

# Stanisław Urbański

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## Mystical aspects in the life of Blessed Faustyna Kowalska

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STANISŁAW URBAŃSKI

**MYSTICAL ASPECTS IN THE LIFE OF BLESSED  
FAUSTYNA KOWALSKA.**

It is important to keep in mind that by presenting the life of Blessed Faustyna one uncovers an aspect of Catholic mysticism of a significant value, not only from a perspective of a Polish Church, but also from a broader perspective of the Church Universal.

**1. The Most Significant Biographical Aspects of Blessed  
Faustyna Kowalska.**

Blessed Faustyna Kowalska was born on the 25th of August 1905 in Glogowiec, a little town located in a state of Lodz, in Poland. Having finished the fourteenth year of life, she began working as a house keeper, first in Alexandrow and then in Lodz. On the 1st of August 1925 she entered a convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. The time of postulate she spent in Warsaw; then followed the novitiate with the same order in Krakow. At the ceremony, during which she received the habit, she took a name of Maria Faustyna, which she kept for the rest of her professed life. After two years of novitiate, on the 30th of April 1928, Blessed Faustyna took her temporary vows. Shortly thereafter she began working in various Convents of her Congregation, i.e. in Wilno, Warszawa, and Krakow. On the 1st of May 1933 she took the final vows. Only several weeks after this event her health began to weaken. In August of 1934 the symptoms of an illness began to intensify and she was diagnosed with severely advanced tuberculosis. During the next four years several times she ended up in the hospital in Pradnik, a town located near Krakow. In that very hospital she spent the last five months of her life where she died on the 5th of October 1938. She was buried in the common grave in the cemetery located in the garden of the Sisters of Our Lady of

Mercy in Krakow. The process of gathering the information about her life was initiated on the 21st of October 1965 by the Metropolitan Curia of Krakow. Three years later, in 1968 the beatification process was opened in Rome.

## **2. *The Diary of Sister Faustyna as a Source and a Testimony of Her Mysticism.***

The Mysticism of Sister Faustyna represents a surprising phenomenon of Polish religious culture, given especially the fact that too often that culture has been perceived as being characterized by too traditionalistic tendencies. *The Diary* contradicts this popular perception by presenting not only the mystical experiences and the testimony of faith that are, so to speak, removed from reality, but also by attesting to the fact that both of those phenomena had an application in concrete life that was permeated by the heroic Christian virtues. In addition, *The Diary* constitutes a valuable document for theological investigations, because it contains numerous important information regarding the character of a mystical life. It would not be an exaggeration to look at this work as a treasure of the mystical theology.

Faustyna wrote *The Diary* upon a suggestion given by her confessors, Fr. M. Sopoćko and Fr. J. Andrasz. She also admits in her writing that she wants to fulfill the recommendation she received from Jesus, namely, to make humanity aware of the goodness and the grace of God. The only wish she had was that the publication of *The Diary* would take place only after her death.

*The Diary* contains descriptions of extraordinary experiences taken down as they occurred. Usually, Faustyna focuses on the internal contact and on the contemplative unity with God. She describes relationship between a human being and God found very rarely in a history of such encounters. *The Diary*, a result of God's inspiration and of the submission to God's will, born from cooperation between a human desire to reach perfection and the grace of God, emerges as an unusual example of the relationship with God, of walking along the path of the spiritual development, of deep faith, and of consistent behavior based on a total trust in the love of God.

*The Diary* also contains certain instructions and recommendations of God. Some pages reflect Faustyna's personal reflections on thoughts and teachings flowing from priestly preaching. Thus one can encounter, written in very simple words, descriptions illustrating almost flames of love that draw the heart to the Creator filled with longing for God. All this written in words full of adoration and gratitude.

Blessed Faustyna began writing *The Diary* in the year 1934. The work, however, was not very systematic. For instance, she burned the first part of the work, and only upon the request of Fr. M. Sopoćko she began an effort to reconstruct that part. However, during this process she adds some of the experiences that were currently taking place. This resulted in certain chronological inconsistencies. Only during her illness, which gives her a little bit more time, she became more consistent and systematic in her writing. The year of her death (1938) constitutes the last part of the work. As an additional matter of interest, it is appropriate to point out that *The Diary* contains 477 of handwritten reflections.

