. Peter’s Square, when the Pope Francis is blessing the copy of the picture with the image of Merciful Jesus, which I had sent to Father Julian earlier.

VATICAN, St. Peter’s Square
Pope Francis
Audience General, May 8, 2013

A Russian missionary met in Medjugorje asked me for a large number of images in Russian. He said that the Message of the Divine Mercy is known in Russia. For the images of the Merciful Jesus to be accepted in Russia they should be in the form of an icon intended for worship, written with the procedures required in the Orthodox Church (conformity with the record of the message, impartial intention, sacrifice in form of fasting, suffering, and a personal prayer). All these conditions were kept by sister Faustina at the time of the painting of the first image of Merciful Jesus.

One of the first recipients of the images of the Merciful Jesus was father Mieczysław Łabiak, a Polish missionary in Belarus. He was able to get a few packages with images to Belarus despite very rigorous border controls. He took the risk because he felt God's protection and he did not know how it was possible that the border guards did not see these packages.

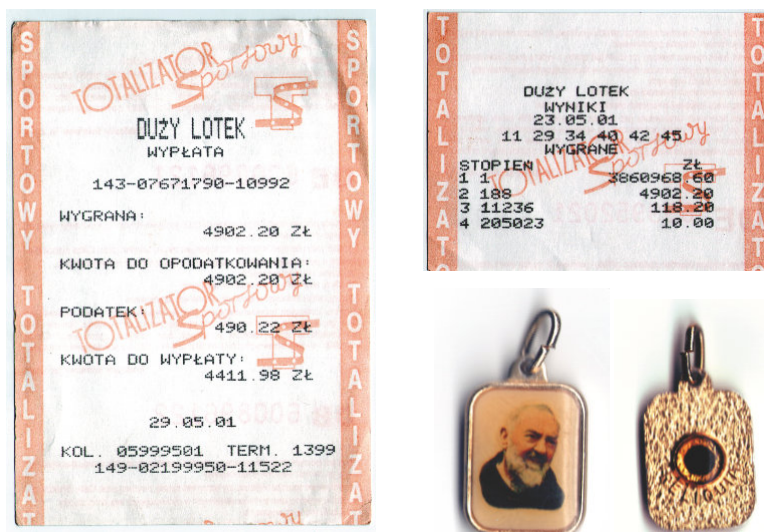
He informed me that he was coming to Poland in a couple of days and asked to prepare the images in Polish, Belarusian and Russian languages. I did not have such images or the money to print them, but I ordered the printing hoping that I would manage somehow.

On the way to the organizational meeting with the pilgrims, I stopped at a service shop to copy the pilgrimage plan, there was also a lotto kiosk. A thought to purchase the lotto ticket crossed my mind but I ignored it as I am not a fan of gambling. When I was paying for the copying service, a medal with the relic of the saint Father Pio fell out my wallet. When I was picking it up, that thought – to purchase the ticket – returned, this time much stronger. Even though I thought it was a bit funny, I decided to buy the ticket as maybe it was him who wanted me to do so (father Pio). A week later, when I was making photocopies again, I noticed in my wallet the unchecked lotto ticket and just for the sake of formality I checked it.

Amount of money won turnout out to be the exact amount which I needed at that time to pay for the invoice at the printing shop, this experience prevented me from functioning normally for several days (it was year 2001).

I had never earlier experienced such undisturbed feeling of freedom in giving away something that it could have been very helpful to me, since my laundry machine was broken and I also had other needs.

I have kept the lotto ticket and the medal with Father Pio as a souvenir.



Beside the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, in spreading the brochures and images of the Merciful Jesus got involved many missionaries and priests as well as volunteers serving at hospitals and in prisons. On a larger scale got involved also lay persons, including:

Violetta Wawer in Paris – co-founder of the association “For Mercy”. Association that promotes the message of Divine Mercy in various available forms in French language.

Czesław Mazur with family – for many years in Madrid sponsored the printouts of the image of Merciful Jesus in Spanish for various churches all over the world. Through him the painting of the Merciful Jesus was received by several convents of the Congregation of Missionaries of Charity including the motherhouse (of Mather Teresa) in Calcutta.

Julita Nazdrowicz-Woodley in London – keeps in touch with missionaries in many countries founding the printouts with the image of the Merciful Jesus.

Thanks to the pilgrimages, the support of my activities by the Congregation, and the generosity of many people, I was able for many years to print and deliver the brochures and images in many languages to many places for evangelization. For example, only the St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Andrew Bobola Jesuit parish in Jastrzębia Góra distributed about 200,000 of images during the stay as the superior of father Józef Łągwa, SJ.

One of the prison chaplains suggested to me the need to print the images of the Merciful Jesus not only with the promise of the graces but also with the entire text of the Divine Mercy Chaplet: Our Father..., Hail Mary..., I believe in God..., explaining that it was very needed, not only for prisoners.



Jezu, ufam Tobie

Obraz Jezusa Miłosiernego namalowany na życzenie Zbawiciela, według wskazówek św. siostry Faustyny w 1934 r. w Wilnie. Obraz ten jest czczony w Sanktuarium Miłosierdzia Bożego w Wilnie.

Pan Jezus powiedział: „Obliczuj, że dusza, która czcił będzie ten obraz, nie zginie. Obliczuj także, już tu na ziemi, zwycięstwo nad nieprzyjaciółmi, szczególnie w godzinie śmierci” (Dz. 47).

„Przez obraz ten udzielać będą wiele łask, a przez to niech ma przystęp wszelka dusza do niego” (Dz. 570).

KORONKA DO MIŁOSIERNIA BOŻEGO

Koronkę do Miłosierdzia Bożego poddyktował Pan Jezus św. siostrze Faustynie w Wilnie 13-14 września 1935 r. jako modlitwę o uproszczenie łaski miłosierdzia Bożego dla grzeszników.

„Przez nią uprosisz wszystko, jeżeli to, o co prosisz będzie zgodne z wolą moją” (Dz. 1731).

