

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann

*Exercise of the Devotion  
to the Mercy of God*

Rome, 2009

**175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Foundation of the Institute**

## Introduction

*The Exercise of the Devotion to the Mercy of God* had been willed and propagated by our dear Foundress, Giulia of Barolo, in our Institute, in that of the Magdalenes and in the Refuge. Seeing that “*many evident benefits were gained by this practice*”, the Marchioness wished that it be spread also in the Churches for the public. With this aim she asked and got pontifical approval (16<sup>th</sup> March 1846) and also the granting of the indulgences, first on a temporary basis and later perpetually.

The originality and the efficacy of this practice consists in two aspects:

- ✓ for having integrated the prayer of **supplication** and the prayer of **thanksgiving** towards the Divine Mercy;
- ✓ for having *extended* the prayer in itself **to the whole of humanity**.

Having received pontifical approval, the Marchioness Giulia desired that someone “good with the pen” should write the meditations that would accompany this practice. Through the mediation of Silvio Pellico, it was probably Don Bosco who wrote these reflections. Once the booklet was drawn up, it was published and distributed in thousands of copies.

In a letter dated 17<sup>th</sup> February 1847, written by Silvio Pellico on behalf of the Marchioness and addressed to the Father General of the Jesuits, we read thus: “*The Marchioness rightly desires that this pious practice to the Divine Mercy be propagated, seeing here the **remarkable conversions and growth in faith and fervour** as a result of that practice*”.

Such results are confirmed by the Marchioness herself in her Petition to Holy Father for the approval of the practice and also by G.B. Lemoyne who, in the Biographical Memoires of Don Bosco, narrates episodes of conversion which took place in the printing press itself, at the moment of printing.

In our Congregation, in particular in the Mother House, this practice was kept up until the years of Vatican Council II. It was held on the days of Carnival

concomitantly with the Forty Hours or on other dates fixed annually. The verse of supplication “*O mercy of God...*” was also set to music by our Sr. Bianca Regis.

In 2008, before our Chapter, the General Council, desiring to revive and update this practice, modified it in the form of a **chaplet**, so that it could be recited individually or collectively, in a continuous, complete form or divided into six days, combining – according to the original intentions of the Foundress – the prayer of supplication and that of thanksgiving. And this received approval from the Vicariate of Rome on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2008..

In a particular way, Mother General and her Council, during their meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009, deliberated to *take up this practice again in all our Communities, during the **six days that precede the Feast of Divine Providence**, which in our Congregation is celebrated on **26<sup>th</sup> October**, the Birthday of Carlo Tancredi di Barolo*, to put into evidence how Mercy is the greatest expression of the Providence itself of God, who takes cares of His children with infinite love..

Besides these six days fixed, each one can pray it even daily, and can invite others to do it, above all in particular situations or to obtain certain graces, knowing that the Love of God is the fount of every perfect gift.

We recommend that you resume this practice individually and as a community and also spread it among lay people, knowing that through this pious practice, we can obtain abundant graces, above all with regard to *conversion* and *growth of spiritual life*.

Here we present the following:

1. The **original booklet**, just as it was written and published for the first time, to be used as a practice divided in six days, and also to draw points for reflection and prayer from the various meditations.
2. The **simple chaplet**, according to the recent approval, to be recited in 6 decades, individually or collectively, in its complete continuous form or divided in six days.

EXERCISE OF THE DEVOTION  
TO THE MERCY OF GOD

*Original Text*

**Approval of this Exercise and of the Indulgences  
connected with the same**

MOST BLESSED FATHER

In the pious establishments of St. Ann and St. Mary Magdalene erected in Turin and recently approved by Your Holiness, for some years in those religious communities, an exercise of devotion has been practised, directed at imploring Divine Mercy during the first three days for the conversion of sinners, and during the next three, to give thanks for the benefits received. It consists of: a short talk on the eve of the first day, during which the outline and the purpose of the Devotion is explained; during the following three days the practices of devotion, almsgiving etc. are proposed, and in the evening, after a brief meditation the Miserere Psalm is sung, and the Blessing with the Blessed Sacrament is given. On the last three days, in order to spend them in giving thanks for the graces received, a talk on gratitude owed to God is given, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, the Benedictus is sung, and then as on the previous days, the Blessing is given. Since many benefits have already been gained by this practice, the Marchioness of Barolo, Foundress of the above-mentioned establishments would desire that it be followed in some public Church, however at the request of the Parish Priest or its Rector, and since this is not granted by the Ordinary without the approval of the Holy See, she has beseeched Your Holiness to deign to consent to her solicitious request, and has graciously obtained through the S. Congregation of Rites the following favourable Rescript.

*From the audience with His Holiness held on 16 March 1846*

His Holiness on the basis of the report signed by me the secretary kindly approving the above-mentioned Exercise commissioned the Most Rev. Archbishop of Turin, that at the request of any Parish Priest or Rector of Churches in his Diocese, who desire to make it publicly in his Church at any time of the year according to his will and prudence, consents to and permits the said Exercise; the due conditions being observed, all things to the contrary notwithstanding.

I. G. FATATI S. R. C. Seg.

*Now the applicant, desiring to increase more and more the devotion to this pious Exercise, humbly entreats Your Holiness to grant in the said pious establishments as well as elsewhere, an Indulgence of hundred days to all those who are present for it at least on one day, and Plenary Indulgence to those who take part in it on all the days of the pious Exercise.*

*From the audience with the Holy Father*

His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI graciously grants to all the faithful of both sexes the Plenary Indulgence to be obtained once only, on the last day of the said pious Exercise, to be practised in the Churches of the above-mentioned pious establishments, as well as in a Church to be designated by the Ordinary provided that on that day, truly repented, confessed and having received Communion, they will have visited any one of these Churches or pious Oratories, and have prayed according to the intentions of His Holiness for some time, and besides, have taken part in the same pious exercise. Every time then with at least a contrite heart, they devotedly take part in the aforesaid pious exercise, and will have prayed as above, he grants every time the indulgence of hundred days. These indulgences will be in force for seven years without any promulgation of a Brief, and with the faculty to apply them in suffrage of the faithful departed. - Given in Rome by the Sacred Congregation for Sacred Indulgences on 6 April 1846. - Cardinal GABRIELE FERRETTI Prefect - A. Arc. PRINZIVALLI Substitute.