*The Diary* is characterized by a very unique style of composition. For instance, the words of Faustyna are often intersected with those of Jesus, or a given narration is concluded with His words. Moreover, the descriptions of facts are often intersected by prayers what gives the text a poetic overtones. In addition, one encounters numerous words and phrases that are underlined. Following an advice of Fr. Sopoćko, Faustyna implemented this device in order to separate her reflections from explicit commendations of Jesus. The number of the underlined sections suggests that Faustyna believed that most of her work was a direct fulfillment of Jesus' will.

After Faustyna's death the handwritten original was kept among the members of her Congregation. Only after the beatification process was opened the text was copied from the original and attached to the acts.

### **3. Facts Testifying to the Mystical Experiences in the Life of the Blessed Faustyna.**

*The Diary* testifies to the fact that the mystical experiences in Faustyna's life began when she was barely seven. That is how she describes her first experience after many years have elapsed: „Once,

when I was seven years old, at a Vespers Service, conducted before Lord Jesus in the monstrance, the love of God was imparted to me for the first time and filled my little heart; and the Lord gave me understanding of divine things.” (Sister M. Faustyna Kowalska, *The Diary*. Stock bridge, Massachusetts: Marian Press, 1987, 1404) Later similar experience took place during one of the dances. After „the internal struggles” she saw next to her a suffering Christ. He was said due to her decision to abandon the vocation, which she made after sensing opposition of her parents to join the Convent. (9) From that moment on her life underwent a significant transformation. Christ became for her the most important goal of her life and the source that gave sense to that life. As a result, she decides to join the Convent, but still one year will elapse before she is accepted. During that time of test and waiting she takes a private vow of perpetual chastity. (16)

The first months of her life in the Convent are permeated by rich mystical experiences. Jesus does not allow her to leave the Convent and to move into even more cloistered form of life. (20) Under the guidance of Christ’s light, meditation on the truths of God becomes for her much easier. The truths that she could not grasp earlier now become clear. (267) In these, often mysterious experiences, she discovers God’s will for her life and she is filled with a profound internal sense of peace. (1328) At the same time, gradually, she begins to discover the mission that God has in store for her to fulfill on the earth. (1329, 1334)

Also at that time she receives the gift of supernatural contemplation and taken up by God in that fashion she is not capable anymore of continuing a regular style of praying. Thus during the Mass or adoration of the Blessed Sacrament Faustyna is not capable of following the liturgy. Sometimes, upon entering the chapel, she is „flooded” with the feeling of God’s presence. Describing that form of presence she states that it was allpermeating, and she compares herself to a child resting in the arms of the loving Father, whose love pierces through her very core. Her soul, even to the forgetfulness of self, is entirely submerged in God. It seems like she is hidden from the world; the senses are turned off; and only due to a power of the special light she is able to feel God’s action within her and she dives right into it. She experiences an extremely strong bond between herself and God. (30, 629)

In this initial stage of mystical experiences Sister Kowalska begins to discover „the heavenly Powers” that constantly glorify God in front of His throne. (85) She also sees the souls suffering in the purgatory, their futile prayers, and the Blessed Mother bringing them consolation. (20)

Toward the end of her first year of novitiate, Faustyna, as one can read in *The Diary*, experiences the dark night of the soul. After the time of great love of God and the internal peace come moments of the absence of God’s presence, times of aridity and spiritual dryness that lead to the peak of spiritual suffering. Faustyna feels like being rejected by God. Feelings of despair begin to surface, but she abides by God with the words „Jesus I trust in You.” (23-4)