„Odmawiaj nieustannie tę koronkę, której cię nauczyłem. Ktokolwiek będzie ją odmawiał, dostąpi wielkiego miłosierdzia w godzinie śmierci. Kapłani będą ją podawać grzesznikom jako ostatnią deskę ratunku; chociażby grzesznik był najzawziętszy, jeżeli tylko raz zmówi tę koronkę, dostąpi łaski i nieskończonego miłosierdzia mojego” (Dz. 687).

„Każdą duszę bronię w godzinie śmierci, jako swej chwały, która odmawiać będzie tę koronkę albo przy konającym inni odmówią – odpustu tego samego dostępują” (Dz. 811).

Do odmawiania na różańcu: „Na początku:

Ojciec nasz, któryś jest w niebie, święc się imię Twoje, przyjdź królestwo Twoje, bądź wola Twoja, jako w niebie, tak i na ziemi. Chleba naszego powszedniego daj nam dzisiaj i odpuszc nam nasze winy jako i my odpuszczamy naszym winowajcom, i nie wódz nas na pokuszenie, ale nas zbaw ode złego. Amen.


Zdrowaś Maryjo, łaski pełna, Pan z Tobą, Błogosławionaś Ty między niewiastami i błogosławiony owoc żywota Twojego, Jezus. Święta Maryjo, Matko Boża, módl się za nami grzesznymi teraz i w godzinie śmierci naszej. Amen.

Wierzę w Boga, Ojca wszechmogącego, Stworzyciela nieba i ziemi. I w Jezusa Chrystusa, Syna Jego Jedynego, Pana naszego, który się poczył z Ducha Świętego, narodził się z Maryi Panny, umęczon pod Ponckim Piłatem, ukrzyżowan, umarł i pogrzebion; zstąpił do piekieł; trzeciego dnia zmartwychwstał; wstąpił na niebiosa; siedzi po prawicy Boga Ojca wszechmogącego, stamtąd przyjdzie sądzić żywych i umarłych. Wierzę w Ducha Świętego; święty Kościół powszechny; świętych obcowanie; grzechów odpuszczenie; ciała zmartwychwstanie; żywot wieczny. Amen.

Na dużych paciorkach (1 x): **Ojciec Przedwieczny, ofiaruj Ci Ciało i Krew, Duszę i Bóstwo najmilszego Syna Twojego, a Pana naszego Jezusa Chrystusa, na przeżycie za grzechy nasze i całego świata. Na małych paciorkach (10 x): Dla Jego bolesnej męki miej miłosierdzie dla nas i całego świata.**

Na zakończenie (3 x): **Święty Boże, Święty Mocny, Święty Nieśmiertelny, zmiłuj się nad nami i nad całym światem”** (Dz. 476).

(Fragmety „Dzienniczka” św. siostry Faustyny)

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Sanktuarium Miłosierdzia Bożego 74-300 Mysłiborz, ul. Bohaterów Warszawy 77, tel. 95 747 34 50

www.faustyna.eu

One day at a prayer meeting, a young woman sat next to me. Her behavior indicated that she had a big problem and she would leave soon. Something inspired me to give her a brochure; I asked her if she would accept it. She took it gladly and after making a contact with me, she felt more confident and stayed at the meeting.

That woman later looked for me to tell me about her experience and to thank me for the meeting which she had attended only because she was forced by her family. On the following day, she was to leave forever for some sect she had been in contact with for some time. Her desperate mother asked her to do something for her before she would leave and to go to a prayer group meeting at the Jesuit church. Earlier, the daughter did not want to hear about it.

On her way home from the meeting, she read the brochure and she experienced something that she called a brainwave and restoration of mind. When we met, she said that she had already gone to confession and returned to Church.

The direction of my trips and the type of service were gradually changing. It required from me even bigger flexibility and commitment to focus on new tasks:

- the implementation of decision made by the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus about conservation of the first image of the Merciful Jesus in Vilnius,
- preparing texts for the website **www.faustyna.eu**, and issuing the book – *Jesus, I trust in You. Love and Mercy*. The scope of options to spread the information about graces with regard to the new forms of the Divine Mercy worship, and especially the promise of the grace of mercy for the dying, was growing.

III

In the prayer group “Canaan”, we had a tradition to go for a pilgrimage for the feast of Divine Mercy – we went to Cracow, Rome and Medjugorie (1998), where an interesting incident took place.

The “Oasis of Peace” was filled with Polish pilgrims as the 3 o’clock prayer with the Divine Mercy Chaplet was ending. Suddenly someone outside the chapel (not from our group) asked the person leading the prayer (Halina Kocik) to read the text of the Act of Consecration of Poland to the Divine Mercy written by father Michael Sopoćko.

In 1999, before the feast of Divine Mercy, the Superior of the Jesuits in Łódź, father Józef Łągwa, SJ, asked me if I had been planning any trip because he thought I should go to Vilnius. I did not feel such a need back then. I said that maybe one day I would go there.

At the meeting of the leaders of the prayer group, we talked about the possibilities of going to the Feast of the Divine Mercy. When I heard that it would be good to go to Vilnius this year, I felt awkward because Father Łągwa, SJ, had previously proposed such a trip to me. So I went to Father Łągwa to tell him that I had decided to go to Vilnius.

When I told him the date, father Józef showed me the same date written down in a planner for a pilgrimage he was preparing, for which he had ordered a bus, accommodation and had a list of people willing to go. We decided that in such a situation we would not change anything. I asked father Józef to take four people: two sisters from the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, Halina Kocik and myself. The father agreed. I cannot explain why I so spontaneously proposed the participation in the pilgrimage of these four people.

Mother Superior of the Congregation gave her consent to the participation of sister Bernarda Sural and sister Stanisława Gontarz in that trip.