**The reigning Pope Pius IX  
extends the above-mentioned indulgences perpetually**

In everlasting memory of the event. Expounded to Us on the part of the beloved Daughter in Christ Giulia Colbert Marchioness of Barolo, who through the most humble petition addressed by her to our Predecessor Gregory XVI of happy memory, she had obtained for a span of seven years, by means of a Rescript of the Congregation in charge of the Indulgences and sacred Relics, given on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April of the current year MDCCCXLVI, that all the faithful who carry out the pious exercise called *of Mercy*, and instituted by her for the good of the souls, could get different Indulgences, plenary as well as partial. Now the same Exposer, in order

that this beneficial exercise may not lack any spiritual gift at any time, insistently turned to us to ask us that we deign through Apostolic benignity to extend perpetually the above mentioned Indulgences. We therefore, wishing to favour also through this demonstration of Apostolic benevolence the same Giulia Colbert Marchioness of Barolo, already commended by this Holy See for other Institutes, very useful for the salvation of souls, trusting in the Mercy of the Omnipotent God and in the authority of Blessed Peter and Paul his Apostles, extend through the contents of the present, by Apostolic Authority, all and each Indulgence perpetually, the remission of sins and abolition of penances, already granted for seven years, as said above, in favour of the Faithful who will carry out the said Exercise of Mercy, being observed however in the rest of the said first concession, the form and the disposition, and fulfilled exactly all the conditions therein enjoined. All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at St. Mary Major, in Rome under the seal of the Fisherman, on the VII August MDCCCXLVI, first year of our Pontificate.

For Lord Card. LAMBRUSCHINI

A. PICCIONI Substitute

*V. for the Indulgences*

+ LUIGI ARCHBIS.

# EXERCISE OF DEVOTION

## TO THE MERCY OF GOD

### *On the Vigil*

In order to pray fruitfully, preparation is needed. One must recollect the spirit, the imagination and the affections at the feet of our adorable Saviour Jesus Christ, inflame our heart with love for him, and speak to him with lively faith, hoping for everything from his bounty. Let us therefore put ourselves humbly with profound reflection before him, considering the nature of the devotion we intend to practise.

It had already been established since many years at Turin in some pious establishments and especially in those of St. Ann, of St. Mary Magdalene and of the Refuge, with the aim of invoking the Mercy of God: to invoke it, not only by each soul in favour of itself, but each soul in favour of all the nations of the earth, remembering that we are all sinners, all unhappy due to sin, all in need of pardon and grace, all redeemed by Our Lord through his most precious blood, all called to eternal salvation, if by listening to the divine inspirations we would detest sin and give ourselves heartily in perfect obedience to God and to the holy Catholic Church founded by him.

But since the duty of Christians demands that in prayer, besides asking God for the things we need, we thank Him likewise with great gratitude for the benefits we have received from him, it was thought to dedicate the first three days of this devout practice to implore God's mercy and the other three to render thanks for graces received.

In the evening of the first three, in which some practices of the devotion are proposed, there shall be, after a short meditation, the chanting of the *Miserere* psalm and the blessing with the Blessed Sacrament. On the last three days, there shall be a talk on gratitude owed to God, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the chanting of the *Benedictus* and the blessing.

Since the practices of devotion are subject to many dangers if they are not approved by the Holy See, infallible depository of the truth, in order that our devout exercise be solidly founded, and should continue those spiritual benefits



which already derive from it, a petition was presented to His Holiness Gregory XVI to obtain the supreme pontifical approval.

The Holy Father received this document kindly and wholeheartedly approved the Exercise presented, authorising the Archbishop of Turin, at the request of any Parish Priest or Rector of a Church of his Diocese to permit it publicly in any church and at any time of the year. Besides, the same Supreme Pontiff granted the indulgence of hundred days to all those who are present for it at least on one day, and Plenary Indulgence to all those who take part in it on all six days; the indulgences of which are applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

This permission of indulgences being given at that time only for seven years, the reigning Pius IX, confirming what his Predecessor had done, extended it in perpetuity.

After obtaining Apostolic approval, many Bishops, Parish Priests and Rectors of Churches strived to introduce this Exercise for the benefit of the souls entrusted to them.

Now, since the Supreme Pontiffs have granted the Indulgences, here we are to give during this preparation a brief notification of what the Church intends by Indulgences, reserving ourselves on the other days to consider more extensively what is the value of Mercy and how much we are in need of it.

Therefore we should say here that among the luminous traits of Mercy, we are to enumerate the treasure of the holy indulgences, which serve to wipe out from our souls the stains contracted by sin. Sin produces two very bitter effects in the soul: *guilt* which deprives us of the grace and the friendship of God, and *punishment* as a result of it and which hinders entrance into Paradise. This punishment is of two types, one eternal, and the other temporal. Guilt together with eternal punishment have been totally cancelled for us through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament of Penance, provided we approach it with the due dispositions. But since temporal punishment is not always completely cancelled in us in the said Sacrament, thus a greater part of it is left to be amended for during this life through good works and penance, or in the other by means of the fire of Purgatory. But who can ever penetrate the deepest eternal secrets, and come to know how much the supreme Justice

demands from us in this life in settlement of our dues, or if we have to stay in the fire of Purgatory?

May the Divine Mercy be always blessed, and thanks be given to our most compassionate and merciful Divine Redeemer Jesus Christ, who bestowed on the Holy Church<sup>1</sup> right from its origins, the power to communicate to us, and make us partakers of the treasure of the Holy Indulgences, in virtue of which with very light tribulation we can even fully pay back to Divine Justice what we owe for our sins.

