

# A YEAR OF MERCIFUL LOVE



*God's will  
simplicity  
prayer*



# A YEAR OF MERCIFUL LOVE

“To follow Jesus means to share his merciful love for every human being.”

(Pope Francis, Twitter, September 12, 2013).

# A YEAR OF MERCIFUL LOVE

MYSTICAL ROSE BOOKS  
Burnaby, BC

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Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy  
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TO

## Gene Work, SFO

My first Novice Master and Formation Director in the  
St. Francis Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order  
(SFO) in Vancouver, BC.

A TRIBUTE OF LOVING GRATITUDE  
FOR TEACHING THE LIFE AND SPIRITUALITY OF  
ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI BY WORD AND EXAMPLE  
March 12, 2014

# Introduction

"A Year of Merciful Love" is a book that I felt inspired to write just after going to confession and staying for mass at Our Lady of Victory church in Chatham, Ontario, Canada. The idea of the book is to examine the 12 points of the Way of Life of the Missionaries of Merciful Love, a private association of the faithful that I began many years ago in Vancouver, BC, and spread it out over the course of 12 months.

The first point is "Be consumed by the merciful love of God." The meditations each day of that first month, then, are all concerned with the merciful love of God and how to be consumed by it.

This book can be used repeatedly as a devotional book that is very much rooted in the Divine Mercy message that Jesus gave to St. Faustina Kowalska, the Apostle of Divine Mercy. It also reflects the heart and spirit of St. Therese of the Child Jesus "Little Way" that is contained in her autobiography, "Story of a Soul."

We can never exhaust the love of God, so this book will always remain relevant to our spiritual growth, for we can always grow deeper and deeper into God's mysterious love. For those who feel called to join the Missionaries of Merciful Love this book is used in the year of discernment (or novitiate). For

others, it remains a simple book about the merciful love of God. The book starts with the merciful love of God and ends with the call to spread the good news of salvation in Jesus. When we are consumed by the love of Christ we feel impelled to share it with others by our actions and our words.

To learn more about the Missionaries of Merciful Love visit our website at [www.mercifullove.com](http://www.mercifullove.com) You can also email us at [info@mercifullove.com](mailto:info@mercifullove.com) In Chatham we meet on the first Sunday of the month for prayer and then drive to a different city or town to spread the merciful love of Jesus with music and handing out Divine Mercy cards on the streets and talking with people.

May the Lord bless you as you read this book and may he consume you with his burning love, wash away your sins and fill you with his Spirit of Love so that you may be a witness of Jesus to all you meet. Remember to take a little time for silent prayer each day after you read the reflection.

– Pete Mason

Here are the 12 points of the Way of Life of the Missionaries of Merciful Love. Each point will cover one month. You can start this book on any day of the year.

- 1. Be consumed by the merciful love of God.**
- 2. Love Jesus with a burning love.**
- 3. Show merciful love to others.**
- 4. Do God's will joyfully.**
- 5. Be simple.**
- 6. Pray always from the heart.**
- 7. Trust in Jesus totally.**
- 8. Be humble**
- 9. Desire and strive for holiness.**
- 10. Constantly be led by the Holy Spirit.**
- 11. Use the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the charismatic gifts.**
- 12. Spread the good news of salvation in Jesus.**

## **1.1 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

“Our God is a consuming fire,” Scripture teaches us. God loves you with a burning love. Even though you may not “feel” it, it is true: “God is love” and his love for you is an everlasting love. The Father knows you through and through, for he knit you in your mother’s womb. St. Paul reminds us that God proves his love for us in that he sent his only beloved Son Jesus to die for us while we were yet sinners.

We start this year with the love of God. Our first point in the Way of Life of the Missionaries of Merciful Love is “Be consumed by the merciful love of God.” How do we become consumed by the merciful love of God? Well, think of a dry stick and a blazing fire: how does the dry stick get consumed by the fire? Someone has to throw the stick in the fire.

## 1.2 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God

How, then, are we thrown into the fire of God's love? Well, we need to throw ourselves by reading Scripture, going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession), going to mass and receiving Holy Communion, praying from the heart, fasting and praying the Rosary and meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary. All these practices are ways of throwing ourselves in the furnace of God's love. The greatest, of course is receiving Jesus in his Body and Blood at mass. Jesus will consume us with his love in his real presence in this sacrament.

