

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Faustina Kowalska

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: October 5

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IN BRIEF

Saint Faustina Kowalska

Polish nun, messenger of Divine Mercy.

Feast day	October 5
Born	August 25, 1905, Głogowiec, Poland
Died	October 5, 1938, Kraków-Łagiewniki, Poland
Canonized	April 30, 2000, by Pope John Paul II
Era	20th century

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LIFE

Saint Faustina Kowalska

Saint Faustina Kowalska was a Polish nun who died in 1938 at the age of thirty-three, after devoting her short life to making known the mercy of God. A simple sister assigned to the kitchen, the garden or the convent door, she recorded in her diary the words she said she had received from Christ. From them come the image of the Divine Mercy, with the words "Jesus, I trust in you," and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Canonized by Saint John Paul II in 2000, she is celebrated on October 5.

Who was Saint Faustina Kowalska?

Helena Kowalska was born on August 25, 1905, in Głogowiec, a village in central Poland, then under Russian rule. She was the third of ten children in a poor and very devout peasant family. She went to school for less than three years, and as a teenager she began working as a housemaid for families in Aleksandrów Łódzki and Łódź to help her parents.

She said she felt the call to religious life very early, but her parents opposed it. According to her own account, in 1924, while at a dance in Łódź, she saw the suffering Christ, who reproached her for keeping him waiting. That same evening she left for Warsaw, went into a church and understood that she must look for a convent. After several refusals, she was accepted by the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, which she entered on August 1, 1925.



The Divine Mercy, first image painted by Eugeniusz Kazimirowski in Vilnius in 1934 under Sister Faustina's direction.

Key dates in the life of Saint Faustina

- **August 25, 1905**: Born in Głogowiec, Poland.
- **August 1, 1925**: Enters the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Warsaw.
- **April 30, 1926**: Receives the habit and the name Sister Maria Faustina.
- **February 22, 1931**: In Płock, vision of the merciful Christ, who asks her to have his image painted.
- **May 1, 1933**: Perpetual vows in Kraków.
- **1933-1936**: Stay in Vilnius, where she meets her confessor, Father Michał Sopoćko.
- **1934**: The painter Eugeniusz Kazimirowski completes the first image of the Divine Mercy; Faustina begins her diary.
- **September 1935**: She writes down the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

- **October 5, 1938**: Dies of tuberculosis at the convent in Kraków-Łagiewniki.
- **April 18, 1993**: Beatified by John Paul II.
- **April 30, 2000**: Canonized by John Paul II, who establishes Divine Mercy Sunday.
- **August 17, 2002**: Consecration of the Basilica of Divine Mercy in Łagiewniki.

A hidden life in the convent

In her congregation, devoted to caring for young women in difficulty, Faustina belonged to the sisters of the "second choir," who did the manual work. She moved from house to house, in Warsaw, Płock, Vilnius and Kraków, as a cook, gardener or portress. Her fellow sisters described her as quiet, helpful and often ill. Outwardly, nothing set her apart.

Inwardly, however, she lived an intense mystical life of visions, trials and long spiritual nights. At her confessor's request she wrote down what she was living, in a diary of several notebooks later published under the title *Divine Mercy in My Soul*. Despite its uncertain spelling, this text has become one of the most widely read spiritual books of the twentieth century.

The message of Divine Mercy

On February 22, 1931, in her cell in Płock, Faustina saw Christ in a white garment, one hand raised in blessing and the other resting on his breast, from which came two rays, one pale and one red. She reported that he asked her to have this image painted with the signature "Jesus, I trust in you," and to have a feast of Mercy established on the Sunday after Easter. According to her diary, the two rays stand for the water and the blood that flowed from the side of Christ on the cross.