Together we decided that the most important goal of our pilgrimage to Vilnius would be prayer at the Church of the Holy Spirit where the first painting of the Merciful Jesus was located. On the fourth day of our pilgrimage, at the feast of Divine Mercy, as we agreed on earlier, the four of us went to the Church of the Holy Spirit. Father Łągwa, SJ, together with the pilgrims, was to come to the temple for the Holy Mass. at. 3pm A few hours of praying before the painting with the Image of the Merciful Jesus passed like a moment. Before 3pm Halina gave me the Bible to open it and pointed to the Word of God. It was Zechariah 6: 1-8.

...These are going forth to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth. The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white ones go toward the west country, and the dappled ones go toward the south country." When the steeds came out, they were impatient to get off and patrol the earth. And he said, "Go, patrol the earth." So they patrolled the earth...

At the Church of the Holy Spirit we saw how neglected the first painting with the Image of the Merciful Jesus was. It was placed in a dark side altar it does not arouse any interest of pilgrims or tourist groups visiting the Church. At that time I was already printing the brochures and little pictures with that Image and information of the grace of Divine Mercy to be received through it together with the information about the location of the painting.

I realized how disappointed it can be for anyone who decides to come to this church encouraged by printed information. I experienced a feeling of responsibility and the need to do something with that. When we came back, I talked with the Sisters about various possibilities to bring that place to life. Taking into consideration the Word of God and our feelings, we came to the conclusion that it should not be a one-off event, because it would not bring any effect. One of the ideas was the longterm Novena.

* English version of scripture quotations from: The Revised Standard Version of the Bible: Catholic Edition, copyright © 1965, 1966 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

For a long time, the sisters in the Congregation tried to recognize God's Will in these ideas through prayer, bearing in mind the possibility and conditions for their implementation.

I already forgot about our talks, when three months later sister Teresa Szałkowska informed me about the decision of the Congregation and asked for help to organize the nine-month Novena at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius. It consisted in the departure of an organized group of pilgrims each month for a three-day adoration of the Blessed Sacrament before the painting of the Merciful Jesus.

I agreed to that without hesitation. I didn't think about how difficult it would be to complete such undertaking and in what conditions we would have to travel for so many months – roads not cleared from the snow and staying at adoration in the cold damp church.

The Novena began in August 1999 and ended in April 2000 at the feast of Divine Mercy. As it turned out later, that day was selected by the Holy Father for the canonization of sister Faustina.

I had less than a week to organize the first trip. In preparing that undertaking I experienced an extraordinary protection of Divine Providence. It regarded the organization of the vehicle, accommodation and the priest willing to participate in the Novena. Unexpectedly, a friend of mine Bogusława Rolkiewicz proposed that her husband would go with us to Vilnius in their new car. Then, I recalled a letter I received earlier from London from Anna Mitura (now Anna Karczemska), who studied there. I knew her earlier from the prayer group in Łódź. She wanted to inform me that she met Inga Mrych (now Inga Vinall) from Vilnius. Inga told her many important things about the first painting of Merciful Jesus. Her mother was taking care of the sick Lithuanian*, who together with a Pole back in 1950s removed that painting from St. Michael church in Vilnius liquidated by the Soviets. Anna was convinced that I should meet Inga's mother, because everything she had heard from her would be very interesting to me. She gave me a phone number to Mrs. Jadwiga Adaśko.

* The Lithuanian and the Polish girl were pupils of Fr. Michael Sopoćko during their studies at the University of Vilnius and they had knowledge about new forms of worship of the Divine Mercy and the value of the painting. According the account of a Lithuanian woman, Fr. Sopoćko forced to leave Vilnius, concerned about the fate of the painting, authorized a priest friend to take care of it. This priest, whose name Mrs. Jadwiga did not remember, watched over the situation by donating 300 rubles to buy the painting from the liquidated church.

I made contact with Mrs. Jadwiga and it was thanks to her efforts, for the entire duration of the novena, we were welcomed by the Sisters of the Eucharist. For Ms. Jadwiga, the mission we undertook was also the need of her heart, she served us with selfless help throughout our arrivals. Our friendly bond lasted for many years.

The Adoration at the time of Novena required the presence of the priest. I knew that after the two-year stay in the “Oasis of Peace” in Medjugorje, father Ryszard Grefkowicz had returned to Łódź. He had time as he was waiting to be assigned for service at a parish. He agreed to go to Vilnius without asking about details. When we were on our way, he asked us about the purpose of our trip to Vilnius. After learning the reason, he said that he had finally understood why he had felt the urge to return home to get the Mission Cross.

In my conversation with the Mother Superior of the Congregation I expressed my concern that beside the consent of the parish priest, there was no information about the Novena in Vilnius, and that only five people were to start the Great Novena. I did not understand her answer back then as she told me that everything that is needed has been prepared and is enough, for her to trust, and the Lord Jesus, if it is in accordance with God's Will, will take care of the rest.

To my surprise, on the third day of the first Novena already 50 people participated in the prayers and the number increased in the subsequent months. Gradually, the adoration was joined by the residents of Vilnius and the surrounding areas. The prayer was led all the time by Sisters from the Congregation of the Sisters of the Merciful Jesus.

It was very emotional for me to hear the prayers said in the beautiful Old Polish language by older people who joined the Novena. They were entrusting to the Merciful Jesus multiple human problems as well as the problems of the entire world. I had never participated before in such sincere, coming from the heart, spontaneous prayer.

In organizing subsequent trips, in which he always participated different composition of people, various obstacles accumulated, but the grace of patience and courage given to me at that time did not leave me to the end. Also, our pilgrimage welcomed the new year of two thousand with night adoration in front of the Image of Merciful Jesus in the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius.

I received a lot of help and kindness during that difficult time from father Eugeniusz Śpiołek, SchP, founder of the Community of Our Lady of Peace in Cracow, whom I met earlier during trips to Medjugorje. He was really helpful with organizing the trips to Vilnius and gave me a lot of spiritual support in completing the undertakings.

Also the acquaintance with father Piotr Andrukiewicz, CSsR, (met in Medjugorje, serving at "Radio Maryja"), resulted in three transmissions on the radio (then using my mobile phone) of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy prayer from the ongoing Novena in Vilnius.

