Saint Faustina had her moments of doubt and interior struggle, and yet her deep trust in God allowed her to rise above the despair and gloom of the world. She wrote, “I put my trust in the ocean of Your mercy, and I know that my hope will not be deceived” (Diary, 69). Her deep trust is obvious as she writes, “O My Jesus, despite the deep night that is around me and the dark clouds which hide the horizon, I know that the sun never goes out” (Diary, 73).

Many times in our struggles and trials, we battle despair and hopelessness, but it is at these times that we must trust all the more. It is at these difficult moments that we must cling to His garment, trusting in His unfathomable mercy. And, because of the closeness of her soul to God, St. Faustina knew her frailties. How many times?

It is a grace to be aware of our imperfections and impurities. Many of us go through life so critical of others that we never have a clue about how many times our words and actions have hurt others, or how many times our sharp tongue has pierced the heart of a loved one.

When the bright sun shines through the windows in our home in Florida, one can occasionally see the dust floating in the air. This is caused by the refraction, or bending, of light as it hits the particles of dust. Saint Faustina compared our imperfections to dust when she wrote, “O Divine Sun, in Your rays the soul sees the tiniest specks of dust which displease You” (Diary, 71).

Just as every home has dust, every soul has imperfections. And yet we look at others’ dust as if to say, “I am glad I am not like them, and that my spiritual house doesn’t have any dust!” We read in Matthew 7:3, “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”

Spiritual progress occurs when we are able to recognize our weaknesses and strive for perfection, understanding that we are all human and that God’s mercy is greater than our greatest sin. We believe that although humans frequently deny mercy to each other and even themselves, God will not deny His mercy to anyone. Heaven and earth may change, but God’s mercy is constant.

Even in periods of darkness, suffering, pain, rejection, and humiliation, St. Faustina had only one goal. She wrote, “If it is Your will, Lord, that I live always in such darkness, may You be blessed. I ask You only one thing, Jesus: do not allow me to offend You in any way” (Diary, 73).

A great void

Saint Faustina had her own periods of spiritual dryness and wrote, “My mind became dimmed in a strange way; no truth seemed clear to me. When people spoke to me about God, my heart was like a rock. I could not draw from it a single sentiment of love for Him.”

When I tried, by an act of the will, to remain close to Him, I experienced great torments, and it seemed to me that I was only provoking God to an even greater anger. It was absolutely impossible for me to meditate as I had been accustomed to do in the past. I felt in my soul a great void, and there was nothing with which I could fill it. I began to suffer from a great hunger and yearning for God, but I saw my utter powerlessness. I tried to read slowly, sentence by sentence and to meditate in this way, but this also was of no avail. I understood nothing of what I had read” (Diary, 77).

Each one of us has periods in our life where we wonder, “Where are You, God?” or “Do You really exist?” It is these dry spells that allow us to grow in holiness, and allow our spiritual roots to grow deeper and closer to Him.

If you are one who is struggling to find God and speak intimately with Him, go to a quiet place, that is, the quiet recesses of your heart, and speak to Him. Imagine yourself as a little child, sitting on the lap of a loving Father, and tell Him your needs and concerns. And above all, know that God is a God of love and mercy. Humble yourself and come back to Him, as He is waiting with open arms.
CENACLES UPDATE

NORTHAMPTON, Pennsylvania

Rosemary Rossner wrote and told us:

Our cenacle within our parish, Queenship of Mary, was created in May 2013. Currently our group, consisting of 12 active EADM members, meets every other Friday evening.

Realizing it was so important to spread the message of the Divine Mercy within our community, we decided to erect a billboard directly on Main St. in Northampton during the month of May, depicting the Divine Mercy Image complete with the words “Jesus, I trust in You.” Easily the money was raised to fund the project through two weekends of hoagie sales at Queenship. Our parishioners were 100 percent behind the billboard project. We’re hoping to make this an annual billboard presentation in April. Our parishioners were asked to save their “hoagie appetites” till next year!

Annually in October, to coincide with the feast day of St. Francis and the blessing of animals, we sponsor a drive for pet donations to local animal shelters. Another yearly drive, that really is well gifted, is our sock drive the month of November for homeless men at the Allentown Rescue Mission. Almost 1,700 pairs were delivered last year to the Mission.