This treasure which persists inexorably in the sight of God, is so to say a deposit of merits, and advantages of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints. So the indulgences are none other than the value of the merits of the Saviour which were superabundant and infinite, and likewise of Mary Most Holy, the Martyrs and the other Saints, who did not need to make reparation for their sins. Therefore the indulgences are called heavenly treasures by the Sacred Council of Trent<sup>2</sup>. This doctrine was taught by the Supreme Pontiff of happy memory Clement VI, saying that Jesus Christ through his grace, and through the superabundance of his passion left to the Militant Church here on earth an infinite treasure neither hidden in a sheet, nor concealed in a field, but he ordered that it be distributed for the benefit of the faithful, to Blessed Peter, who carries the keys of Heaven, and to his successors, the vicars of Jesus Christ on earth, whose treasure they administer, proof of the merits of the Blessed Mother of God and all the elect<sup>3</sup>.

These infinite riches then never diminished and will never diminish, like an immense ocean, which does not undergo diminution, no matter how much is drawn from it.

But the indulgences are not at the liberty of every Christian, so that they can be availed of in his or her own way; they can be enjoyed only *when*, *how*, and in *that greater or lesser quantity* determined by the Holy Church and the Supreme Pontiff. Therefore they are generally distinguished into two classes, *partial* or of some months or years and *plenary*. In our case it would be a partial

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<sup>1</sup> *Conc Trid. Sess. 25 de Indulg.*

<sup>2</sup> *Sess. 21 c. 9 de reform.*

<sup>3</sup> *Clem. 6 in dd. ext.*

indulgence, that of a hundred days which can be obtained every day by anyone who makes this Exercise of ours. The plenary indulgence is that by which is cancelled the whole temporal punishment for which because of our sins we are debtors to God; this is precisely the indulgence that can be obtained by all those who take part in this Exercise all six days. Having gained the indulgence of these six days we are once again before God as we were when we were born, in such a way that if one was to die in such a state, he would go to Paradise without even touching the punishments of Purgatory. And since the indulgence granted for this Exercise is likewise applicable to the souls in Purgatory, so we can, always with the due dispositions, free the soul of our dear departed and open heaven to them.

In order to acquire the indulgences some conditions are required. The first is that one be in the grace of God, because one who before God is guilty of grave sin and eternal punishment, is not and cannot receive the remission of temporal punishment. Therefore the best advice will be that each of us during these days make our confession.

The second condition is the fulfilment of what the Roman Pontiff prescribes. Since the Holy Church on opening the treasure of the holy indulgences, always compels the faithful to perform some good work in a particular time and place, so to acquire the indulgence of which we are especially speaking, the Supreme Pontiff, granting the plenary indulgence wants that each one approach the Sacraments of Confession and Communion, and while participating in the sacred functions prays according to the intentions of the same Supreme Pontiff. Then regarding the hundred days that can be obtained by participating every day in the Exercise, it is enough that one has sincerely repented for his or her sins. However here it must be noted that for those persons who make their confession once every week, this is enough for acquiring the indulgences although he or she does not confess during that time.

Finally, in the third place, in order to acquire the plenary indulgence and the remission of all one's sins, it is necessary that one detests the same sins, even venial ones, and further that one gives up affection for all and each of the same.

Here in short has been explained what is necessary for acquiring during these days the holy indulgences and for corresponding to the great goodness and mercy of our God. Thus we could take advantage of this Divine Treasure in favour of our soul and also in suffrage of the souls of our dear departed, who are waiting to be relieved by us from the pain of that fire in which they find themselves. This will move our God to shower on us His graces in great abundance, so that we can in the course of these days come to know more and more the Divine Mercy and invoke it for the conversion of sins. May God grant that all our hearts be inflamed for the acquisition of the holy indulgences for our spiritual benefit, and that the Divine Mercy come down beneficent on many unhappy sinners, who unfortunately live far away from that path which alone can lead them to salvation.

## **PRACTICE**

*The practice for this evening is encouraging all your relatives and friends to take part in this pious exercise, in as much as it is possible for them.*



## **FIRST DAY**

*God shows his mercy daily to the just and the sinners.*

**O Mercy of God!**

**We call on you not only for ourselves,  
but for all human creatures!**

To animate our confidence in the Divine Mercy let us consider right from the beginning how the Lord gives proof of his goodness to all without distinction. Sacred Scripture says: the whole earth is full of God's mercy, *misericaordia Domini plena est omnis terra*. We cannot fix our gaze anywhere without experiencing the benefits of God. The air that gives us breath, the sun that illuminates us, the elements that sustain us, fire, water that is useful to us in many ways, animals tamed for our convenience, whatever we see that is

beautiful, precious and magnificent everywhere, everything reveals the divine goodness. Man's life by day and by night is subject to so many accidents, through food, through drink, on the streets, at work and in every other action, yet God has preserved us till now!

We see this action in temporal things; what then shall we say about what God does regarding spiritual things? The intellect by means of which man knows the truth, the reason by which he distinguishes good from evil, the will by which man can follow virtue and gain merit before the Lord, the memory, the faculty to speak, to reason, to know, in short the *thinking* principle, that is, the soul, are gifts the Lord has given to us, and which he preserves for us through his daily goodness and providence. The Churches, the sacraments, all the other spiritual comforts make this Divine Mercy more and more evident for the benefit of men.

All the same, the Lord assures us that He distributes these benefits without distinction on the just and the sinners. «He makes his sun shine on the good and on the wicked and makes the dew from heaven fall on the just, as well as on the sinners»<sup>4</sup> Then, since the sinner by sinning loses many of these gifts, so it seems that the Lord goes in search of him in order to help him and restore what he lost through sin. Let us see what he makes one of his holy prophets say: "Let the sinner abandon the path of evil and return to his Lord, He will have compassion on him". Come to me, He says in another place, and I will give you what you have lost when you were living far from me, I will give you not only what you do not have, but what you not even think of.

