

A Lenten Meditation: A Journey to the Cross with Saint Faustina

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Catholics will begin their Lenten season in just four short days. St. Faustina, I pray you bring us closer to Jesus Christ and may we experience lent like we never have before. St. Faustina, bless us with new understandings and let it lead to a deeper love for our Jesus. I pray we allow you to guide us over the next forty days and beyond.

So why does God often choose the poor uneducated peasants to do His work on earth? Fr. Benedict Groeschel thinks the answer is simple: "They listen."

St. Faustina had only two winters of education.

Imagine being called "Secretary to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." It gives me goose bumps each time I think of it. The qualification to become one is simple: "listen." Appointments are eternal.

So let us begin our Journey at Our Lord's Last Supper where Jesus institutes the Holy Eucharist.

A common theme occurs when reading St. Faustina's diary - suffering and pains from our Lord's Passion present themselves when St. Faustina is either at Mass receiving Jesus or adoring Jesus during a "Holy Hour." In both cases, the Eucharist is present. I believe I know why.

This past November Msgr. Gerald McCarren, a Professor here at Seton Hall's School of Theology, led a retreat on the Eucharist. The Eucharistic prayer was explained to me like it never was before. Humility allows me to admit I wasn't aware of its beauty and meaning prior. I wasn't listening.

I thank Jesus for His willingness to take spittle and rub them in my ears (Mark 7:33). May it become my prayer not for those who can't hear, but for those who think they can.

Heaven / Eternity has no time. To God, it is now. Now is endless. His creation is still occurring. What God remembers is present. Christ performed one sacrifice – both as priest and victim – the one offering and one offered.

In the Eucharistic prayer, we set aside all concerns in the introductory dialogue; offer a prayer of thanksgiving in the preface; pray the Sanctus, repeating Hosana ("save us") from Mark and Revelations; and then kneel to set our focus on God and invoke the Holy Spirit to make us "one body." It is at the consecration when our Lord Jesus arrives (as we do) at the foot of the cross. When the wine is transformed into His blood our Lord dies on the cross. We are there. His sacrifice is perfect and eternal. We are at Calvary.

During the second Epiclesis we pray to the Holy Spirit that He will change us into the Body and Blood of Christ - a transformation of our heart. When the Body and Blood of our Lord are lifted during the Doxology, it is where we join Him in His sacrifice. Jesus is indeed present. Now we have a gift to give to our Almighty Father. God the Father is offered His Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. We join Him. It is why we need to all shout Amen! at the Great Amen.

Two weeks ago at a conference on Divine Mercy I learned something else about Saint Faustina's love of the Eucharist and why it all ties in with our Lord's Journey to the Cross. Her Sainthood may have not have occurred had it not been for what I am about to tell you. Fr. Seraphim Michalenko, Vice Postulator for the canonization, explains it during his homily at the closing mass. They needed a witness for "something" that happened during her childhood. What led her to be this saint? Two years before her birth altar boys at what was to be her home parish, saw Jesus' head crowned with thorns during a "Holy Hour." It was so powerful and so believable that, within hours, people from near and far away literally broke off the front of the church to get near Him. Before the forty-hour devotion ended, it happened again. The parish and the community would never be the same again. Before Helen Kowalska entered the convent, she was sent to be a servant at this lady's house. The husband was Jewish and she was Catholic. She had their children baptized. The children never went to church and were a handful. So much so, they had a problem retaining help. It is there that Helen's life long love of the Eucharist became quite apparent. A religious hymn of Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist would flood the house day and night. So much so, the entire family memorized every stanza. The family loved and adored her. The children became little angels. A lady Doctor, who was Jewish, would often visit this household. It was to be Divine Providence when a woman and a nun met on a train. It had been years and each thought they knew each other. The nun asked her if she ever had help. "Many" was her reply. She then asked if she ever employed a woman who sung songs of joy and celebration to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. "Yes, that was Helenka" "Kowalska," the nun asked? The nun turned out to be the lady Jewish Doctor who visited. The nun was aware of her beatification and asked the lady to be the needed witness.

St. Faustina often felt all the justice of God weighing on her as she received Holy Communion. The Last Supper; the Garden of Olives and the Crucifixion - we are there too, as St Faustina was when we receive Holy Communion.

St. Faustina prays with Him; is sentenced with Him; is beaten with Him; condemned with Him; forced to carry the cross with Him; and dies with Him. She is offered for sinners.

Her mystical powers felt and saw the sin of others. It was her love of neighbor – always wanting to take the sin away. She simply asked Jesus for the torments of hell. Why not, if it was good enough for Jesus, why not her? Jesus never asks of us what He wouldn't do first.

She gave, gave and gave some more, all for Jesus' love of us and St. Faustina's love of sinners. Jesus doesn't want one person to die. Death destroys nothing that is good. Jesus

has infinite amounts for us to take – free and clear – because God’s world has no end. It is not money He is giving away. It is something better – mercy. “Father, forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing (Luke 23:34)” is all Love ever has to say.

St. Faustina writes that God is generous and He does not deny His grace to anyone. He gives more than we ask of Him. His Passion was for His love of us.

St. Faustina was always praying for the conversion of sinners. St. Faustina won souls so routinely because as Jesus stated to her, “Your great trust in Me forces Me to continuously grant you graces.” Trust springs from faith. Trust is listed 220 times in the Bible.

Often we see St. Faustina suffering for only three hours - the time it took Jesus to suffer on the Cross.

St. Faustina often experienced thorns being dug into her head. We should start to meditate on this with our next headache. St. Faustina felt the pain. Can we ever get to that level? I hope so.

Jesus usually gave her only one thorn. She begged for them all – as a trade for the sins of others. St. Faustina knows He can’t say no. All you have to do is verbalize it and it will manifest. The faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains (Matthew 17:20).

All because St. Faustina listened, souls are being saved. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, our school’s namesake, said this about the will of God: “The first end I propose in our daily work is to do the will of God; secondly, to do it in the manner He wills it; and thirdly, to do it because it is His will.”

St. Faustina prayed both the Rosary and the Chaplet with her arms outstretched. Jesus loves us that much.

We can meditate with Jesus too. Praying the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary and Stations of the Cross are just two examples. Let us re-watch Mel Gibson’s Passion movie and let us all look upon His Passion in a much more profound way. Yes, it is okay to weep.

Jesus tells St. Faustina that one-hour meditating on His sorrowful Passion means more to Him than one year of corporal mortification. Jesus took the sheer evil so we wouldn’t have to. He always gives us more.

Jesus further states to St. Faustina: “There are few souls who contemplate My Passion with true feeling; I give great graces to souls who meditate devoutly My Passion.”

She meditated on His sorrowful Passion for one straight week when she was ill. It was at Jesus’ request. A joy entered her soul. She had no light and no visitors – it didn’t matter. Her and Jesus – perfect together.