Having lived through the dark night of the soul, Blessed Faustyna begins to experience again gentle touches of God. With time, also the frequency and the depth of those experiences increases. In addition, she possesses a form of unity between her will and that of God. Rational knowledge is being replaced with a simple assent of faith. (24). One could name this condition as a state of simple, mystical unity. For instance, on Good Friday, May 15, 1927, as a result of that unity with God, she is taken up into the very center of Jesus’ love. She describes this event in the following way: „The senses dim and are seemingly dead. The soul is most closely united to God; it is immersed in the Deity; its knowledge is complete and perfect, not sporadic as before, but total and absolute.” (115). In other words, the soul unites itself to God via all the internal powers of a person by suspending the very operations of those powers. One does not arrive at the knowledge of God’s presence through one’s own efforts but receives it as a gift, which is a form of an infused grace. The soul is filled with an awareness that God is being united with „it”. According to Faustyna, a Christian is able to perceive not only the drawing close of God and God’s immediate presence, but also he/she is aware that God works within him/her.

The soul experiences a form of a supernatural understanding which is “total and absolute”. The essence of that understanding is not only a result of the limitation of the rational powers but also of the empirical sense of the presence of God. The mystic is convinced that she discovers God „within herself, in the depths of her own being.” (1302).

Blessed Faustyna comes to a realization that she is called by God to a unique union with Him. (1556) She also knows that the way to that unity is through the dark night of the soul. Being afraid, however, that descriptions of that experience may cause scandal in those reading it, she decides to forgo the details in her writing. She presents only the feeling of loneliness, which she compares to a condition of an internal agony, a condition that allows her to realize her own nothingness. Surrounded by that overwhelming darkness, full of an internal struggle that transcends all other forms of suffering, and in the face of her own imperfection and sinfulness she experiences a total isolation from God. (1558) Faced with the greatness of God she feels that much more her own nothingness. That very feeling of her unworthiness in the face of the Creator causes such intense spiritual suffering that the experiences of everyday humiliation Faustyna considers „a refreshment.” (1559)

Despite such intense spiritual suffering, Faustyna does not give up, does not fall into despair, but all the more grows in the love of God. She is convinced that she is neither the source nor the cause of that suffering; it is the loving God who tests those He loves. Thus all she cares about is her personal fidelity to that God in everything she does. She compares herself to a host which is consecrated by the Heavenly Priest as an offering for the entire world: „my pure and undivided love will burn, in profound silence, as a holocaust. And may the fragrance of my love be wafted to the foot of Your throne.” (1564; see also 1235) Not being able to fully comprehend that experience of God, Blessed Faustyna surrenders entirely to the will of God in humility. (1237) However, the unity of her will with that of God is not to be understood as a form of pantheism. Rather, it is a total self-surrender into the hands of the Creator. One can say that she becomes an instrument always ready to be used. From that point on she desires only to do what is dictated by the will of God to a forgetfulness of her own. (487; 952; 1633)

In this so painful experience of the dark night of the soul Faustyna was able to see the nature of God's impact on her, which was permeated by grace and love. Being convinced about that, she is able to state that she „accepts everything with love.” (1633) All the sufferings ignite in the soul such love that despite very humiliating and saddening awareness of personal unworthiness Faustyna is able

to arrive at the highest levels of unity with God, because God gives to a mystic more than He takes away. Initially, as one was able to see, this experience frightens, but later it fills with strength and courage. As a result, the soul reaches the highest level of the supernatural love which leads to a close unity with God. Still before taking perpetual vows Faustyna wrote: "my spirit rejoiced in the Lord, and it seemed to me that I was running, not walking. My wings were spread for flight; I soared into the very heat of the sun, and I will not descend until I rest in Him, in whom my soul has lost itself forever. And I subjected myself totally to the action of Grace. God stoops very low to my soul. I do not draw back, nor do I resist Him, but I lose myself in Him as my only treasure. I am one with the Lord. It is as if gulf between us, Creator and creature, disappears. For few days, my soul was in a state of continuous ecstasy. God's presence did not leave me for a single moment. And my soul remained in a continuous loving union with the Lord [...] I felt I was transformed into love; I was all a fire, but without being burned up. I lost myself in God unceasingly; God drew me to himself so strongly and powerfully that sometimes I was not aware of being on earth." (142)