The same is showed by our Saviour who in the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation should have had particular attention for the just souls who were waiting for him since a long time; yet he himself assures us that he did not come to take on human flesh and work for the just, as we read in the Holy Gospel, but for the sinners, *non veni vocare justos sed peccatores*, and elsewhere he says: I came to save that which was lost; *Veni salvum facere quod perierat*. Almost as if to say: the sinner with sin despises and rejects on his own all the favours of the

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<sup>4</sup> Psal. 8.

divine bounty and merits nothing but eternal death: I came to restore him the hope of life and give back to him what was lost: *veni salum facere quod perierat*. Besides, after man sinned, all the creatures rebelled against the sinner. St. Thomas says that the fire, the earth, water and air, through their natural instinct would be inclined to punish sin in order to vindicate the wrong done to their Creator. *Omnis creatura exandescit adversus iniustos*. Only God in his mercy, while all the elements would exterminate the sinner from the face of the earth, not only holds them back, but makes them continue to serve man, almost, according to the expression of Sacred Scripture, He dissimulates the view that He has of the sins of men so that they might mend their ways. *Dissimulans peccata hominum propter poenitentiam*. He continues to shower His gifts on all without distinction; He looks with eyes of regret on the sinner far from him, He favours Him in a thousand ways, He wants to have mercy on him.

Yet, who would believe it? In spite of such moving traits of goodness of our God, many live in an almost insensible manner in the disorder of their life without caring that the time of mercy could end for them and be replaced by his severe justice. This unfortunately happens, that the sinner far from his God does not think any more of Him, and while He seeks him to show him mercy, it seems that he competes to irritate Him and induce Him to punish him. Let us ponder well on these characteristics of divine goodness, and while we see them renewed daily for our advantage, lo! we are most ungrateful; and if at all sin keeps us away from God, let us detest it with a true heart and return to him as soon as possible. And since the sinner mostly after the fall does not think of returning to his Lord, we, today, enlightened by God in a special way, prostrate before the throne of His Divine Mercy and invoke Him that He may shower His Divine grace on the obstinate sinner and enlighten him so that he may return to Him. Bewailing the wretched state of all sinners, we detest our sins; we thus say to God: ah! My Lord, I understand that at this hour I deserve to be in hell, and by your mercy, this day is yet given to me to throw myself at your feet and feel that you wish to show me mercy and forgive me provided that I repent of the wrong done to you.

Yes, my God, I thank you for all the benefits you have done for me and which you are doing every day; I was ungrateful to you in the past, but now I

love you with all my heart, I repent for having wronged you, I regret having offended you more than any evil I could have incurred; for pity's sake enlighten me O infinite goodness, make me understand my great ingratitude; ah that I may never have offended you! O my Jesus pardon me, and from today onwards may I love no one but you, live only for you, who died for me. The grace that I ask for me, likewise I ask for all the sinners, so that all may know your great bounty in benefiting them, may they leave once and for all the unhappy state in which they find themselves and return to taste the delights of a loving Father as you are. I ask this grace by the merits of your divine son and our Saviour Jesus Christ. And you, O loving Mother of Mercies, sweetness and comfort of sinners, let my prayer be granted, since never was a grace asked of God through you, that was not granted.

### **PRACTICE.**

*Forgive someone who might have offended you, and the more grave be the injury you have forgiven your neighbour, as much more you can expect to receive from the Divine Mercy.*

- **Psalm 50**



### **SECOND DAY**

*Particular features from the Sacred Scriptures used by God towards sinners.*

O Mercy of God!

We call on you not only for ourselves,  
but for all human creatures!

The marvellous way in which God in each age dealt with the greatest of sinners must be a powerful reason to animate ourselves with confidence and return to God. The whole of Sacred Scripture is full of these wonders. Our first parents Adam and Eve disobeyed God and through sin made themselves unworthy of paradise and guilty of death; the merciful God changed eternal death in temporal death for them and comforted them with the promise of a Saviour. The whole of the human race abandoned itself to every kind of vice. God justly indignant decreed to send a universal deluge, but for the duration of a hundred years made them understand through Noah that if they were converted and returned to Him He would undoubtedly have forgiven them. Very many times the Hebrews rebelled against God, who abandoned them into the hands of their enemies to make them amend their ways. They repented of their sins, their hearts turned back to God, He immediately moved to pity, received them into His grace, freed them from their enemies and made them experience peace and tranquillity. But ungrateful for the Divine favours, they repeatedly showed their infidelity to Him and were always received by Him as soon as they returned to Him.

Then what particularly manifests the great goodness of God towards the sinner is the episode of David. This king after having received great favours from God, fell into very grave sins. One evil led to another; days, months and years passed by, and David lived unhappily far from his Lord, and did not think of returning to Him. A marvellous trait of Divine clemency also in favour of one who does not seek Him! God was moved to pity by his unhappy condition and sent Prophet Nathan to him to awaken him from the sleep of Death. Under the guise of asking from him justice for the misdeed committed, Nathan presented himself to David: Lord my King, he said to him, in the same town there were two men, one rich man who had flocks and herds in great numbers, the other who had just one little ewe lamb which was all he had. Now it happened that the rich man having to prepare a meal for a wayfarer who had come to him, sparing his own flocks and herds took the poor man's ewe lamb and made a meal of it. On hearing this David grew very angry and exclaimed, "The man who has done this merits death! Then Nathan said to him: "You are that man, O King; Thus says the Lord God of Israel: I anointed you king over my people, I freed you from your enemies, and I filled you with every good. You, ungrateful for so many favours to



the scandal of my people, you abandoned my law and became the occasion for others to blaspheme the name of the God of hosts." David who had a good heart, understood the Divine clemency that was seeking him and entering into himself raised his gaze to Heaven and totally moved he exclaimed: I have sinned against the Lord. This confession was of few words, but enough to make him enter into the grace of his God, and he merited immediately to hear those consoling words of the Prophet: "The Lord too has forgiven your sin, you shall not die." *Dominus transtulit peccatum tuum, non morieris. (2 Regum, cap. 12).* These luminous traits of goodness shown towards David are the same that He pronounced through the mouth of His Prophets in every age. Here are some of these expressions: come and see how the Lord is ready to forgive; and elsewhere almost lamenting because the sinner delays in going to Him, says: I will raise up sons, I will educate them and fill them with every good thing; they will despise me. Let the wicked abandon the way of iniquity and come to his Lord and he will find compassion. If the sinner will return to me repented, I will forget all his iniquity, and calling particularly the sinner will say to him, what do you want that I do for you? What could I have ever done for you that I have not done?