Other campaigns included food drives for our community food bank and a children’s book drive in collaboration with the Allentown Rescue Mission, which distributes the books to children within the Lehigh Valley school districts.

In addition to offering gift cards to families at Thanksgiving and Christmas, quarterly within the year a member chooses which favorite charity should receive a monetary donation.

Prior to COVID, during the Christmas holidays we spent evenings visiting senior facilities with caroling, trivia, and fun. Throughout the year at our gatherings, we share educational material, DVDs, books, and much more. Most importantly, we share a special camaraderie and are known throughout the parish as “prayer warriors.”

It is our hope that other cenacles will have billboards erected with the Image to spread this “mercy message” from community to community, state to state!

MESA, Arizona

Laurie Buckles wrote and told us:

I am writing you from St. Timothy Catholic Church to share our happiness about having completed our Divine Mercy Cenacle Induction ceremony on May 15, 2022. Father John Greb, our pastor, performed our ceremony with family and friends in attendance.

This was the culmination of a five-year journey of discernment and spiritual growth for our group. We began our journey in November of 2017 when we attended the 33 Days to Morning Glory retreat sponsored by our parish and facilitated by Deacon Jim Beattie and his wife, Sandi. We continued on, completing all of the subsequent Hearts Afire retreats.

In August 2019, we attended a discernment retreat to see where the Holy Spirit was leading our group, which by this time had bonded and was interested in serving God and our parish according to God’s will. It became clear to us that we were being led to form a Divine Mercy ministry at St. Timothy’s.

We spoke with appropriate advisory staff and proceeded to continue our formation in conjunction with our parish’s New Evangelization plan. We were able to access and complete videos and workbooks from Bishop Barron and Word on Fire’s Catholicism and the New Evangelization.

In 2020, COVID hit with a vengeance. Not to be deterred, one of our group members was able to share a Zoom account with us, and our group went online to study 33 Days to Greater Glory. Throughout this ongoing formation time, while navigating the pandemic from afar, we felt led to inquire about your apostolate Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy. We ordered manuals and began our cenacle formation.

We completed Manual 1 and are now more than halfway through Manual 2. Our cenacle members meet twice monthly. We have members who pray the Chaplet and Rosary regularly; are active in Eucharistic Adoration; are Extraordinary Ministers; are core members of Acts; bring Communion, the Rosary, and the Chaplet to the home-bound; who minister to the poor and homeless in our community as well as supporting many of the other ministries within our very active parish. We also are the sponsors of Hearts Afire retreats at St. Timothy’s.

It is our hope that, along with the retreats and our cenacle ministry, we will be able to continue sharing the message of Divine Mercy, add new cenacles within our parish, and if God wills, throughout the diocese.
EAST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT
Karina Campos wrote and told us:

We are continuing to work in our EADM mission as missionaries at the feet of Jesus in Peru. We have an EADM group in Lima, Tambogrande Piura, and Huaylas Ancash, and also one in Argentina. Our first group was consecrated on Oct. 25, 2021, in the Air Force Chapel in Lima with Fr. Martin Saavedra, and we continue to spread the devotion everywhere we can. This photo is of an EADM cenacle in Chiclayo, Peru. We will be heading back to South America soon for an induction ceremony with one of the groups.

WOODSTOCK, VIRGINIA
Marge Rao wrote and told us:

Yolanda Harlan and I are co-facilitators for our EADM cenacle group. The Eucharistic Apostles of Divine Mercy of St. John Bosco Church became inducted on Oct. 5, 2022, the Feast of St. Faustina, at a Mass celebrated in her honor by the Parochial Administrator, Fr. Augustine Tran.

These ambassadors of Divine Mercy prepared themselves for the Induction Ceremony through a weekly study of Sacred Scripture, the Catholic Catechism, the Diary of St. Faustina, and the Cenacle Formation Manual.

Coming from all walks of life, these EADMS are ready to assist in the parish life in any capacity through the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy as designated by Fr. Tran. Presently, they will partake in Adoration Hours and assist in the Bereavement Ministry, the latter providing much consolation to those grieving.