This kind of love-filled unity with God, Faustyna points out, lasted at times for several days without ceasing. (346; 174) The exact way in which God drew near to the soul during such experiences was known only to them. Writing further about this form of unity she often underlines the role of love, which causes that the mystic almost faints and loses herself entirely into the hands of God; dives into the „ocean of love," (5 I 3) which „floods the soul." (Ibid.) Faustyna is not able to put into words the entire experience, she states only that her „soul understands it well." (472)

As a result of growing in love, Faustyna, being almost constantly in a state of infused contemplation, received from God „the delights and raptures of love to the point of becoming oblivious to what was going on around." (1633) This description testifies to a deep union with God, a union which she considers superior to that to in the womb of a mother: „When I was enclosed in my mother's womb, I was not so closely united with her as I am with my God. There it was an unawareness; but here, it is the fullness of reality and the consciousness of union." (883) In this unity with God the mystic



recognizes to a greater degree the majesty of the Creator, and the unity permeating the Triune God. It is a form of understanding that transcends the ability of natural reason because it takes place suddenly, under the power of illumination, that allows to get to know things in a way „God sees them, regarding matters of both the interior and the exterior world.” (733)

Having experienced such great unity with God, Faustyna realizes that Christ is also revealing to her the saving aspect of life. Each Christian is called to enter into Jesus' death in order that „the world has the life and has it to the fullest.” (John 10:10) During the moments of unity Blessed Faustyna learns the meaning of suffering, and the Savior Himself prepares her heart so that she can be happy even at those difficult moments, because she suffers for Him. (303) None suffers for the sake of suffering alone. Nothing that takes place in the life of a Christian stays without some impact on the rest of humanity. Thus Faustyna is aware that she participates in the sufferings of Christ and so in His saving mission. She testifies to that fact stating: „Join your sufferings to My Passion and offer them to the heavenly Father for sinners.” (1032) Motivated by these words of Christ, Faustyna decides to follow the suffering Christ through accepting her own suffering and through humility. (262; 1394; 1488) From that point on she unites herself in everything she does with the Savior on the cross. Together with Him she is nailed to the cross for the salvation of others. (1120)

#### **4. The Main Elements of the Mystical Experience in the Light of *The Diary*.**

##### *A. Passivity.*

Faustyna's statements contained in *The Diary* illustrate the aspect of „passivity” of a person in the mystical form of life. In general, one can say that for a mystic „passivity” means first and foremost an acceptance of God's work in his/her internal life. The soul is able to feel that its senses cease to work, because God, by drawing close to a soul, „suspends all the laws of nature. He acts as He wills.” (1019) The soul surrenders entirely to God and is embraced by Him. (432, 771)

In addition to the harmony that has to exist between the human will and the demands of the will of God, the mystical unity with God also requires a rational activity on the high level, to which Faustyna testifies when she states that the mysteries of God are „revealed to her in simple and understanding way.” (293)

### B. *Gratuity.*

Faustyna admits that all that she experiences is the result of God's work. She points out in *The Diary* that in no way she has merited the grace of God which He gives to her out of His goodness. (1661) She is even surprised that God, who needs nothing, lowers himself to a Christian and out of love bestows the gift of himself, rendering the transformation of the soul. (1584). This is the miracle of unpenetrable mystery of God's mercy. This grace - Faustyna writes - emerges from a merciful Heart of Jesus and gives the soul a special light [...] but conversion depends on its own will. (1486) Further, she adds: I am flooded with your grace, I feel new life entering into me, and above all, I feel your love in my heart, [...] (Ibid.) „I know very well what I am of myself [...] and hence I understand that whatever good there is in my soul consists solely of His holy grace.” (56)

### C. *The Knowledge of God.*

The text of *The Diary* presents a description of a mystical experience viewed as a supernatural way of arriving at the knowledge of God. Before Faustyna experiences the mystical presence of God, however, she perceives Him as Holiness, Justice, and Goodness. The Holiness of God rests upon each individual disciple of Christ as well as upon the entire Church. She arrives at the second attribute of God - Justice - by realizing that in the face of Him everything has to stand in truth. Another attribute of God which Faustyna perceives is love combined with mercy. Also at this point she begins to understand that the realization of love in the life of a person lies in the fulfillment of God's will. In addition, God makes her aware of His immense love for her.