Then if we observe the conduct of our Divine Saviour in the Gospel, O how His Mercy for the sinner shines forth! At times He resembles a woman who turns the house upside down searching for the lost coin; at times he presents himself as the afflicted shepherd who lets the ninety-nine sheep go on their way, and he goes through valleys and cliffs in search of the one which was lost, and which on finding, He puts on his shoulders and carries it joyfully to the fold. At other times He presents Himself as a tender father, who with great transports of joy welcomes his spendthrift son who returns to the paternal home. All these ways of speaking of our good God show the great desire that the Lord has to use mercy on all, but especially on the sinner. Rather He assures us that when a sinner returns to God, it is a reason for greater rejoicing in heaven than when ninety-nine just men walk the way of justice. However let us note well that not only the parables but the very literal narrations of the Gospel give evidence to what we are saying. The fact of the Magdalene is valid for all. This woman given in to a permissive life had become the public scandal of the entire city. God, moved to pity by her deplorable state, enlightened her with a ray of

His grace. She without further delay abandoned the world with its flatteries, ran to prostrate herself at the feet of the Saviour. Perhaps he should have scolded her? Rather He lovingly accepted her, and seeing she had repented, He made these memorable words resound for her: your sins are forgiven. So it is not to be wondered if the holy fathers apply what follows to our Divine Saviour, almost as though saying to the sinner *laboravi clamans, raucoe factoe sunt fauces meoe*. (Ps. 68). Son, I have almost lost my voice calling out to you. Take heed, O sinners, says St. Theresa, that the Lord whom you have offended so much is calling you. Ah therefore! Do not any more persist in displeasing this loving, heavenly Father; He knocks on your heart and says to your soul: dear soul open to me. *Soror mea aperi mihi*. (Cant. 5. 2.) Therefore let us not go far away from him, let us listen to what he goes on telling us: you ungrateful ones, do not run away any more from me; tell me, why do you run away? I desire your welfare and nothing else but to make you happy: Why do you want to lose yourselves? But what are you doing, O Lord? Why so much of patience and so much love for these rebels? You, O my good God, you always answer me that you do not desire the death of a sinner, but that he repent and live. *Non mortem peccatoris, sed ut magis convertatur et vivat*.

Merciful God, I would no more merit compassion from you, but that goodness which withheld you until now from abandoning me while I was going astray, I hope that you may well want to accept me now that I return to you. Give me true sorrow for my sins, so that I may grieve for them as long as I live, and in exchange for the insults done to you, I will make every effort to lead back to the right path those who have offended you, and when the impious will all be converted to you together, we shall sing the divine Mercies. *Docebo iniquos vias tua set impii ad te convertentur*.

## PRACTICE

*Today make some abstinence so as to obtain mercy from God for all the sinners, but especially for those who are on the point of death.*

- Psalm 50



## THIRD DAY

*Particular features of mercy used by the Divine Saviour  
in his passion for sinners.*

O Mercy of God!

We call on you not only for ourselves,  
but for all human creatures!

All the deeds of our loving Saviour are a continuous expression of the acts of his generous divine goodness, specially by never rejecting or treating rudely the greatest of sinners. Nevertheless, this most luminous goodness appears in his passion, and what is more, in favour of sinners who were the cause of his death. Judas after having received great signs of special love and trust, sacrilegiously sold him to his enemies and at the head of a large band of armed men went to hand him over into their hands. He said nothing else but these loving words: *Amice ad quid venisti?* Peter transported by excessive zeal cut off the ear of a brigand; Jesus lovingly commands that it be fixed again and with a miracle he heals him perfectly. Peter denies him three times, he looks at him with a gaze of compassion, he makes him enter into himself, and he receives him again through his grace. After the most unjust and wicked sentence, he is scourged, crowned with thorns, pierced with nails; he does not utter a word of lamentation, and though he could take the most terrible revenge on his judges and his executioners, yet he accepts his condemnation, he keeps silent, suffers and forgives everyone. Then with what was an excess of goodness and love when nailed to the cross, pierced by nails, cursed and insulted in a thousand ways by the same enemies, what did he do? He could have rightly commanded the lightning to burn them all to ashes, or make the earth open under their feet, and all would have been swallowed into its abysses; but the goodness of a God Saviour did not want this. He did nothing else but lift up His gaze to His heavenly Father: My Father, he said, forgive them for they do not know what they do. Adorable words which could not but be of a God! On the cross He was placed in the middle of two thieves, one of them turned to him, asking him to have mercy on him. Immediately the sorrowful Saviour lovingly assured him that on the very

same day he would be with him in Paradise. Then at the last moment of his life in the midst of those most acute spasms He pronounced those last words: *Sitio*; which, as St. Bernard explains, revealed what charity and immense mercy burned in His heart right until His last breath. Could we imagine greater love and greater mercy? "What can I say of you, my God? the holy Archbishop St. Thomas of Villania, exclaims, as if beside himself with wonder (*serm. De dom. 2 adv.*). With the Apostle of the Gentiles I shall say that your love and your mercy have abounded. I shall say that you have loved without any measure. I shall say that you who arrange all things by number, weight and measure, in loving me you have surpassed every weight, way and measure: *In dirigendo me modum, pondus, atque mensuram excessisti.*" Take courage therefore, you afflicted souls and you miserable sinners, courage and confidence in the goodness of this God. The number of your sins may be great, but know that his mercy will surpass them, if you repent. He says to you: Peace be with you, do not fear, it is I who speak to you. Can these mighty promises fall short? Never; heaven and earth will pass away, all the elements will turn to nothing, but it will be always God who speaks thus, he will never fail in his promises, he will always be good and merciful and as a tender and loving father will welcome us every time we return to him.