At the end of the Novena on the Feast of Divine Mercy in 2000 "Radio Maryja" (ang. "Radio Mary") carried out the official broadcast of this ceremony. Father Piotr also supported me in the later dissemination of pictures of Merciful Jesus during meetings of the "Radio Maryja Family" at Jasna Góra, and in placing a large copy of the first picture with the Image of Merciful Jesus on Jasna Góra Embankment during these celebrations.



The painting of the Merciful Jesus on the Jasna Góra Walls

At the end of my arrivals for the Novena, Fr. Jan Kasiukiewicz, then the parish priest of the Church of the Holy Spirit, I asked for permission to illuminate the painting. I had the feeling that that he consented only through my importunity, because in our conversations I have heard many times that my efforts make no sense, that this picture is dark and very ugly by nature.



It did not discourage me. During our next trip to Vilnius for the Novena, we installed on the side pillars special lights purchased in Częstochowa. The effect was surprising because despite visible damages and spots, the painting was beautifully displayed.

Shortly after the Novena there was a change of parish priest at the church of the Holy Spirit. The new parish priest was father Mirosław Grabowski. He asked the Sisters to provide the service at this church. Accepting the invitation, with consent of Vilnius curia, the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus created a new mission in Vilnius, and as much as it was possible, took care of the painting.

The stay of the Sisters in Vilnius began in very difficult material and housing conditions - they had to change their place of residence many times. It was not until 2004 that the sisters' religious life stabilized. Cardinal Audrys Juozas Bačkis, Metropolitan of Vilnius, gave to the Congregation two buildings to live and work at 4a Rassa St., where in 1934 the first painting with the image of the Merciful Jesus was painted – currently it is a convent chapel where many pilgrims come.

IV

I talked many times with Sister Maria, Superior General of the Congregation, about an urgent need of the conservation of the painting. However, after the hardships of organizing pilgrimages to Vilnius for nine months, I did not want to get engaged into that. The Superior of the convent sister Helena Świątek tried to obtain funds for the conservation of the painting, but with no success.

She approached the Senate of the Republic of Poland and the Marshal of the Republic of Poland, prof. Andrzej Stelmachowski, president of the "Polish Community" Association. It resulted in the Association sending to Vilnius a restorer to evaluate the condition of the painting. The restorer returned very pleased with the hospitality of the parish priest but was very critical about the painting. In her opinion, its value was not worth investing into its conservation. She suggested painting over the damages and spots.

Sister Helena was not persuaded by this opinion and continued to try to obtain money for the painting's conservation. She asked me to find another restorer to conduct another evaluation of the real condition of the painting.

A friend of mine recommended a well-known in Łódź restorer, the art historian prof. Ewa Marxen-Wolska, PhD. Mrs. Wolska was an older person. She was very happy with the proposal of restoration of the first image of the Merciful Jesus because she had known about its existence and she had a great desire to see it. She said that because of her age she would be able to act as the consultant but the work would be outsourced to another person. She could guarantee for the work to be done so well that she would be able to sign under it. That person was Mrs. Edyta Hankowska-Czerwińska from Włocławek – restorer of works of art, a graduate of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

Mrs. Wolska and Mrs. Czerwińska scheduled their trip to Vilnius together. They wanted to see the painting to evaluate its condition and the chances for conservation. But it became impossible since a few days later as a result of disease complications Mrs. Wolska lost her sight. Hoping that it was temporary, she asked to start the undertaking without her. But the health condition of Mrs. Wolska did not improve over time – she did not regain her sight until the end of her life.

After contacting Mrs. Edyta, we went to Vilnius to determine if she would be able to conduct the conservation work by herself. After detailed inspection of the painting, she agreed. But unfavorable circumstances delayed that work – among others, we still had no money.

A few months later, when the issue of the conservation resurfaced, the Organizer of the National Youth Meeting at Lednica Fields – father Jan Góra, OP, scheduled a spectacle about Divine Mercy for the youth meeting in 2003. He had an idea to display during that spectacle (under the “Ichthys” constituting an altar), a very large image of Merciful Jesus and to give to participants images with the Chaplet to Divine Mercy. He needed about 120 000 small images as that many participants were expected.

Father Góra turned to sister Maria because he wanted it to be the copy of the first image from Vilnius. He knew that we were printing such images for the evangelization needs and there was a Foundation registered for that purpose. But for the image to be so much enlarged, it was necessary to provide a high resolution photography or slide. No one had such photography and it was not possible to make it due to the damages and spots on the painting. We talked with sister Maria about how disappointing it would be for father Góra. We did not know how to tell him that.

Next day I got a phone call from Mr. Kazimierz Stępień who already many times supported my work in various ways (among others, he paid for the posters for bulletin boards at all churches; these posters included information about the possibility to obtain graces of mercy for the dying for praying the Chaplet to Divine Mercy). He asked me if he could come over as he was in the neighborhood. He asked me about my plans for the near future. I told him about the problems with printing of the image of the Merciful Jesus for father Jan Góra, needed for the youth meeting for the Lednica.

Mr. Kazimierz had a completely different view at that situation – he said that we should not give up. In his opinion, if the obstacle is the outstanding renovation of the painting, it had to be done as soon as possible. The meeting in Lednica was to take place in three months.

Our further conversation regarded estimating the possible cost of the conservation work. I already did some research earlier and I knew that at least 10,000 Polish zlotys were needed just to start the work. I did not have such money. Without any hesitation Mr. Kazimierz declared that he could have contributed such an amount. I was surprised by his proposal because he was not a rich person and I did not expect it. I informed Sister Maria about this, asking her advice on what to do in this situation. Her decision was clear – we should take the risk to perform the conservation. She asked me to go to Vilnius to get the permission and then we would see what would happen next. The parish priest Mirosław Grabowski did not have any problems to get the permission at the Vilnius curia.

Later it turned out, that no one in the curia knew that the first painting of the Merciful Jesus was in Vilnius and that the request for the consent to conservation work regarded that particular painting. I passed the good news to sister Maria and Mr. Kazimierz. Already the next day, the money for this purpose was in the account of the earlier established Foundation.