An experience of that love gives her a sense of approachability of God and the gap between her and the Creator is filled by Jesus. In that way God seems to establish a form of communication between Him and her. From that point on Faustyna intercedes for God's mercy on behalf of other people via her union with Christ. At the same time, awareness of a personal misery and sinfulness allows her to be even more perceptive of God's mercy. (490; 611; 1092; 1318)

The knowledge of God experienced by Faustyna exceeds her rational abilities. She is not capable to put into words all that she is experiencing when she „is flooded by the light of God.” She feels great intimacy with God who bestows on her the gift of that light and of sweetness that is so difficult to describe. (1048) Nevertheless, she makes an attempt to illustrate this experience of grace: „This flash of the knowledge of God draws the soul [...] and it does not last for too long, since the soul would not be able to endure such light.” (95)

In *The Diary* one also encounters requests for the grace leading to an even deeper knowledge of God: „Jesus, give me an intellect, a great intellect, for this only, that I may understand You better.” (1474) Ultimately, she asks for the grace of knowing God as He is. (1631) An empirical knowledge of God takes place when a soul „tastes” indescribable graces bestowed by God. That is the moment when a soul can perceive the results of God's presence within it. (1397)

The mystic, when he/she enters into the process of the knowledge of God, is overjoyed from the fact that the truth is revealed to him/her as it is to God. Pure love, writes Faustyna, „enables me to know God and understand many mysteries.” (293) In another place she adds: „the soul receives inward instruction about things it has not read in any book and has not been taught by any person. These are times of great inner knowledge which God himself imparts to the soul. These are great mysteries.” (1102)

Faustyna describes an empirical knowledge of God in very spiritual terms. The soul, as well as the body, is capable of experiencing goodness, greatness, and beauty of God. Above all, however, the soul experiences love. The immediacy of „the spiritual unity” fills Faustyna with an indescribable trust, joy, and very intense power of love. (1030)

The self-imposing knowledge of God present in the soul results in Faustyna's confidence, when it comes to an understanding of God's

truth. She states that the soul „in one instant comprehends so many truths and mysteries, which it would not be able to grasp even in a small fraction, even if strenuous, years-long work assisted by great intellectual efforts and imaginative powers were to take place.” (1102)

Thus, according to Faustyna, the soul also experiences the presence of God. It knows that God dwells within it, because it not only experiences the mysteries of God but also perceives God's presence in itself. The intensity of that perception increases with an increase of the level of purity of a soul. Ultimately, however, the conviction that one has arrived at the knowledge of God is granted by God himself. (605; 1318; 56)

#### D. *The Dark Night of the Soul.*

Constant mystical experience, presence of the supernatural graces, and above all full unity with God have to be preceded by deeply purifying dark night of the soul. In case of Blessed Faustyna this condition appears very early on, namely, toward the end of the first year of her novitiate. As she mentions in *The Diary*, at that time „it began to grow dark in her soul.” She begins to experience lack of comfort in prayer; she does not feel, as she did before, the joyful presence of God; contact with creation causes only disappointment and bitterness and is not capable of providing any comfort. (96; 1200) The most painful struggle is caused by the lack of delight in prayer and by an internal conviction that her prayers are not pleasing to God. (23; 68) Despite that suffering, she does not give up but, assisted by her strong will, abides by God. (268) During her prayers Faustyna continues to feel dryness and disappointment. (Ibid.) An experience of distress and anguish, that cannot be expressed in words, is constantly present. (68) Even the sacrament of Reconciliation does not have a calming effect, and the words of a priest „that she is more pleasing to God in her suffering than if she would have abounded with greatest joys,” also remain without result. (Ibid.) When she approaches the Sacraments, Faustyna feels that she is not worthy of God's mercy; she has an impression that by doing so „she offends God even more.” (23) On one hand, she experiences painful and persistent need to be united with