Perhaps we will be terrified by the abuse of the graces granted by God to us in the past? What an enormous abuse Judas made of them! Yet he heard no reproof, and was called by the sweet name of friend. If someone is lost, it is only because of wanting to persist obstinately in evil. St. Peter was filled with great favours, notwithstanding this he denied Him three times; but since he repented, he at once received pardon for them. Does the gravity of our sins frighten us? The example of the good thief must console us and encourage us to ask what he obtained. Will your iniquity equal that of those who killed a God made man? Well we too shall have a Saviour who intercedes for us near His heavenly Father saying: Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do, *ignosce illis, nesciunt enim quid faciunt.* Ah! Full of confidence then, let all of us approach this cross on which the author of life itself dies. While he sheds his most precious blood till the last drop, while he foresees all the repeated falls and

scorns, he never ceases to call us: Come to me all of you: *venite a me tutti, venite ad me omnes*<sup>5</sup>..

## PRACTICE

*Give something in alms according to your possibility: and not being able to, recite five times the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be to the five wounds of our Divine Saviour, with the ejaculatory prayer My Jesus, mercy*<sup>6</sup>.

- **Psalm 50**



## FOURTH DAY

*The love with which God welcomes the sinner is the first motive for which we should thank him.*

O Mercy of God!

May you be eternally thanked  
for the benefits granted to all human creatures!

During the past three days we tried to make known how great Divine Mercy is, invoking it with all our heart for us and for the conversion of sinners. During the next three days that still remain of this sacred practice, we will

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<sup>5</sup> *Some persons by chance got the manuscript in their hands with the thought for this day. They began reading it just to make fun of the author and nothing more. But the ever Good Lord showed a trait of His paternal goodness. It was read in deep silence and instead of laughter, lively remorse took its place; and they ended by going to confess their sins at the feet of a confessor, thus abandoning their disorderly life.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Supreme Pontiffs PIUS VI and PIUS VII have granted the indulgence of 100 days every time the Glory be is recited. The Reigning PIUS IX has likewise granted the indulgence of hundred days to the one who recites the ejaculatory prayer My Jesus, Mercy.*

engage ourselves in as much as it is possible, to thank divine bounty for the acts of mercy and benefits granted to us. Although innumerable are the reasons that urge us to thank God, however it seems that he merits special thanks for the love with which he welcomes the sinner, who with greater confidence will present himself to his offended Lord, who calls him lovingly.

The princes of the earth not always decide to listen to their rebellious subjects who go to ask them pardon, and in spite of the most lively signs of repentance it is necessary to pay with one's life. God does not do this to us. He assures us that He will never turn His face away from us each time we return to Him; no, because He Himself invites us, and promises us the most ready and loving acceptance. *Revertere ad me et suscipiam te*: return to me, O sinner, and I will welcome you. (Jer. 3:11). *Convertimini ad me, et converta ad vos, ait Dominus*: you just have to will to return to me, I shall run and come to meet you. (Zach. 1:13). Ah with what love, with what tenderness God embraces a sinner when he returns to Him! Let us again recall the already mentioned parable of the lost sheep. The Good Shepherd finds it, he clasps it on his shoulder, takes it home and calls his friends to rejoice with him crying out: Rejoice with me because I have found the sheep that was lost. *Congratulamini mihi quia inveni ovem quae perierat*. This was what the Redeemer meant to communicate more through the parable of the prodigal son, saying that he was that father who seeing his lost son returning, ran to meet him; and before he could speak he embraced him, he kissed him tenderly, and almost fainted with tenderness because of the consolation he felt (Lk. 15:20). One thing that could turn away sinners from this return is the fear that God could throw back at them their offences; something that happens in the case of men, who forget the offenses for some time, and at the slightest incident bring them up again. With the Lord it is not so: He says that if the sinner repents, He wants to even forget his sins as if he had never offended him, listen to his precise words: if the wicked will make penance he shall be pardoned, and I shall forget entirely all his iniquity: *si impius egerit poenitentiam vita vivet; omnium iniquitatum ejus non recordabor*. He says something more (and it seems that divine mercy cannot go beyond) *venite et arguite me, dicit Dominus: si fuerint peccata vestra ut coccinum, quasi nix dealbabuntur*. (Isaiah. 1:18) Which means, come, O sinners, and try it, even if

your soul be black due to a thousand iniquities, if I do not pardon you, *arguite me*, reprove me and treat me as an infidel. But God does not know how to despise a humble and contrite heart; rather the Lord exalts Himself to show mercy and pardon towards the sinners: *exaltabitur parcens vobis*. (Is. 30: 18); and what must be of more consolation to the sinner is that he will not have much to weep about: at the first tear, as soon as he says I repent, the Lord will be immediately moved to pity, *statim ut audierit, respondebit tibi*; as soon as you repent and ask His pardon, He immediately forgives you.

Perhaps the timid souls will say, it is true that the mercy of the Lord is great, but no one can deny that He is also a just judge, who will treat us as our faults deserve. Unfortunately there are many sinners, who frightened by the idea of finding in God a severe judge, do not dare return to Him. Such are the judges of this world who treat the delinquents according to the gravity of their misdeed. But, I repeat it, God does not deal with sinners like this. Rather, sometimes He uses His justice, but only to correct the sinner and make him return to His fold; He is terrible, for towards the one who returns to Him He is all amiability, and all charity; *Deus caritas est*. Perhaps the outrages done to the Divine Saviour terrify us? Not even this must terrify us: Jesus Christ is our judge, but He is also our friend, *vos amici mei estis*, are His words. Rather Jesus Christ came to save sinners. *Veni salvum facere quod perierat*. For the sinner, He descended from heaven to the earth, He was born in poverty, He lived in poverty, He gave up His life in suffering, and shed all His most precious blood to save the sinner. Therefore He cannot but feel satisfied when He sees His sufferings bear fruit through the conversion of the sinner. He Himself wanted to demonstrate this when He said, that when a sinner amends his ways all the blessed will rejoice and the whole of paradise will celebrate. Therefore away with every fear of rigorous divine justice, instead let us thank our good God for the many benefits that he has imparted to us in the course of our life and specially for having awaited for us to make penance. Let us promise him from our heart that in the future we will be faithful to him always and constant in serving him. And let us tell him with love that for the innumerable acts of goodness that he has used, whatever pain, affliction, suffering, life and even death would not be enough to thank him for our immense debt. In the

meanwhile grateful to him for many signs of his divine bounty and animated by his loving acceptance with which he receives us, let us approach the throne of his grace with confidence, and being sure to obtain the pardon of our sins, let us promise God to use each moment of our life in thanking, blessing and praising him. Wherefore, all the days that it will please him to leave us in this life, are none other than a continual rendering of thanks for the goodness used towards us, so that exalting his mercy here on earth, we may be able to praise and exalt him one day with all the saints and the blessed in heaven. *Misericordia Domini in aeternum cantabo.*

## PRACTICE

*Pause a while to reflect on your sins of your past life, and prepare yourself to make a good confession.*

- **Benedictus**



## FIFTH DAY

*The benefits of the Sacrament of Penance is the second motive  
for which we should thank God.*

O Mercy of God!