LANGLEY AFB
HAMPTON, VIRGINIA
Nancy LaCross wrote and told us:

I have been the Divine Mercy Cenacle facilitator since 2006 at Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel at Langley Air Force Base. We welcomed four new members into the cenacle on Dec. 8, 2022, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Emmanuela and Jacob (son) Patterson, Marta Mrasek, and Virginia B. Furlow were inducted as Eucharistic Apostles of the Divine Mercy by our pastor, Fr. Steve Thomlison. Our cenacle has grown to 17.

My goal for 2021-2022 as the leader was dedicated to increasing the wisdom and knowledge of our Divine Mercy members, our military families within the community of faith at OLQP Chapel through education programs in line with the present priorities of the Catholic Church teachings; i.e., on the Eucharist; the Year of St. Joseph by DVD presentations by Dr. Brant Pitre; Consecration to St. Joseph by Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC; and Evangelization and the Acts of the Apostles by Mary Healy. These programs have been incorporated into, and along with, the regular Divine Mercy programs using Scripture, the Diary of St. Faustina, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the three Cenacle Formation books. Our cenacle motto is: “Mercy, Mercy and Evangelize on the GO.”

We are presently performing spiritual and corporal works of mercy for military families, retirees, the elderly, and the homeless within and outside our community of faith as an outreach program; and conducting Rosary rallies and praying at abortion clinics. After the noontime Mass each day, in the OLQP Chapel Blessed Sacrament room, we invite the congregation to join with us in praying the Rosary and Chaplet of Divine Mercy for the sick, dying, and the Right to Life of the unborn. Money collected from our Divine Mercy members for doing “Acts of Mercy” is sent to the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception, Marian Helpers, Campaign for Holy Priests, or seminarian vocations, as needed.

OLQP at Langley AFB and Nancy LaCross wish to thank Dr. Bryan Thatcher, your family, and your staff for the continual support, dedication and commitment to our Divine Mercy cenacle and to those throughout the world. May the New Year 2023 bring you His Rays of Merciful love; strength, wisdom, and courage from the Holy Spirit of “Mercy Unbound.” We continue to pray that St. Faustina will be declared a Doctor of the Church in 2023.
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Obedience to God requires submission to the will of God. Mary, who is called “most obedient,” glorified God in all things through her obedience to Him. She did not obey out of fear or concern about a rule, but rather, she did it out of love. The Rule of the Ten Evangelical Virtues states, “The Virgin Mary was always most obedient not only to God, but for God’s sake, also to men.”

Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (Jn 14:15). Mary was obedient out of love, not out of fear. Because she trusted and loved God, she was able to obey Him without hesitation, whether it was going to help her pregnant cousin Elizabeth, or fleeing into Egypt when Herod sought the life of the Baby Jesus.

Reflect on how disobedience to God brought sin, suffering, and death into the world. One example is how Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt when she looked back. Let us not look back or too far forward at what might be. Let us stay in the moment and take one day at a time.

We must be obedient to God’s will. Obedience means not seeing our will as paramount but recognizing and doing the will of God. Sometimes that puts us in conflict with the world. When the Sadducees and priests told John and Peter not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, they knew what they had to do. And Peter and John answered, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20).

Discernment through prayer regarding God’s will is essential if we are to be obedient. He values obedience more than sacrifice or offering. May we learn from the example of Mary, and the gentle whispers of the Holy Spirit, what God’s will is for us in our lives.

Mary Book: Cenacle Manual Four

Remember there is a manual four! Dr. Robert Stackpole collaborated with Dr. Bryan Thatcher on an excellent book on the Blessed Mother. Mary: Who She Is and Why She Matters is an overview of the basic truths about Our Lady and her ongoing role in the Church today written with wit and erudition, making this the perfect introduction to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It offers answers to common Protestant objections to Catholic teaching about and devotion to the Blessed Mother. Those EADM members who have read the book have shared that they really enjoyed it, and it is well written and easy to read. To order, visit ShopMercy.org (Product code: EV-MBK).
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Effective March 1, our new address is: Dr. Bryan Thatcher, EADM, 12452 Horseshoe Bend Drive, Lithia, FL 33547.