

**Homily for the Diocesan Curia Respect Life Mass  
St. Viator Chapel, Springfield, Illinois  
Memorial of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska  
Wednesday of the 27<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time (Year 2) | October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022 AD**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: It is good to be with all of you today for our annual Diocesan Curia Respect Life Mass. Together we pray in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass today that our land may be a place where the sanctity of all life would be upheld from conception to natural death.

Few things could be imagined as more destructive of Christian culture, of the work of the Church, and the salvific plan of Christ, than the killing of millions of unborn babies. As we lament this tragedy and try to understand why God allows this to happen, we can learn from the story of Job, which we heard in our weekday Mass readings last week. We read how Job lost his property, family, and the respect he held before his friends, and even his own health. He cries out to God, begging Him to answer, and – at the climax of this dramatic story so familiar to any of us who have suffered – God answers Job from the storm cloud: “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” (Job 38:4). God goes down the long list of creatures throughout the world – the stars, the angels, the sea, the animals – and asks Job whether he

knows how the least of them was made. Job, of course, is silent and humbled before the majesty of God. He repents of his doubt and surrenders himself once again into God's Almighty hands. Then, marvelously and miraculously, all that he had lost is restored to him: sheep, camels, oxen, donkeys, sons and daughters ... and not only that, but his faith and confidence in God as well. Yet one part of this story should give us pause: Job's original livestock, and home, and family, were *not* returned. The sons and daughters he had at the beginning of the story are still lost, and dead. His book ends with restoration, but *limited restoration*. God has shown His power, and held back the Evil One who had assaulted Job, but the Enemy has not yet been overthrown, nor have the powers of death been reversed.

We should be able to recognize ourselves in a similar place. With the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the *Dobbs* decision of just three months ago, we rejoice to see the attack of our enemy turned back. God has made His power evident over our land and we see the miracle that is His grace at work in fragile, broken, fearful human hearts. Part of our prayer today is in praise of God's work that has returned to our country a greater freedom for life. Yet our hearts still mourn the loss of so many innocent lives, and here in Illinois, we find that the Evil One's assault on life – against children, against mothers and fathers,

against the family that is meant to be an icon to all of God's love – that in our State, Satan's attack is all the more frantic and brutal.

In today's Gospel reading (Lk 11:1-4), Jesus taught His disciples the prayer that bring us closer to Our Father in heaven. Saint Bonaventure says the following about our request to "give us today our daily bread." For Bonaventure, there are five loaves. The first is nourishment for daily existence. The second is an understanding of Scripture because we do not live by material bread alone. The third is the Eucharist, as Jn 6:52 says: "The bread . . . is my flesh for the life of the world." The fourth is grace's assistance as the psalmist says: "Humans were given angels' bread." The fifth is obedience, as Jn 4:34 says: "My food is to do the will of my Father."

Of course, St. Matthew's version of the Our father (Mt 6:9-15) ends with the line, "deliver us from evil." In the face of evil, our fight is only sometimes directly against the Evil One's attack. Above and beyond any sort of return fire, our fight must be to *abide in Christ*, to trust in the Father's Love and power, and to *live out of that love and power*. In Christ, we remain in the Father's hand and are capable of withstanding the most withering attack of the Devil, and, like Jesus, we can respond to even the most brutal hatred with a love that can only be given to us from Heaven.

Today we celebrate the Memorial of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska. Saint Faustina's name is forever linked to the annual feast of the Divine Mercy, the Divine Mercy chaplet, and the Divine Mercy prayer recited each day at 3 p.m. by many people.

Born in what is now west-central Poland, Helena Kowalska was the third of 10 children. She worked as a housekeeper in three cities before joining the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in 1925. She worked as a cook, gardener, and porter in three of their houses.

In addition to carrying out her work faithfully, generously serving the needs of the sisters and the local people, Sister Faustina also had a deep interior life. This included receiving revelations from the Lord Jesus, messages that she recorded in her diary at the request of Christ and of her confessors.

At a time when some Catholics had an image of God as such a strict judge that they might be tempted to despair about the possibility of being forgiven, Jesus chose to emphasize his mercy and forgiveness for sins acknowledged and confessed. "I do not want to punish aching mankind," He once told Saint Faustina, "but I desire to heal it, pressing it to my merciful heart." The two rays emanating from Christ's heart, she said, represent the blood and water poured out after Jesus' death.

Because Sister Maria Faustina knew that the revelations she had already received did not constitute holiness itself, she wrote in her diary: “Neither graces, nor revelations, nor raptures, nor gifts granted to a soul make it perfect, but rather the intimate union of the soul with God. These gifts are merely ornaments of the soul, but constitute neither its essence nor its perfection. My sanctity and perfection consist in the close union of my will with the will of God.”

Sister Maria Faustina died of tuberculosis in Krakow, Poland, on October 5, 1938. Pope John Paul II beatified her in 1993, and canonized her seven years later.

Devotion to God’s Divine Mercy is closely related to devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In both cases, sinners are encouraged not to despair, not to doubt God’s willingness to forgive them if they repent. As Psalm 136 says in each of its 26 verses, “God’s mercy endures forever.”<sup>1</sup>

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Saint of the Day: Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, accessed online at: <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-maria-faustina-kowalska>.