May you be eternally thanked

for the benefits granted to all human creatures!

Our good God whose wisdom and bounty are great in all his works, never allowed us to lack anything that we needed. He founded the Church of which he himself is the head and all the faithful are its members. And foreseeing our weaknesses, in order to help us, he appointed his ministers with the power to forgive sins in such a way that those who would be forgiven here on earth, would be likewise forgiven in heaven, so that we have in the confessional, one who stands for God on earth.



Come, O faithful, with how much facility can we be certain of the forgiveness for our sins through the Sacrament of Penance. What great benefit, St. Thomas da Villanova exclaims, did He not do for us, and what great mercy did God not show by instituting such a useful and necessary sacrament! *Quam grande beneficium, quam grandis misericordia fuit haec!* Just think, continues this Saint, O ungrateful man, and thankless to your God that sometimes you lament that having to confess your sins is like an unbearable burden; just think, He says, if during the past centuries there ever was to be found such a good and merciful king, who would have done the same to each of his enemies, as God does to us, and would have exacted no other punishment from them than the confession and repentance for their sins, leaving it in their hands to obtain pardon for them. (*In Dom. 3. quad.*)

It is true that some sinners say that the number of their sins being so great, they fear they will not receive pardon for them any more. For pity's sake do not fear, no, come as well to this mercy, and you will find it ready to pardon you. The Divine Saviour shows this especially when St. Peter questions Him if we must forgive up to seven times. He being filled with kindness and mercy towards the sinners replies: I do not say, O Peter, to forgive seven times, but up to seventy times seven: I do not say *tibi usque septies, sed usque septuagies septies*. (25): with what words, adds St. John Chrysostom, He does not intend fixing that particular number, but it signifies, that he must on His behalf forgive every time the sinner, truly repentant should present himself at His feet to confess his faults: *non numerum statuit hic, sed infinite, perpetuo, et semper denotat*. Rather, continues the same Saint, our excellent God, in instituting such a great sacrament wants to appoint as its ministers not the angels, but men clad in flesh like us, so that knowing human frailty and weakness, they should know how to bear with the misery of others and use sweetness and charity in receiving the sinner.

Someone could add: I have already confessed many times, and have always fallen into the same sins; therefore it is useless for me to confess. Go slow, do not speak like this, you show yourself so very ungrateful to Jesus Christ; He, in instituting this sacrament did not promise to make us impeccable, but promised that everytime we would have returned to Him He would forgive us: *quorum remiseritis peccata, remittuntur eis*. Then it is not true that this

Sacrament of Confession has been useless to you, inasmuch as you obtain pardon for the sins you sincerely confess, as also you will be forgiven every time you fall again, provided you go to the feet of the confessor to detest them: because these words are always steadfast: *Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicias.*

One could also say: of what use is it to leave sin? I know my frailties, I am so weak, that if today I should go to confession, tomorrow I will fall in the same sins, therefore how does confession benefit me? Dear souls, be well attentive, this is a snare which the devil uses to keep the sinner bound and to lead him to damnation with him. Abandon sin courageously, make the firm resolution not to sin any more trusting in the grace of God that will give you the strength to observe this great resolution. By repenting and proposing not to offend the Lord any more, He can give you valuable assistance for weeks, months and years and for all your career. On the other hand, who assures you that tomorrow you will still be alive? Could it not be that today is the last day for you, and therefore every danger has been removed for you? But is it so difficult to make a good confession, who knows that we do not add a sacrilege to the sins already committed? It is true that it is difficult to make a good confession; therefore if one goes to confession without the will to abandon evil, it is better that he does not go.

The Lord, who well knew our weakness, in instituting this sacrament assured us that by detesting our sins at the feet of the confessor, they are all forgiven, without being afraid of the difficulty to confess well. Therefore away with every fear. Courage and confidence and firm resolution. We go to a God who is a very good Father, who loves us his creatures. Why should we fear the one who loves us? Rather, let us thank the Divine Mercy for having instituted that beneficent and consoling sacrament, through which our soul is washed from every stain that renders it detestable to his sight. Let us promise, ah! yes let us promise from our heart that we want in the future to correspond to his immense goodness, by approaching the saving waters of Penitence with the due dispositions and as often as possible, to wash and beautify our souls.

My God, I thank you with all my heart for having waited so long for me to return to you. Eh! Could you not rightly have deprived me of life in the state of sin and condemned me eternally in hell? Your clemency did not want this. You added favours to favours so that I return: now here I am merciful God, here I am ready to do what you will. May my heart, my mind and soul seek nothing else but to please you, my God, my Father, my Saviour, my All. Most Holy Virgin, refuge of sinners, obtain for me from your Divine son true love for God, and sincere sorrow for my sins.

## PRACTICE

*Seven times the Hail Mary and Glory be to the seven sorrows of Mary Most Holy, so that she obtains for us true contrition for our sins.*

- **Benedictus**



## SIXTH DAY

*The means of salvation procured by God in our holy religion  
are a third motive to thank him.*

O Mercy of God!

May you be eternally thanked

for the benefits granted to all human creatures!