In Vilnius, Father Michał Sopoćko, cautious at first, had her examined and then supported her. He asked the painter Eugeniusz Kazimirowski to make the image, which was finished in 1934 under Faustina's eyes; she was disappointed that it was not as beautiful as the Christ she had seen. The diary also hands on other devotions: the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, the Hour of Mercy at three in the afternoon in memory of Christ's death, and a novena that begins on Good Friday.



The Divine Mercy by Adolf Hyła, in the convent chapel at Łagiewniki where Saint Faustina is buried.

From obscurity to canonization

Suffering from tuberculosis, Faustina spent her last years between the convent of Łagiewniki, on the outskirts of Kraków, and a nearby sanatorium. She died on October 5, 1938, at thirty-three, less than a year before the invasion of Poland. During the war, devotion to the Divine Mercy spread among the

suffering Polish people. After a period of reserve on the part of the Holy See, partly due to faulty translations of her writings, the Archbishop of Kraków, Karol Wojtyła, had her cause opened.

Having become Pope John Paul II, he beatified her in 1993 and canonized her on April 30, 2000: she was the first saint of the Great Jubilee. On the same day he established Divine Mercy Sunday, the Second Sunday of Easter, for the whole Church. He himself died on April 2, 2005, on the evening before that feast. In 2020, the memorial of Saint Faustina on October 5 was added to the General Roman Calendar.



The Basilica of Divine Mercy in Kraków-Łagiewniki, consecrated by John Paul II in 2002.

Why is Saint Faustina called the Apostle of Divine Mercy?

Saint Faustina is not the official patron of a country or a trade. The Church honors her above all as the messenger, or apostle, of Divine Mercy: through her, the image "Jesus, I trust in you," the chaplet and Divine Mercy Sunday

have spread throughout the world. Her message recalls that mercy is the heart of the Gospel: no sin is too great for the love of God, if only we entrust ourselves to it. She lived that trust herself in darkness, illness and misunderstanding, and she invites us to show mercy in turn, by word, by deed and by prayer. People turn to her especially for sinners who no longer dare to come back to God, for the sick and for the dying.

To pray with her, you can use the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and the prayer to Saint Faustina, or follow the novena to Saint Faustina from September 26 to October 4, so that it ends on the eve of her feast.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Faustina in art

- **The religious habit**: she is shown in the black veil and white wimple of her congregation, often based on her photographs.
- **The Divine Mercy image**: she frequently holds or kneels before the image of Christ with the pale and red rays.
- **"Jesus, I trust in you"**: the words of the image often appear near her.
- **The diary**: a book or notebook sometimes recalls the writings that made her message known.

Where to pray to Saint Faustina

- **Kraków** (Poland): the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Łagiewniki, where she is buried.
- **Vilnius** (Lithuania): the Divine Mercy Sanctuary, which keeps the image painted by Kazimirowski in 1934.
- **Płock** (Poland): the convent of her congregation, where she had the vision of February 22, 1931.
- **Głogowiec and Swinice Warckie** (Poland): her birthplace and the church of her baptism.

- **Stockbridge, Massachusetts** (United States): the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy, a major center of the devotion in the English-speaking world.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Faustina and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy

This page presents the heart of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, handed on by Saint Faustina Kowalska, and an original prayer inspired by her life. Her writings date from the twentieth century, so we quote only a few lines here, to encourage you to read her diary, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, in the editions published with her congregation's approval.

The Chaplet of Divine Mercy

In September 1935, in Vilnius, Faustina wrote in her diary a prayer she said she had received from Christ, to be said on ordinary rosary beads. Begin with an Our Father, a Hail Mary and the Apostles' Creed. Then, on each large bead, say:

> *"Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of your dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world."*

And on each of the ten small beads:

> *"For the sake of his sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world."*

Source: Saint Faustina Kowalska, *Diary*, no. 476 (September 1935). After the five decades, conclude by repeating three times an invocation to God, holy, mighty and immortal, asking his mercy for us and for the whole world. Many

of the faithful pray this chaplet at three o'clock in the afternoon, the hour of Christ's death.