God, and on the other, she feels rejected by Him. That thought pierces her soul and she describes it as „the agony” of the soul. (23) The painful sighs to Christ add even more sorrow. They seem to be left without answers that she is expects to hear. As a result, Faustyna experiences a great „vacuum” in her soul, which nothing can fill up. (77)

At the same time, Faustyna is able to recognize her own misery, who she is, and above all her nothingness in the face of God. There is nothing in her that she cares to respecting, and she does not find there any joy. (76)

After the time of the internal anguish, despite which she keeps her fidelity to God, Faustyna’s soul begins to be filled with the love of the Creator. Again, for the short intervals of time, the soul enters into intimacy with God, almost plunges into it, and tastes of God’s delights. (91-98) One of such experiences took place toward the end of her novitiate, on Good Friday, during an evening adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. At that moment she forgot about all the suffering, though the state did not last for too long. The condition of darkness came back and lasted for half a year after she took the temporary vows. Only then the darkness gives place to God’s light needed for an understanding of the nature of His presence.

In *The Diary* Faustyna records that what she is writing represents only a faded reflection of what she experienced and suffered. (104) She is aware of all that God has done in her soul and that awareness becomes the sole source of her life. She is convinced that God himself purified and thus prepared her soul, so that she can be capable of the full unity with Him. (115) The light that comes with God’s presence is so strong that it blinds, and that is why God „has to be” with the soul. Otherwise, without that supernatural grace, the soul „would succumb at the first blow” of the dark night. (109) Due to the supernatural assistance of God, the sufferings are not that terrible; God sweetens them up and thus transforms human weakness into power. Faustyna tries to encourage those who experience similar night of the soul to forgo any sensual pleasures. She warns against the temptation of an easy escape, which is always present when one is climbing the slope of Calvary. (1655) The dark night of the soul plays the decisive part in the development of the mystical life. Successful endurance of that time enables a Christian to attain full and mature level of love.

### 5. An Object of the Mystical Experience.

In each event Faustyna experiences God. Just as seven-years-old girl she hears God's invitation to lead a perfect life. That invitation is present again when she considers entering the Convent. Later, the entire duration of the monastic life is permeated by more or less conscious experiences of God. The object of the mystical experience Faustyna usually describes using terms „God” or „Lord.” That does not mean, however, that she is not experiencing presence of the Holy Trinity in its unity or in the individual Persons. Describing her mystical experiences, though, she does not point out by which Person of the Trinity she is permeated at a given moment. (137; 911; 1670)

Careful reading of *The Diary* allows one to see that any experience of God's presence emerges suddenly, and then gradually allows Faustyna to be totally immersed in God. She is assisted by the feeling which she calls „fusion with God.” (137; 346; 1024) The Lord desires to be with her and to guide her. Thus Faustyna gets to know God via a personal relation „God - I.” Permeated by Him, she fills that she is entering into such a close union that „words cannot express it.” (629) These are the moments of recognizing the interior life of God, first, in His Divinity and unity of Persons; second, in participation in the everlasting happiness and in the life of the Creator. (472; 1129)

The most frequent object of the mystical experience is the second Person of the Trinity in His humanity and in the context of the mystery of salvation. “I sense - she writes - His divine gaze; I have long talks with Him without saying a word; I know what His divine heart desires.” (411) She experiences, on the most profound level, the mystery of God's self-emptying and becoming human. At one time, Jesus invites her to the upper-room. The moment of consecration becomes for Faustyna the most profound experience of her life. Never before did she encounter such deep understanding of that mystery. (684)

For the Blessed Faustyna, an encounter of Christ's humanity is not only an occasion for actually seeing Him, but also a condition that allows her to empathize with Him; to share with Him His feelings. Because of that ability she is present with Christ in the Olive Garden, during the time of imprisonment, and in each aspect of his agony. During meditation on His Passion she co-suffers with Him, feeling

what He does. The apogee of that experience is reached in the experience of wounds inflicted by the thorns and nails, that lasts all day. (1054; 1663; 1619; 1425)

