

Sister Paulette spreads sweet mercy

Many of us in the Baltimore area know of Honeygo Boulevard, near White Marsh Mall. You can imagine my surprise then, when, while giving a retreat at the Dominican Retreat House in McLean, Va. I met someone with the name of Honeygosky - Vincentian Sister of Charity Paulette Honeygosky, to be exact!

This nun with the numinous name has another claim to fame. She is also the cousin of St. Faustina, the saint who popularized Divine Mercy. Sister Paulette, from the Arlington Diocese, has dedicated her life to the cause of her sainted cousin - popularizing devotion to the Divine Mercy. You might want to contact Sister for a talk to your group or parish.

Prior to Vatican II, there were numerous popular devotions, many novenas to Mary under various titles, and devotions to various saints, such as St. Francis Xavier and St. Theresa of the Little Flower. With the liturgy being translated from Latin into the language of the people, and with renewed emphasis on study of Scripture, less emphasis was put on popular piety. The Divine Mercy can help to fill that void in personal piety.

Other than promoting the work of Sister Paulette Honeygosky, I also want to share a story.

Sister knew Father Ron Pytel. As many of you may know, this saintly priest from Baltimore was the third miracle that completed the canonization process for St. Faustina. Father Pytel had suffered from heart disease. Through the intercession of St. Faustina, he was completely cured.

Because of his prominent role in her canonization, Father Ron was frequently called upon by others. He had often worked with his good friend, Father Larry Gesy, as part of his healing ministry.

One day, Sister Paulette said, a lady called Father Pytel in absolute despair. She was waiting to receive an organ from a donor, and was giving up. She was tired of the pain, tired of the misery.

Father Pytel persuaded her not to give up, to continue treatment until a donor could be found. She listened. The next week a donor appeared. Had she despaired she would have missed this life-saving procedure by one week.

No doubt there are countless other stories that could be told about this holy priest. This story seemed especially poignant for our time.

We live in a time when many people feel discouraged, even despairing. We see Catholic schools closing, church attendance dwindling, numbers of Masses being condensed. In society we see the devastation of unemployment, of cutbacks in services, of people feeling overworked and overstressed.

We need to be there for each other, looking for the best in each other and the best in life. Jesus never promised that life would be easy. He did promise that he would stay with us. We need to do the same.

As always, focusing on the positive helps. In the church, we need to focus on the schools that are open, on those who do go to church, on the Masses that are being said. In communities, it's important to realize that, if it takes a village to raise a child, it may take a neighborhood to help families through these crises. If Divine Mercy is to be more than just a devotion, then it must be manifest in the mercy we show each other.

As many of us know, Father Ron Pytel, who had a miracle of healing worked for his heart, would later die of cancer. Bodily miracles are only extensions of life, not perpetual life.

However, all bodily miracles do point to a miracle beyond themselves, namely eternal life. We believe that while our bodies die, we do not. And we believe further that our bodies will share in resurrection with Christ – that our bodies will rise again on the last day. That's why we never despair. Despair is a luxury only non-believers can afford. There is life beyond life, light beyond the darkness, hope that triumphs over despair.

So you may want to contact Sister Paulette to learn more about the life of St. Faustina and the devotion of Divine Mercy. But our deepest calling is not just to

learn more about love and mercy but to become that love and mercy to each other. The world doesn't need more information. The world needs more love and encouragement.

Allow me to quote a few sentences from one of Sister Paulette's writings: "Heaven is not far away. Christ is with us. He is within us. Together in Christ we will one day rise. Together in Christ the whole of humanity will rise!"

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