Words to meditate on

> *"Jesus, I trust in you."*

These words, which Faustina was asked to have inscribed at the bottom of the Divine Mercy image, sum up her whole message. They can be repeated throughout the day, like the breathing of the soul.

Prayer to Saint Faustina

Saint Faustina, you who served God in the humblest tasks, in the kitchen, in the garden and at the door of your convent, teach me to meet the Lord in the middle of my daily life.

You who received the mission to make God's mercy known, help me believe that no sin is greater than his love. When I am discouraged, remind me to turn to him with trust.

You who suffered illness and misunderstanding without losing your peace, I entrust to you the sick, sinners who no longer dare to return to God, the dying and those who care for them. I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Make me in turn a witness of mercy, by my words, my actions and my prayer. With you I say again: Jesus, I trust in you. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Faustina's feast is on October 5, the anniversary of her death in Kraków. Divine Mercy Sunday, the Second Sunday of Easter, is another special time to pray with her, as is the Hour of Mercy every day at three in the afternoon. For a longer time of prayer, you can follow the novena to Saint Faustina, and read more about the life of Saint Faustina.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Faustina

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Faustina Kowalska. It is not an official liturgical text, nor the Divine Mercy Novena that the saint records in her diary, which begins on Good Friday. To finish it on the eve of her feast, begin on September 26; it then ends on October 4. Each day follows a stage of her life, from her poor childhood to her peaceful death, and draws one lesson of trust and mercy from it.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father and a Hail Mary. If you wish, you can also pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. The small act suggested for each day helps you live mercy in concrete ways.



Saint Faustina Kowalska, church statue or stained glass.

Day 1: A poor childhood

Helena grew up in a poor peasant family and barely went to school. God does not look for the most educated or the richest: he looks at the heart. Her poverty did not keep her from God; it taught her early to depend on him and to work for others.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for all I have received, even when it seems little to me. Teach me to offer it to you.

Today: Give thanks for three simple things in your life.

Day 2: Not keeping God waiting

In the middle of a dance, Helena understood that she could no longer put off the answer she owed to Christ. That same night she set out for Warsaw with almost nothing. Some calls cannot be postponed forever, and God often gives

the strength to answer at the very moment we say yes.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to answer you today, without waiting for better days.

Today: Carry out a decision you have been putting off for a long time.

Day 3: Humble tasks

In the convent, Faustina cooked, worked in the garden or kept the door. She lived with God there as much as in the chapel. No work is too small to be offered, and the hidden faithfulness of ordinary days is already a path to holiness.

Prayer: Lord, may my work today be a prayer, and may I do it with love.

Today: Do a thankless task carefully, without complaining.

Day 4: Jesus, I trust in you

These words, which Faustina was to have written beneath the image, are the center of her message. Trust is not the absence of fear: it is the choice to hand our fear over to God. Faustina herself knew long periods of darkness, and she kept repeating these words even when she felt nothing.

Prayer: Jesus, I trust in you. I place in your hands what worries me today.

Today: Repeat "Jesus, I trust in you" each time a worry comes up during the day.

Day 5: No sin is too great

Faustina's diary returns again and again to this certainty: God's mercy is greater than all sins. The only thing that closes the door is refusing to entrust ourselves to it. No past is so heavy that it cannot be brought to the Father who waits for his children.

Prayer: God of mercy, I entrust to you my sins and those of the world. May no one despair of your forgiveness.

Today: Prepare for confession, or ask someone's forgiveness.

Day 6: The Hour of Mercy

Faustina invites us to remember, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the death of Christ on the cross. A single moment is enough to unite our day to his love. Wherever we are, at work, at home or on the road, we can pause and turn our hearts toward the cross.

Prayer: Jesus, by your death on the cross, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

Today: At three in the afternoon, stop for a moment to pray, or pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

Day 7: Showing mercy

Faustina understood that receiving mercy commits us to giving it: by word, by deed and by prayer. Everyone can do at least one of these three things. Mercy received and kept for ourselves would no longer be mercy.

