

WAF England and Wales Launch Mass Homily by Canon Jason Jones, 22 Feb 2020

On this day in 1931, in the Polish city of Plock, St Faustina, the apostle of Divine Mercy, saw a vision of the Lord. He requested her to paint an image of him with the words "Jesus I trust in you". Over the course of the following years, Our Lord would reveal to this Polish nun his plans of mercy and the new practices of Divine Mercy, the chaplet, the feast of mercy, the hour of mercy and the importance of the works of mercy.

That particular apparition was a turning point for the world, and as we know from the seventy-fifth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz this year, she was living on the eve of one of the darkest moments in history. In the midst of so much misery, Divine Mercy came as a ray of hope to a darkened world.

Jesus said to St Faustina that mankind would not have peace until it turned to his Divine Mercy and that she was to be the chosen instrument to usher in the time of mercy before the time of judgement. Divine Mercy was to be the devotion that would lead into the end times.

It is therefore a great joy for me both as rector of the Menevia diocesan shrine of Divine Mercy and as the national spiritual director of the World Apostolate in England and Wales to be with you this day, and to help us see that the message of mercy is also the message of Mary, and that in living out both messages the triumph of the Immaculate Heart will bring about the reign of Christ the king of Mercy.

Fourteen years before today's 1931 anniversary of the revelation of the image of Divine Mercy, in 1917, Our Lady at Fatima had revealed her message to the three shepherd children and promised that if her requests were heeded there would be an era of peace. She said that the First World war, which was taking place at the time of the apparitions, would soon end, but she also foretold in her July 1917 apparition that if her message went unheeded, and offences against the Most High continued, a worse war would take place.

This coming July, as in every July, the World Apostolate of Fatima has its national pilgrimage to the shrine of Fatima because the July apparition contains the central message of the Fatima story. It is the conditional hinge that had the power to change the course of history, and would either lead to great persecutions for the world and for the church, or the triumph of the Immaculate Heart and a period of peace for the world.

Tragically, though, because of an insufficient response to Our Lady's message at Fatima, a worse war did indeed come, and we could say that the vision of hell revealed to the children became a reality on earth with the unfolding of the events of the Second World war.

It is no wonder then that Our Lady, after showing the children the vision of hell, would teach them the Fatima decade prayer, that is: "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins save us from

the fires of hell and lead all souls to heaven especially those who are most in need of your mercy.”

People, then, were deaf to her warnings, and so from 1931, in Poland, the Divine Mercy message began to take centre stage because the world at that time was especially in need of such divine mercy.

Coming back to Fatima, during the July apparition Our Lady had said that she would come to ask for the consecration of Russia and for the Five First Saturdays devotion of reparation, and if these requests were heeded there would be peace.

Lucia was told that although her two cousins would soon die and go to heaven, she had to remain on earth so as to help establish devotion to Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart. Sr Lucia accepted the consecration of Russia as performed by Pope St John Paul in 1984, but she lived on till 2005 which could be interpreted as a sign that devotion to the Immaculate heart is still not firmly established in the world.

Today, at this Launch Mass we begin the five year countdown to the centennial celebration of the 1925 apparition of Our Lady to Sr Lucia at Pontevedra in Spain and the full revelation of the Five First Saturdays devotion.

The future of the world, the peace of the world, therefore, is in our hands because Our Lady promised that if her requests were fulfilled – that is the consecration of Russia and establishment of the Five First Saturdays devotion – then there would be peace.

We could interpret today’s gospel on the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, as symbolic of the way the world, and indeed the Church, are living like Our Lady without Christ during those three days. What pain and anguish filled her heart as she and St Joseph searched for Jesus. Many have lost Christ, the world has lost Christ, and rather than being anxious and concerned to find him there is little if any regard for Christ and his gospel. Many do not believe, do not adore, do not hope, and do not love God.

The Passion of Good Friday, the rejection of Christ, is being relived throughout the world, and it is up to faithful ones, those who are consecrated to Our Lady, to anxiously await, to pray, to work and so help others find Christ as he rises again on the third day and is discovered anew.

And so, we have to ensure that we fulfil the further request of Our Lady by carrying out and promoting the Five First Saturdays devotion because the world is suffering from a flood of blasphemy as Christ is lost and forgotten in our own time. Time is indeed passing and the world is in great of peace, in great need of divine mercy.

Our Lady also promised that in the end her Immaculate Heart would triumph.

At first these words seem like a contradiction. How can a heart which is humble, pure and immaculate, a heart completely focused on God with no shadow of sin be a triumphal

heart? We think of a triumph as an egocentric dominating victory, one accompanied by a triumphalist boastful attitude. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth in the case of the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady

Her motherly heart is a reflection of Divine Mercy because it was through Divine Mercy at work at the first moment of her conception that her heart is immaculate. When she sees the world having lost Christ her son, her sorrow is renewed and the thorns which surrounded her heart, which she showed to Sr Lucia, need to be removed through our reparation and consolation. In listening to her appeal not only do we remove them but we will be placed, as she promised Lucia, close to the throne of God in heaven.

The Immaculate Heart of Our Lady is a reflection of God's Divine Mercy for us. As the heart of the Lord was pierced on the cross and blood and water flowed out, that sword also pierced the heart of Our Lady.

Yet it is upon the cross that Christ reigns, that Christ is king, that he is victorious and brings peace to the world. When we work for the triumph of the Immaculate Heart, this is none other than allowing the same virtues and dispositions present in the Immaculate Heart of Mary to live in our own hearts. This means that our devotion leads to imitation, and we are allowing Christ to reign in us as he reigned in the heart of his immaculate mother.

Saturdays, and in particular the first Saturday of the month are a day dedicated to honouring Our Lady. As she kept hope and faith from Good Friday through all of Holy Saturday to await the joy of Easter, we who believe, and adore, and hope and love God keep company with Our Lady in her present sorrow.

And as she found Christ on the third day in a foretaste of the joy of the ultimate third day, Easter Sunday, so we will have participated in this joy through our own First Saturday devotion by which we can bring many others to find Christ and his peace, and so save them from the fires of hell.

I encourage you therefore as Lent approaches to offer your Lenten sacrifices for the acceptance and promotion of the Five First Saturdays devotion in our parishes, to perhaps use your alms-giving this Lent to assist the vital work of the World Apostolate of Fatima, and though your Lenten prayers to draw closer to the Immaculate Heart so that she may lead you to the joy of Easter and to the peace of her Son.

This year we also have another centenary celebration that of the Birthday of St John Paul II the great Pope of Fatima and Divine Mercy, who was born on 18 May 1920. It would be great if we could honour him whose life was so interwoven with Our Lady, and whose motto was, *Totus Tuus* ("totally thine"), as sign of his devotion to her, by working for the establishment of the Five first Saturdays with all our hearts.