I asked once Mr. Kazimierz how was it that he was always showing up unexpectedly with selfless help, exactly when it was needed. He said that he did not know but being able to help in such a case made him very happy.

Because 18 months passed since our initial contacts with the restorer Mrs. Edyta, I informed her about the opportunity to go on with the conservation. I wanted to know if she was still interested in the work. It turned out that it would be problematic because she had a nine-month old daughter and was still breastfeeding. So she would have to go away with the baby and have someone to take care of the baby while she is working.

We had to make the decision if we could handle the organization of the trip of Mrs. Edyta with the child and provide the proper care for the baby. The sisters decided to adjust to the situation and keep the earlier arrangements.

When everything was ready for the trip, there was a nasty surprise. Father Grabowski and a man representing the “Polish Community” asked me to immediately give them the money received by the Foundation for that purpose, because they decided that they would do the conservation work themselves.

I said that it was not possible as there was not some Foundation but my Foundation and I saw no reason why I should donate money so that they could do the work themselves. A few hours later father Grabowski informed me that he was misled and asked to continue with the organization of the trip. (copy of the Agreement p. 45)

Father Józef Łągwa SJ helped me in organizing the trip, he asked his friend to go with us to Vilnius. He had a large car and it was possible to load items needed for painting conservation and equipment for a child (including a baby cot) for a longer stay. With all the equipment and a child crying because of the long journey, we reached Vilnius.

Mrs. Edyta, a conservator, was accommodated in the convent of the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, because the painting was being conserved in the chapel of that house. At the beginning, there was a problem with the child as she did not approve the babysitters in black habits.



Already on the day after our arrival, at the church of the Holy Spirit, the painting was removed from the frames and replaced with the printed earlier copy of it. How low the awareness about the value of the painting in Vilnius was – was proven by the situation.

At the time when all people at the church focused on assembling the copy of the painting, the sacristan took the original painting removed from the altar under his arm and headed for the convent of Sisters where the conservation work was to take place. Worried about the safety of the painting, I went out to catch the walking away sacristan and to secure the painting so it would not attract the interest of the passers-by. And so we were walking together down the streets of Vilnius with the painting covered with a simple blanket, heading for the place of Sisters who lived next to the railway station.

How very different from that event was what I saw on a computer screen thirteen years later. I have received a version of the website **www.faustyna.eu** translated into Lithuanian.

To upload it to the site, we needed a code for Lithuanian language. For that purpose Mr. Tomasz Perek incidentally opened a Lithuanian website **www.l24.lt** to see the code (Mr. Tomasz has been preparing materials for printing and websites for me for about twenty years, and Mr. Jarosław Śmięgielski selflessly updates the prepared files on the server).

Unexpectedly, we were surprised by the view of the broadcast from the religious event in Lithuania, ending the National Congress of Mercy organized as a part of celebrating the Year of Mercy (2016). On the streets of Vilnius there was a solemn procession with a beautifully decorated with flowers painting of the Merciful Jesus. It was with participation by the legate Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, and the Lithuanian authorities, priests, friars and a large number of the faithful. In this way the Lithuanian church wanted to fulfill the promise and obtain from the Merciful Jesus the blessing for the town.

I was extremely happy to see that, although for a while, as a human, I felt sorry that I could not be there because I had not known about that celebration.



When the image was displayed, I saw a sudden movement of the hand of Jesus, as He made a large sign of the cross. In the evening of the same day, (...) I saw the image going over the town, and the town was covered with what appeared to be a mesh and nets. As Jesus passed, He cut through all the nets...
(“Diary” of Saint Sister Faustina, 416).

During the time of the conservation work I went to Vilnius many times. Among other things I brought lamps borrowed from Mrs. Wolska enabling the observation of the painting in UV lighting. Accompanying the restorer, I could see in details the numerous over-paintings and the results of unprofessional renovations which completely distorted facial features of Lord Jesus, as well as numerous damages resulting from the turbulent history of the painting. I watched the arduous work of removing all over-paintings and the amazing end result, when the true, full of majesty Image of the Merciful Jesus with his contemplative full of merciful love gaze was revealed. I also saw the marks after corrections made by the painter Kazimirowski*, when at the request of sister Faustina, he modified a few times the position of hands of Lord Jesus. I also saw the marks after numerous removals of the painting from the frames – the painting was preserved in its original size (it was not cut off).

* Eugeniusz Kazimirowski – the creator of the first Image of the Merciful Jesus. Notes p.46

We were eagerly waiting for progress in the conducted restoration so we could – still before the end of it – make the slide needed to print the enlarged copy of the painting for the youth meeting in Lednica. When the circumstances were favorable, I went to Vilnius with Ewa and Sławomir Śmi-gielski, my friends from the Community. Sławomir undertook to make the slide and he made every effort to make sure that the figure of Lord Jesus would be maximally big. But when we returned, it turned out that the painting was only two centimeters in size and the entire slide included its surrounding. We were very worried whether we would be able to print the image needed.

I contacted Mr. Marek Kiecana from Warsaw, who supported financially the printing of the brochures and posters (among others, he paid for the posters for the church bulletin boards with the image of the Merciful Jesus and the Divine Mercy Message, which with the introductory letter of the Mother Superior of the Congregation were sent through the Curia to all parishes in Poland; he also initiated the website of the Congregation).

I wanted to ask him for the information about a place to print a big picture because I remembered that once we spoke about the printing of the promotional materials for his company. I told him about the picture needed for Father Góra on the Lednica and that I had only a two-centimeter slide and was not sure if that was enough. Mr. Kiecana asked me to bring the slide to his company to see what could be done. At that time, I was able to cover the cost of the printout not bigger than six meters (considering my own savings), and therefore, I was asking to try to enlarge the printout of the image up to that height.