Prayer: Lord, make my eyes, my words and my hands merciful toward everyone I meet.

Today: Do a concrete work of mercy: visit, help or comfort someone.

Day 8: Passing through suffering

Ill with tuberculosis and often misunderstood, Faustina offered her sufferings for sinners. She did not seek pain, but she handed it over to God. Her example speaks to all who live with long illness and to those who keep watch at their side.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the sick, those who suffer without hope of healing, and those who care for them.

Today: Pray for someone who is sick and reach out to them.

Day 9: Praying for the dying

Faustina prayed a great deal for the dying, that they might abandon themselves to mercy at the last moment. She herself died in peace at thirty-three. At the end of this novena, let us ask for that same peace for all who will leave this world today.

Prayer: Lord, at the end of this novena, I place my intention in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint Faustina, grant to all who are dying today the grace to trust in you. Amen.

Today: Pray for someone who has died, or for those who will die today.

Closing prayer

Saint Faustina, apostle of Divine Mercy, at the end of these nine days I entrust to you the intention I carry. Pray for me, for my family and for the whole world. Obtain for me an unshakable trust in the love of God and a merciful heart toward my brothers and sisters. Jesus, I trust in you. Amen.

To go further, read the life of Saint Faustina and pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

PILGRIMAGE

Divine Mercy Sanctuary in Kraków-Łagiewniki

The Divine Mercy Sanctuary in Łagiewniki, in the south of Kraków, is where Saint Faustina Kowalska spent her last years and where she rests. Around the convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy has grown one of the great shrines of the Catholic world, visited each year by pilgrims from many countries.

Sister Faustina's convent

The congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy settled in Łagiewniki in the late 19th century to take in young women in difficulty. Faustina made her perpetual vows there in 1933, then returned in 1936, already ill. She died there on October 5, 1938, and was buried in the convent cemetery. In 1966, her remains were moved to the convent chapel.

It is in this chapel that the image of the Merciful Jesus painted in 1943 by Adolf Hyła is displayed, now the best known in the world. The tomb of Saint Faustina is very near the image, in the same chapel.



The Basilica of Divine Mercy in Kraków-Łagiewniki.

The Basilica of Divine Mercy

To welcome the crowds, a large modern basilica was built next to the convent. John Paul II, who came from Rome, consecrated it on August 17, 2002, and entrusted the world to Divine Mercy there. Its shape evokes a boat, and its tower serves as a lookout over the city. A copy of the image of the Merciful Jesus dominates the choir. Not far away, a shrine dedicated to Saint John Paul II was built in the following years.

Praying at the sanctuary

Before your visit, you may wish to reread the life of Saint Faustina. On site, many pilgrims first pray in the small convent chapel, before the image and the tomb, and then take part in the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, prayed every day at

three o'clock. The Chaplet of Divine Mercy and the novena to Saint Faustina can accompany this moment. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia for a personal visit.

Other places connected with Saint Faustina

- **Vilnius** (Lithuania): the Divine Mercy Sanctuary, which preserves the first image, painted by Eugeniusz Kazimirowski in 1934.
- **Płock** (Poland): the congregation's convent, where she had the vision of February 22, 1931.
- **Warsaw**: the congregation's house on Żytnia Street, where she entered the convent in 1925.
- **Głogowiec** (Poland): her birthplace, and the parish church of Swinice Warckie, where she was baptized.
- **Białystok** (Poland): the Divine Mercy Sanctuary, where Blessed Michał Sopoćko, her confessor, rests.

Practical information

The sanctuary is in the Łagiewniki district, south of Kraków, reachable by tram or train from the city center. Divine Mercy Sunday, the second Sunday of Easter, and October 5, the feast of Saint Faustina, attract many pilgrims. Check Mass, confession, and visiting hours with the sanctuary before you come.

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