In the moments of suffering Faustyna also experiences a special closeness of the Blessed Mother, who encourages her to remain trusting and faithful. Mary appears to her above all as the Mother asking her to always remain united with Christ, so that as her daughter she can grow in virtues. Putting herself as the model, Mary teaches Faustyna how to love God and how to always fulfill His will. At the same time, Faustyna aspires to arrive at the deepest possible knowledge of Mary. The result is the discovery of some of her attributes, i.e. humility, meekness, fortitude, and love of her Immaculate Heart. (843; 1710; 1711)

There are some consequences that result from the presence of the Divine Persons in Faustyna's life. Thus she freely decides to make a self-sacrifice for the conversion of sinners, especially for those souls that lost all the hope in the mercy of God. The sacrifice, as she herself confirms, has been received. God reveals that fact to her. He strengthens her in her illness and bestows upon her the fortitude needed for the continuation of work. Jesus assures her that if He demands something of a person, He bestows all the graces needed for the fulfillment of that demand. In the life of Faustyna the experience of God and of everyday life are always correlated. Work and the mystical life constitute perfect harmony. All the efforts of sister Kowalska's life are directed toward reminding humanity about the mercy of God, which emerges as His greatest attribute. Thus, with the full involvement, Faustyna begins the process of the fulfillment of God's will, that is of the drawing of the portrait of the Merciful Christ and of establishing His feast on the first Sunday after Easter. (505; 300; 601; 611; 949; 1533; 125)

## **6. Extraordinary Mystical Phenomena.**

The world got to know Blessed Faustyna as the herald of God's mercy. Often her mystical life, permeated by the supernatural gifts received from God, are thus overlooked. An object of this work does not lie in a detailed description and classification of all the mystical

graces present in the life of Blessed Faustyna, but in making known that such supernatural graces existed in that holy life.

### A. *Mystical Visions.*

The discipline of mysticism distinguishes three types of mystical visions: bodily, imaginative, and intellectual. In the case of Faustyna the bodily vision takes form of Christ from whose heart come out two rays. (87) On another occasion, it is Jesus hidden under the person of somebody else, i.e. of the poor young man. Very often she sees Jesus sitting at the table and waiting for her. (881; 1312; 1782)

In addition, she describes visions of the Seraphim that brings her Holy Communion during the thirteen days of her sickness. (1676) Several times she also sees the Satan, who is visibly disappointed with the state of her spiritual condition. (418-419; 1127) Finally, she encounters the "souls that are in need of her intercession at the throne of God. (516)

Also, the imaginative visions are constantly present in her life. The place and the time of the most intense visions of that kind is the celebration of the Eucharist. The content of such visions is usually filled by the pictures of the Passion of the Lord and of her ability to co-suffer with the Savior. In addition, she is capable of perceiving feelings of Jesus, i.e. His entry to Jerusalem on the Palm Sunday. (642) Very often Jesus appears to her as a little child in order that she can learn from Him simplicity and humility. (338) She is also aware of the effects of her sacrifices as well as of the value of the religious vows. (394; 851; 640)

Thirdly, Faustyna experiences the intellectual visions. They are centered on obtaining a deeper knowledge of the mystery of the Holy Trinity. (911) These are the moments of sudden illuminations during which God reveals to her His perception of reality regarding both internal and external principles operating within that reality. (733) The mind, as she herself states, „is bright and clear and free from all shadows.” (912)

During those visions Faustyna also arrives at the knowledge of her own spirituality. She perceives things that still have to be changed so



that she can live in accordance with God's will and to fulfill entrusted to her mission of proclaiming God's mercy. (854; 1056; 1592)

### *B. Mystical Expressions.*

Faustyna does not pay much attention to the forms of the supernatural phenomena. She is not interested in detailed description of the way in which mystical events take place. Rather, she focuses on their content. As an example of the heard word can be a vision of the Seraphim bringing her Communion. At that time she hears the following words: „This is the Lord of Angels.” (1676) In a similar fashion, she hears the request for prayer uttered by one of the sisters who passed away few days earlier. The content of the request, however, is not recorded in *The Diary*. (516)

In the mystical experience of Faustyna one also encounters the imaginary words, which, according to the theology of mysticism, constitute a phenomenon of receiving of the heard word via an interior sense. Aided by this strategy, Christ communicates to Faustyna almost all the „directions” needed for her spiritual growth. God's guidance lasts for many years until her prayers for the visible help on earth are fulfilled. This correlates with an encounter of her permanent confessor, Fr. M. Sopoćko. (74; 145; 13) From that point on Christ prepares her to fulfill her mission in life which is the proclamation of God's mercy. (966; 1446) At the same time, her confessor keeps vigilance over her spiritual life.