It turned out that Mr. Kiecana was once in Lednica and in his opinion the size proposed by me would not be visible in the entire area. He thought that the image should have been enlarged to 10m. They talked for a long time, contacting some company with regard to production technique. The issue was for the figure of the Lord Jesus made from such a small slide to be visible. Shortly after that, I got the message that it would be done and that the order was already placed. I did not say anything earlier that the enlarging of the image would be a great financial burden for me but I came to terms with a *fait accompli* and asked where and whom should I pay. Mr. Kiecana said that I could go back home with no worry as it was not my concern anymore. Because he himself will pay for the printed image and deliver it to Fr. Jan Góra to Lednica.

Words cannot express the extent of help of Divine Providence in critical moments of my work. The happiness I felt in these moments was always something I looked for when undertaking new tasks.

Father Jan Góra thanked me and invited me to that event. I went with friends: Halina, Ewa, Sławomir and Andrzej. During that beautiful celebration, there was a very touching moment. During the devotion to Divine Mercy celebrated by bishop Edward Dajczak, everyone saw – lifted at a high crane and beautifully highlighted – the painting with the image of the Merciful Jesus against the background of the white and red rays of light.



This view accompanied the youth during the Chaplet of Divine Mercy prayer. Bishop Dajczak, making sure that everyone received small pictures with the image of the Merciful Jesus and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, he asked them to keep it - **because it is a ticket to Heaven.**

Lednica is a lake in central west Poland which is the very possible place of the baptism of Poland in 966. Fields of Lednica as the important place for history of Poland and Christianity, are known of the annual Youth Prayer Meetings with the especially designed huge gate of the fish shape.

In the solemn procession and the prayers in Lednica participated the Sisters from the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus. For us, it was also a great privilege to participate in a such beautiful and festive atmosphere of prayer of praise – the very first – after the conservation work – public presentation of the copy of the painting with the image of the Merciful Jesus, the painting that was created in the atmosphere of prayer, suffering, and personal participation of Saint Sister Faustina and Blessed Father Michael Sopoćko.

After the conservation work, during which the original look and shape of the painting were restored, the painting was returned to the church of the Holy Spirit. But to make copies of the painting in the offset printing technique we still needed the slide showing its beauty in details. Having involved a professional photographer, I agreed with father Grabowski on the possibility to conduct photo sessions of the painting.

I was encouraged to do so by a friend, Mrs. Julitta Nazdrowicz-Woodley, who was interested in disseminating the painting and lived permanently in London, but often stayed in Łódź. She willingly became involved in the implementation of this session.

She brought from London a specialized camera to make a 20-cm slide. In organizing that trip helped us father Paweł Dziedziczak. He was the student chaplain of the Academic Ministry "Piątka" (Eng. "Five") in Łódź, who offered to take us to Vilnius in his car.

It turned out that it was the last chance for making such session as the interest in the painting suddenly grew (2004). Already after one week, various controversial claims with regard to the painting arose, making the completion of any task impossible. The misunderstanding regarded the decision of the metropolitan of Vilnius cardinal Audrys Juozas Bačkis to move the painting from the church of the Holy Spirit (where the Holy Masses and services were held only in Polish), to the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy. But that situation, lasting for several months, was no longer preventing me from making the photocopies of the painting for evangelization purposes of the Congregation and allow the printing for the evangelization purpose available for all over the world.

One of the slides taken at that time was given by the Metropolitan of Vilnius to the Marians in the USA.



Perpetual adoration at the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy in Vilnius, 12 Dominion St., where the first painting with the image of the Merciful Jesus is displayed.

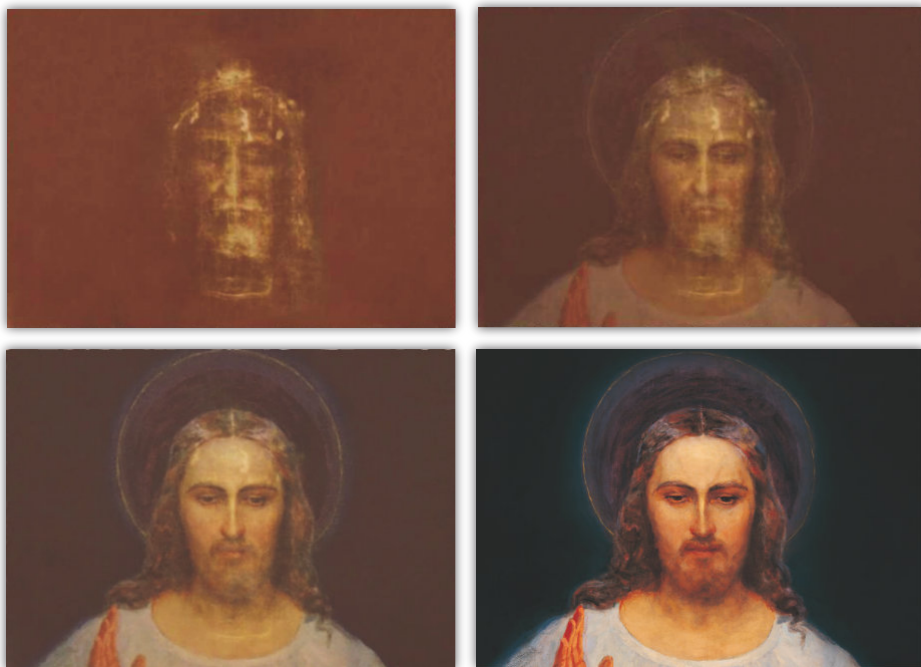
By means of this Image I shall be granting many graces to souls; so, let every soul have access to it.

(“Diary” of Saint Sister Faustina, 570).

The desire to fully fulfill the wish of the Lord Jesus has been in my heart for a long time. It was the motivation to make a copy of the painting with the Image of Merciful Jesus available to anyone who wants to have it in their home, in a chapel or in a church. In order to make it possible, I registered a domain: **www.merciful-jesus.com**. For some time, something kept preventing us from making it work because we were focusing on other tasks. One day, I asked Mr. Tomasz Perek to create this domain.

