



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
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N. 160730d

Saturday 30.07.2016

Visit to the Shrine of Divine Mercy

Early this morning the Holy Father travelled to Lagiewniki, an area in the south of Krakow, known for devotion to Divine Mercy and the mystical experience of St. Faustina Kowalska. The convent where she lived is located there, along with the shrine to Divine Mercy which receives two million pilgrims each year.

The Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy was founded in 1862 in Warsaw to help women in need, providing education and helping them find work. Under the communist regime between 1969 and 1989 the nuns, whose home was confiscated, dedicated themselves to the care of the disabled. Today the institution is again active as a Youth Education Centre, and welcomes disadvantaged girls who receive education in a lyceum and two professional schools.

St. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938) entered the Congregation at the age of 20 and resided in various convents. Her mystical experiences began in Krakow, when on 22 February 1931 she saw Christ, dressed in white and with His right hand raised in blessing, and the left touching His tunic at the chest, from which two large rays shine, one white and one left. Christ said to Sister Faustina, "Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: 'Jesus, I trust in You'. I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and then throughout the world". In 1934 Sister Faustina arranged for the image of Divine Mercy to be painted by the artist Eugenius Kazimierski, following her instructions, and in the last four years of her life she wrote in her diary all Jesus' requests so that the world might recognise the biblical truth on God's mercy to all mankind, and for the introduction of new forms of worship centred on Divine Mercy. These forms of worship consisted of the veneration of the image of Christ with the phrase, "Jesus, I trust in You", and the institution of Divine Mercy Sunday, the first after Easter, the recital of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and prayer at the time of Jesus' death on the cross, 3 p.m., as well as the dissemination of the worship of mercy.

The Holy Father was received at the entrance to the chapel of the Shrine of Divine Mercy by the Superior General and the Superior of the convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. Outside he was awaited by around three hundred people, including 80 young people who study in the Centre. As he entered the building, the Pope blessed a large painting of Divine Mercy, and then collected himself in prayer in the chapel before the tomb of St. Faustina, where her relics are conserved. The Pope signed the Book of Honour with the phrase "I desire mercy, not sacrifice".

He then greeted from the terrace the thousands of young people gathered on the “lawn of confessions” – where several confessionals had been installed, available throughout World Youth Day – that separates the Shrine of Divine Mercy from the adjacent Shrine to St. John Paul II, with these words: “Good day to you all. Today the Lord wants us to feel His great mercy even more profoundly. Let us never drift away from Jesus. Even if we think that we are the worst for our sins and our shortcomings, He prefers us as we are; in this way His mercy spreads. Let us make the most of this day to receive all Jesus’ mercy. Let us pray together to the Mother of Mercy. Hail Mary...”.

After blessing those present and asking them to pray for him, Francis entered the Shrine of Divine Mercy through the door bearing the same name, and confessed eight people: five girls, two boys and a priest, in Italian, Spanish and French. Before leaving the Shrine, the Pope venerated the Most Holy Sacrament; he then left by car for the Shrine to St. John Paul II to celebrate Holy Mass.
