

Forgiveness is theme of Divine Mercy Sunday in Archdiocese of Baltimore

Society of Christ Father Ryszard Czerniak sees the Feast of Divine Mercy as an opportunity to encounter the love of God in a deeply personal way.

“It’s a day when God wants to remind us that, ‘I love you and I forgive you,’” said Father Czerniak, pastor of Holy Rosary in Fells Point. “He says, ‘Come to me. Come and receive from the font of my Divine Mercy.’”

Instituted by St. John Paul II and observed annually as part of the Catholic Church’s liturgical calendar since the Jubilee Year 2000, Divine Mercy Sunday is celebrated on the second Sunday of Easter - April 8 this year. The readings for the liturgy focus on God’s mercy.

Divine Mercy Sunday is connected to Christ’s private revelations to St. Faustina Kowalska, a 20th century Polish nun. Christ asked her for devotion to Divine Mercy, promising that on the Feast of Divine Mercy “whoever approaches the font of life on this day will be granted complete remission of sins and punishment.”

In her diary, St. Faustina wrote that Christ revealed to her that “the soul that will go to confession, and receive Holy Communion, shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment.”

Holy Rosary has a special association with St. Faustina because Father Ronald Pytel, a former pastor, was cured of congestive heart failure when prayers were offered to St. Faustina for her intercession on the priest’s behalf. Father Pytel’s unexplained

recovery in 1995 became the second miracle needed for St. Faustina's canonization.

Archbishop Lori will celebrate a 1:30 p.m. Divine Mercy Sunday Mass April 8 at Holy Rosary, home of the Archdiocese of Baltimore Divine Mercy Shrine. Prior to the bilingual Mass, to be celebrated in English and Polish, the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed for adoration beginning at noon. Five priests will be available for the sacrament of reconciliation from noon to 3 p.m. in English and Polish.

During his visit, Archbishop Lori will dedicate a newly constructed shrine of Divine Mercy, which will complement the existing shrine. The new shrine, located in the church's narthex, features a painting by Polish artist Ewa Mika that depicts Christ as he appeared in a vision to St. Faustina. Christ is dressed in white with his left hand held near his heart, emanating red and white rays symbolizing the blood and water that gushed from the heart of Christ at his crucifixion.

The shrine also features paintings of St. Faustina and St. John Paul II.

At 3 p.m. at Holy Rosary, there will be a procession, the Divine Mercy Chaplet and veneration of the Divine Mercy image and relics of St. John Paul II, St. Faustina and Blessed Michael Sopocho. Polish food will be offered from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Other parishes throughout the archdiocese will also be offering special times for confession, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and other devotions on Divine Mercy Sunday.

Divine Mercy Parish in Western Maryland will distribute prayer cards at all Masses at its four locations. It will offer adoration of the Blessed Sacrament 1-3 p.m. April 8 at St. Michael in Frostburg, St. Ann in Grantsville, St. Joseph in Midland and St. Peter in Westernport.

At the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

in Baltimore, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will be held in the undercroft chapel immediately after the 10:45 a.m. Mass, until 3 p.m. Confessions will be heard noon to 3 p.m., 3:45-4:15 p.m. and then again after the 4:30 p.m Mass. The Divine Mercy Chaplet will be prayed at 3 p.m.

At the National Shrine Grotto of Lourdes in Emmitsburg, adoration will be offered at 10:45 a.m. in St. Mary's Chapel, reconciliation at 10:45 a.m. in the confessional near St. Mary's Chapel, and an English Mass at noon will be celebrated in the chapel. A Spanish Mass will be celebrated at 2 p.m. The Divine Mercy Chaplet will be prayed at 3 p.m.

Institute of the Incarnate Word Father Daniel Montesana, chaplain of the National Shrine Grotto of Lourdes, said Divine Mercy Sunday is a day to practice the "ABCs" - asking God for mercy, being merciful to others and showing confidence in God's mercy.

"He offers us an ocean of graces," Father Montesana said. "If you go into the font of mercy with a little glass, you are only going to get just a glass of that water. But if you go with another container that's bigger, you are getting more. It's all in your trust."

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