The following day, when the installed domain was already working, I got a phone call from the restorer Mrs. Edyta, with whom I keep in touch occasionally. She asked me if I knew what had happened. I was sure that she had seen the domain with the image for printing. But she called for a different reason. She wanted to tell me that on that exact day was the 70th anniversary of the death of the painter Eugeniusz Kazimirowski and all restrictions with regard to publicizing the image no longer existed.

Some other interested experience with regard to the Internet concerns the animation of the image. I asked Mr. Tomasz to prepare the test of the animation of pictures: a fragment of the first image of the Merciful Jesus and a fragment of the Shroud of Turin. I remembered that in 1998, when I was with sister Maria in Białystok at the meeting with father Serafin Michalenko, MIC, at the conference he was conducting he showed the enlarged images comparing their size. Mr. Tomasz was not convinced but he said he would try to do something with that. During the attempt of superimposing the images, he was surprised with the compatibility of details in the places visible on the photographs. He was so surprised by the unexpected effect of the interpenetration of the images that at night he woke up his wife to share with her the running animation that giving the impression of the reconstruction of the moment of the resurrection of Lord Jesus*.



The animation of the painting has been available since 2005 on: www.faustyna.eu

* In his publications father Sopoćko confirms that the painting was painted precisely according to the instructions of sister Faustina. The exceptional diligence in the reconstruction of the memorized by her Holy Image of the Savior is demonstrated by the fact that the image in the painting ideally corresponds to the size of the image on the Shroud of Turin.

During my entire over 20 years of service, at the times of doubts or fatigue, I have many times been strengthened by the exceptional coincidences, not possible for the man to arrange in a way they happened. After such experiences, I had always regained strength and internal peace.

Because of increasing difficulties and discouragement, I decided to stop taking care of the website. I went to Vilnius to complain to Lord Jesus and to tell Sisters that I could not manage because I was unfamiliar with that and I did not have proper predispositions to do that. As usually, I was staying at the Sisters' convent. At dinner, across the table was sitting a woman from Australia taking with one of the sisters in English. I learned earlier from the Sisters that she had been praying for a few hours before the "Holy Image" of the Merciful Jesus* at the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy.

Guided by curiosity, I asked the Sister to ask that woman why did she come to Vilnius. She said that after reading the history of the first image of the Merciful Jesus on the website: **www.faustyna.eu** (which I created), she had such a great desire to come to Vilnius, that she spent her entire savings on that trip. It wasn't the first time when my big problem was solved by Lord Jesus in such real and understood by me manner.

A few months later, in 2008, I participated in the 1st Congress of Divine Mercy in Rome. During that Congress, at one of the Holy Masses, at the moment of offering each other the sign of peace, I met the same woman from Australia whom I met in Vilnius – she turned to me and offered me the sign of peace. For both of us it was a very happy sign of peace.

I went to that Congress with the Sisters from the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus. At that time, with the help of sisters and Mrs. Violetta Wawer from Paris, we distributed among the participants a few thousand of brochures in various languages.

* Among the revelations, there is only one known case when Lord Jesus expressed His wish to paint the painting with his image. He Himself expressed and approved His artistic vision – revealing Himself many times to sister Faustina in such a form as it was rendered on the painting in Vilnius. Moreover, by the promise of special graces for the worshippers of that image, He gave to the painting a unique religious value.

The direction of evangelization was indicated by various events. When I was already a member of the prayer group, I experienced a very difficult situation. It regarded a man very close to me who was at a hospital dying and who had not received a sacrament of reconciliation for about 50 years. On that critical day, around 11pm, I was asked to leave the hospital with information that all possibilities of pharmacotherapy were exhausted and there was no chance the man would live. Feeling helpless, I put under his pillow a small picture of the Merciful Jesus with a relic (a thread from the habit) of Saint Sister Faustina.



Awaiting a phone call from the hospital I was united in prayer with the Holy Mass in Licheń ordered in that intention. I had the impression that I was at the hospital at the bedside of the sick man and participated in his dialogue with two other unknown to me people. Seeing the dying person was very sad. One of the strangers, holding up the dying man with great concern, asked: Do you want to meet with God? And the dying man also asked: Do I still have the chance? Yes, but you have to want it. Yes, I want it – he said. Joining the conversation I said: Shall I go for the priest? I heard: It's not yet.

When I could think realistically again, I quickly went to the hospital. I was sure I would receive the information about his death. It was about 8am and the head of the department and all the medical staff were already present in the ward.

I saw strange behavior of doctors and running around nurses. The situation was caused by the view of my sick person, conscious and sitting on his own on the hospital bed. The man kept in his hands the picture of the Merciful Jesus with the relic of Saint Sister Faustina, which was found by a nurse changing his bed sheets. The fate of the person fighting the addiction that was destroying his body unfolded later diversely. But during his next prolonged stay at the hospital, he made a conscious decision to receive the sacraments of reconciliation and anointing of the sick.

These sacraments were provided by father Józef Kozłowski, SJ, who was earlier informed about that critical situation. After receiving the information about the death of that sick man, I asked God during the evening Mass for the grace of salvation for him asking what else I should do in this intention. That night, not fully asleep, I had a strange experience.

I had the impression that in my room there are no walls or ceiling only an endless ray of pink light flowing out into the open space, and in it a heart-wrenching image of the immense immensity of lost, devastated by suffering, sad and poorly dressed people.

I did not see the Lord Jesus, but I was aware of His words:
See what is the situation of those for whom no one stands up and asks.

By spreading information about the promise of graces with regard to the new forms of Divine Mercy worship, and in particular, the grace of Mercy for the dying, I tried as much as I could to implement the charism recognized in the prayer group of Catholic Charismatic Renewal. I kept in mind the inspiration I got in Medjugorje and the entry in the testament left by the Saint Sister Faustina (Diary, 1680),

...that sinners, especially dying sinners, may have recourse to Your mercy and experience the unspeakable effects of this mercy...

