**A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE DIVINE MERCY DEVOTION**

**On a Sunday night in February 1931, shortly before the outbreak of World War II, a simple, young uneducated Polish nun, Faustina Kowalska, received a specially calling. Jesus appeared to her in a white garment with one hand raised in blessing; the other touched his garment at the breast where came forth two large rays.**

**He told her “The two rays denote Blood and Water. The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls. These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized heart was opened by a lance on the Cross. He also told her to “Paint an image according to the pattern that you see, with the signature: Jesus I trust in you. I desire that this image be venerated first in your chapel, and throughout the whole world.” He promised that “the soul that will venerate this image will never perish. “**

**Over the course of the next several years Jesus appeared frequently to Sister, now St. Faustina. He taught her prayers to implore His Divine Mercy, especially the Chaplet which is prayed on rosary beads. He said later, “Say unceasingly this chaplet that I have taught you. Anyone who says it will receive great Mercy at the hour of death. I want to give unimaginable graces to those who trust in My Mercy.” He also asked for special prayer and meditation on His Passion at three o’clock , the hour that recalls His death on the cross. “In this hour, he told her, “I will refuse nothing to the soul that makes a request of Me, in virtue of My Passion.”**

**As a further sign of His forgiving love Jesus called for a Feast of the Divine Mercy to be celebrated throughout the whole Church. This request was finally fulfilled by Pope John Paul II in 2000 when he forever declared the second Sunday of Easter as “ Divine Mercy Sunday” celebrated today throughout the Church world-wide. Jesus said, “ On that day the depths of My Mercy will be open to all. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain *complete* forgiveness of sins and punishment. “**

**What a truly amazing grace! Today Jesus offers you total absolution; a complete pardon-- a remission not only of sins but of any remaining temporal punishment in Purgatory. One theologian has likened this remarkable gift of mercy to a “second baptism.” How very different from a plenary indulgence, where in order to receive complete remission of punishment you must also be completely detached from sin. A very high bar for most of us indeed! But this is the wonder and miracle of Divine Mercy Sunday, today Jesus is waiting to shower you from the font of His Divine forgiveness and truly wash your slate clean.**