And oh, what an inestimable beneficence it was that we were created capable of benefiting from his grace and entering paradise! What beneficence particularly for us having made us to be born in Catholic countries where we have so many helps to save us! As Supreme Lord He brought us into existence; as a Father He preserved us, as Redeemer He ransomed us. And what will we say of such a great beneficence as the Sacrament of Penance, thanks to which we can once again acquire the friendship of God lost through sin? However the divine favours do not end here; he wanted to still provide us with all the means necessary to fortify us in our weakness, and keep us in His grace. He gave us Churches where we can attend the sacred functions; He assures that this holy place is His house, and that whoever in it asks for something, it will be unfailingly

granted: *in ea omnis, quis petit, accipit*. Besides our merciful God knowing our inclination to evil, the passions, the bad habits which we have and which lead us to fall over and over again, as a very efficacious remedy for our fragility He instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharistic in which through His own body and most precious blood He strengthens us against every assault of the enemy of our soul, and makes us invincible to his efforts. Since due to the miserable state in which we find ourselves we could be terrified by the greatness of this Sacrament, so He invites us with those most loving words: come to me, all of you, who are overburdened and weak, I will fortify you in your tiredness: *venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos*. Then He orders His ministers, to use sweet violence on us and almost force us to frequent this great Sacrament, *compellite entrare*.

We do not know how to pray, neither what we should ask God for; the Divine Saviour has taught us the Our Father! The Pater! Which is a prayer by which we can pray to God efficaciously without the danger of asking for things not meant for our salvation.

The time at which more than at any other we need the Divine Mercy is without doubt that of our death; when we are without any more strength, the devil will try with every art to win us over. Oh! How many remedies God has provided us with! The Viaticum which fortifies us, Extreme Unction, which wipes out our sins if they still remain in us, the papal blessing, by which plenary indulgence is imparted to us; many other blessings and prayers which the Church commands to do for all those who find themselves in those last moments; these are all traits of pure mercy and Divine goodness to show us how much our salvation is dear to Him. But to what do these features of divine mercy lead to? They tend to make those who still live in the Militant Church fall in love with the celestial joys, that are enjoyed in the triumphant Church. Inasmuch as our Saviour Jesus Christ himself is the head of the Church in which we still live, which is none other than a passage to the glory of the triumphant Church, of which Jesus Christ himself is also the head, delight of all those blessed. He greatly desires to make of these two churches, one Kingdom of saints, therefore He did not spare anything that could be of benefit for the salvation of souls, so much so that if anyone is lost, it is due to his own fault, not wanting to use those

means which God has procured for him. But when will that much desired time come, in which leaving the exile of this world, we shall be perfectly united to God in the Church of the blessed? My dear faithful, it is certain that we have up there a place prepared for each of us, it is certain that the Lord wants all of us to be saved with Him, it is certain too that the time of the present life is brief and that on this time depends our celestial beatitude. Eh take courage then, the Kingdom of glory was gained for us by our Saviour, He is the means, the guide and the crown, and nothing else is lacking but our cooperation. We will have to suffer something during these last few days we have left; but if we compare these brief sufferings with the eternal reward which has been prepared for us in heaven, ah no, there is no other comparison. Here one suffers for a while, there he will enjoy himself forever; here we will have to suffer hunger, thirst, affliction and even death; it does not matter, this will be compensated with joy, with the bliss of perfect and fulfilled happiness and with that glory that we can imagine but never understand, nor express, if not to say that we will be always with the Lord; *semper cum Domino erimus*.

Ah! May it then be true that we in conformity with the hopes given to us by Faith, and revived through this pious practice by contemplating the Divine Mercy, we can one day find ourselves in the Kingdom of the blessed, in the company of the Most Blessed Virgin, the Holy Guardian Angels, all the Saints of Paradise! And may it also come true that we can find ourselves in that Kingdom, together not only with our parents, relatives and friends, but with an infinite multitude of the saved, since we prayed for all, for all! Desiring that through Divine Mercy, all may cease to be sinners, and that we all together, filled with every good, may live with the Lord eternally. *Sempre cum Domino erimus*. So be it.

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(At least one Hail Mary for the person who has promoted this devotion)

CHAPLET  
OF MERCIFUL LOVE

*Text approved on 24 June 2008*



VICARIATO DI ROMA

Rome, 24 June 2008

PROT. N. 1317/08

Reverend Mother

After having received the positive opinion of the Liturgical Office, to which I had entrusted the examination of the text proposed by you, I am happy to inform you that ecclesiastical approval has been granted to the “Chaplet of Merciful Love” which summarizes the earlier “Exercise of the Devotion to the Mercy of God”, already approved and granted an indulgence by the Sovereign Pontiffs, Gregory XVI and Pius IX.

The wording of the biblical quotation (Jn 3:16) at the beginning of every decade, must be changed in conformity with the new Italian translation of the Bible, officially in use for the Liturgy. The formulation is the following: «God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not be lost, but have eternal life».

I wholeheartedly wish that the practice of this pious Exercise contributes to the deeper study that you are making on the Charism of your Institute and favours a profound spiritual life in the Sisters, based on the unshakeable trust in the Merciful Love of the Father.

I wholeheartedly impart my blessing to you and to all your Sisters, assuring you my prayers, so that the Holy Spirit may inspire and enlighten the work of the coming Chapter.

Sd/-

Camillo Card. Ruini  
Vicar General of His Holiness  
For the Diocese of Rome

Most. Reverend  
Mother FRANCESCHINA MILANESIO  
Superior General  
Sisters of St. Ann  
Via degli Aldobrandeschi, 100  
00163 ROMA RM

## CHAPLET OF MERCIFUL LOVE

At the beginning:

Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory be – I believe

Before each decade, we repeat la Parola di Dio:

**\* God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Son,  
- that whoever believes in Him should not be lost,  
but have eternal life.**

We repeat the following invocation for three decades:

**\* O Mercy of God! We call on you  
- not only for ourselves,  
but for all human creatures.**

For the other three decades, we repeat:

**\* O Mercy of God! May you be eternally thanked,  
- for the benefits granted  
to all human creatures.**

At the end of every decade, we pray the Glory be.

**Orazione:**

*Lord, you reveal your mighty power most of all by your forgiveness and compassion: fill us constantly with your grace as we hasten to share the joys you have promised us in heaven. (We make our prayer) through our Lord...*

**- Amen**



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