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Merciful Jesus and the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, in union with the group of worshippers of the Divine Mercy, for several years have continued an unceasing prayer with the Chaplet to Divine Mercy asking for the Divine Mercy graces for the dying.

My pilgrimage trips spontaneously focused on Medjugorie and Vilnius, drawing my attention to the fact that in these places the crowning of extraordinary works with God's blessing took place at the same time and under the influence of the same circumstances - **the 1900th anniversary of the Jubilee of the Redemption of the World.**

At the beginning of 1934, the parishioners of Medjugorie decided to build a cross at Križevac Mountain. Such an undertaking required the involvement of many people, and those were the poor countryside parishioners, who could not have known that they were preparing the place of worship for thousands of pilgrims.

It is hard to imagine carrying a few tons of construction materials on human backs or the backs of donkeys up to the high mountain full of sharp protruding rocks. How determined they must have been and filled with the grace of faith to recognize God's plan and to fulfill it precisely at the right place and time. The following inscription was engraved on the cross they built: ***To Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the human race as a sign of faith, love and hope, in remembrance of the 1900 years since His passion.***

On August 30, 1984, the Mother of God in the message to the parishioners in Medjugorie said: ***"The Cross was in God's plan when you were building it"***.

My numerous trips to Vilnius allowed me to discover evidence of the presence of Saint Sister Faustina and Blessed Father Michael Sopoćko and traces of their mission that was completed through a great suffering. This mission regarded passing the new forms of Divine Mercy worship. One of the forms is the image of the Merciful Jesus, which **at the beginning of 1934**, thanks to their joint efforts, was painted and for the first time displayed for public veneration at the end of **the Jubilee of the Redemption of the World – 1900 years since the passion of the Lord.** That event was attended by sister Faustina and the homily about the Divine Mercy was given by father Sopoćko – as requested by Lord Jesus.



Cross Mountain
in Medjugorie



The painting
of the Merciful
Jesus displayed
at the Gate of Down
(Vilnius, Lithuania),
during the feast of
the Divine Mercy.
Present view.

“At the Gate of Down, [in Vilnius] during these three days, the closing of the Jubilee of the Redemption of the world was being celebrated, marking the nineteen hundred years that have passed since the Passion of our Savior. I see now that the work of Redemption is bound up with the work of mercy requested by the Lord...”

“When he began to speak [father Sopoćko] about the great mercy of the Lord, the image came alive and the rays pieced the hearts of the people gathered there...” (Diary of Saint Sister Faustina, 89; 417)



Pilgrims near the St. James church in Medjugorie.



Pilgrims at the “Apparition Hill” in Medjugorie.

The power of work of Divine Mercy in Medjugorie has been revealed through the atmosphere of the omnipresent prayer at church and beyond it. It has been proven by the lines to the confessionals and the prayers of pilgrims continuously arriving from every corner of the world, praying on the hills and desiring to experience

THE LOVE OF THE MOTHER AND THE MERCY OF THE SON



JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU

After many years, under a strong influence of co-participants, by this testimony I have tried to document some remarkable events during my long-term service in spreading the Divine Mercy worship and, looking back, to show the fruits of the work of the Divine Providence – the events, that despite numerous neglects, doubts, human weaknesses and lack of the guidelines for the actions, happened at the specific place and time.

I would like to share the experience of how – when we want to fulfill God's will – He makes us capable of performing tasks that may surprise and overwhelm us, especially at the times when having nothing, we get everything that we need at the time.

I think with gratitude about those who left our group and the congregation for eternity, those who at their own initiative protected with their prayers my – sometimes very brave and risky – undertakings.

I thank my family, who thanks to being independent in their everyday life, allowed me to be fully available for this service.

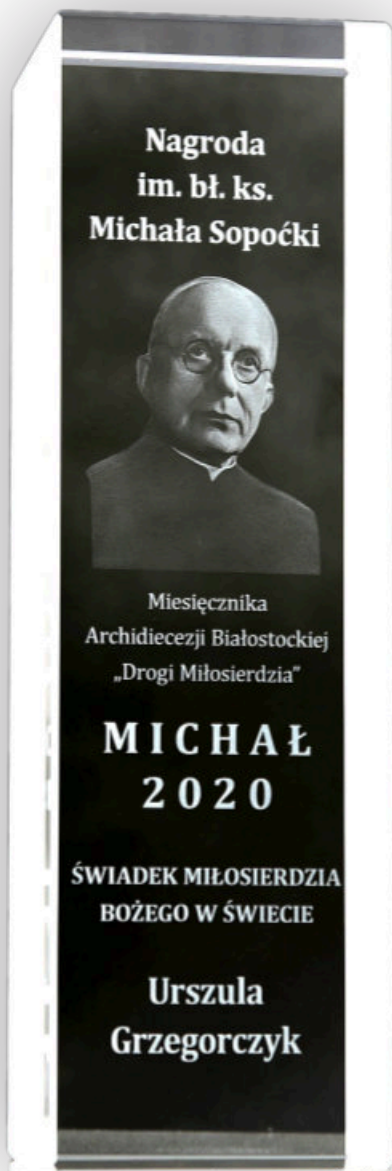
Urszula Grzegorzcyk



Urszula Grzegorzcyk, Maciej Kubiak, friars from the "Oasis of Peace" and father Ryszard Grefkowicz at the pilgrimage to Niepokalanów and Warszawa



December 18, 2018. Participants of the 40th Anniversary of the prayer group of Catholic Charismatic Renewal "Kanaan", Sławomir and Ewa Śmigielski, Bogusław and Anna Klimowicz, current group coordinator Father Józef Łągwa, SJ, Urszula Grzegorzcyk, Halina Kocik.



Award named after blessed
Father Michael Sopoćko

Monthly of the Archdiocese
from Białystok
“The Ways of Mercy”.

MICHAEL 2020

A witness
the mercy of God
in the world.



Medjugorje, church Saint James

*"It is one of the most lively places of worships
and conversions in Europe with healthy spirituality"*

abp Henryk Hoser, SAC.