Together with the imaginary words Faustyna receives the power to put all she hears into practice. (772-773) She also experiences so called intellectual words which are heard by the mystic only in times of concentration and deep meditation. There is no external form or imaginary picture. Faustyna finds out from those experiences that in the future she will become an advocate of Christ's love and mercy. (717-718; 723; 998)

The second type of the intellectual words distinguished by the theologians are the formal words. Their characteristic trait lies in the fact that they are always connected with the specific aspects of Faustyna's vocation. *The Diary*, however, does not contain many tes-

timonies illustrating that she received those types of words. And if one can encounter any, they are usually written in a very laconic way and communicate the essential parts of what Faustyna was hearing. (314; 516; 1185; 1382)

### *C. Mystical Ecstasies.*

Ecstasy leads toward a complete absorption into God. The soul enters into Him with open eyes and discovers the depths of the mysteries of God. According to Faustyna, her soul is suddenly showered with the light of God, she is surrounded by His love, and thus she gets to know the mystery of God. (947) She is not capable of expressing in words what she experiences inside of her. This is grace of spiritual quality that no description can do it justice. (920) What takes place is the unity with the Father of such intensity that nothing is able to break it. (912; 947) The immediate result of the mystical ecstasy, according to the Blessed Faustyna, is an awareness of personal misery, deepening of humility, total surrender to God, and acceptance of all forms of humiliation from of her. (1559;1264)

### *C. Charisms.*

#### *a. Gift of Reading the Mysteries of Hearts.*

Blessed Faustyna, concerned with salvation of souls, receives the gift of reading the mysteries of hearts. Very often this applies to people who live in hypocrisy who are searching for help to enable them to find a real self. She is capable of recognizing this condition of the spirit both in those known to her and in those she never encountered. At those moments she experiences the pain of Christ's wounds. (112; 685; 835; 987; 1247) In addition, she possesses a gift of communing with the souls in agony, interceding for them and obtaining God's mercy. (1684) Very often Faustyna experiences both value and results of the intercessory prayer offered for others. (1248)

### b. Gift of Prophecy.

This gift does not pertain so much to foretelling the future, but to the teaching about God's mercy. She does that on the pages of *The Diary*. Christ calls her „the secretary of His mercy.” (1605)

Most of the prophetic visions experienced by Faustyna regard the deeds of mercy. She perceives the sufferings associated with the mission of proclaiming God's mercy. (675) She also sees the ultimate goal that those who draw from it will obtain. (777; 683) Finally, she has a vision of the new congregation that she is to establish. Unfortunately, that vision is not fulfilled by Faustyna herself.

### Conclusion.

The mission of the blessed Faustyna is widely reflected in contemporary world. For instance, one can find it in the teaching of pope John Paul II in his encyclical about God's mercy *Dives in Misericordia*. Christ, mediating the Father, shows one the mercy in which once again the portrait of God the Father, as always faithful to His love, is revealed. In the spirit of solidarity with that love Jesus realizes the act of salvation for the entire human race.

Partially, because of the writings of Faustyna, the truth about God's mercy is known today to most of those who believe in God. Much less is known, however, about her mystical experiences and about their nature. *The Diary* testifies to the fact that supernatural life does not consist of supernatural phenomena but of the total and child-like surrender to God. That is why the work fascinates one not as much with the descriptions of the mystical graces, but with profound living out of the mundane life in the Convent. Mysticism of Faustyna does not remove her from an everyday encounter with people. United with God she fulfils her usual chores. Totally surrendered to the will of God in work and in suffering Faustyna carries out the mission entrusted to her by the Savior.

*Stanisław URBAŃSKI*