“In order to live in one single act of perfect Love, I OFFER MYSELF AS A VICTIM OF HOLOCAUST TO YOUR MERCIFUL LOVE, asking You to consume me incessantly, allowing the waves of infinite tenderness shut up within You to overflow into my soul, and that thus I may become a martyr of Your Love, O my God!” – St. Therese of the Child Jesus, Act of Oblation to Merciful Love. From *Story of a Soul*, translated by John Clarke, O.C.D. Copyright (c) 1975, 1976, 1996 by Washington Province of Discalced Carmelites ICS Publications 2131 Lincoln Road, N.E. Washington, DC 20002-1199 U.S.A. [www.icspublications.org](http://www.icspublications.org)

## **1.3 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

A dictionary definition of “consume” is “To destroy totally; ravage: flames that consumed the house;” Our God is a consuming fire. He wants to destroy everything that is sinful in us. The Spirit of God purifies us in this life so that we might be completely in love with God. God hates sin. Sin is what weakens our relationship with God and, in the case of mortal sin, destroys it. God is merciful and will forgive our sins when we come to him with sorrow in our hearts.

The Holy Spirit came down on the early church, the apostles and the Blessed Virgin Mary, as tongues of fire. Fire not only destroys, it also purifies, as in the case of gold. The Holy Spirit wants to ravage us with Divine fire, to burn away all that is sinful and impure. We received the Holy Spirit at Baptism and again, in a deeper way, at our Confirmation. Let’s allow the fire of the Spirit to transform us completely.

## **1.4 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

When I was a little boy I loved playing with matches. I would often light them up on the rough concrete around our driveway. There was something about the fire and the smell that was very cool to me. Well, when we get older we should love to “play” with the Fire of God, i.e.. We should love to gaze at Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and allow his gaze to penetrate us, to heal us and fill us with the fire of the Spirit.

We should think of ourselves as little match sticks waiting to be set on fire by God. They only blow out when we commit a mortal sin. Then we can be re-lit by confession. Think of ourselves as a wax candle, lit by Christ and called to shine in the world. We must not let the Devil blow our flame out by giving in to his temptation to sin. We cannot be forced to sin; it is our choice. So also, it is our choice to love and obey God. That is the better choice that leads to the flame of God’s love burning brightly in our hearts and souls.

## **1.5 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

The sun, that gigantic ball of fire, is a symbol of the Lord Most High. St. Francis of Assisi sang about this in his “Canticle of Brother Sun.” St. Francis said that the sun is a symbol of the Lord. Why? Well, God is a consuming fire and the sun looks quite consuming, as far as fires go. Scripture also says “God is light.” The sun gives us light and warmth.

Some people love to get a sun tan. For that we must take off our clothes, lie on a beach put some sun tan lotion on, and let the sun do the rest. We can get a “spiritual sun tan” when we lie down in the presence of the Lord, especially in the Blessed Sacrament, and allow the Spirit to transform our hearts, minds and souls with his love. The Israelites saw a wonderful change in the face of Moses after he was talking in the presence of the Lord. People will see a change in us when we spend time with Jesus in prayer and listening. O Lord, make us radiate the fire and warmth of your love to all!

## **1.6 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Another way of being “consumed by the merciful love of God” is to offer, as a sacrifice of love, everything we are and everything we have to God to do with as he sees fit: we offer our bodies, minds, hearts and souls as well as all our physical possessions, not to mention our time, treasure and talents and our will.

When we are willing to do whatever the Lord wants us to do, that is a wonderful offering to God. The saints sought only to do God’s will and forgot about their own desires. Jesus had St. Faustina cross out her own will with a big X in her diary and state that, from now on, she would only do the will of God. Time wasted can never be “bought back.” It is gone forever. Let’s use our time for the things and will of God, for that will never be a waste. As Mary said, “Do whatever he (Jesus) tells you.” That was at the miracle in Cana with the changing of the jars of water into jars of fine wine. The Lord will change our lives into something beautiful if we allow him. Lord, we surrender everything to you.

## **1.7 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

It has been said that love is a decision, not a feeling. An interesting thought. Feelings are fine, but the rubber hits the road when we make up our minds and choose to love someone. God gives us free will: He invites us to be consumed by his loving fire, but he does not force us. Loving God is a daily choice: in the things we think, say, do and don't do.

Jesus said, **“Ask, and you will receive.”** Well, if we want to experience God's love we should ask God for it. If we want to grow deeper in God's love, we should ask for it. If we want to be completely on fire with God's love we should ask for it. Scripture also says somewhere, “You don't have because you don't ask.” God is very generous and will pour out his love in us when we ask. God our Father wants to reveal his love for you more than you could ever think possible. Jesus is the revelation of the love of God the Father and the Holy Spirit is the love of God outpoured into our hearts.

## **1.8 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Jesus said **“I have come to cast fire on the earth; how I wish it were already kindled!”** He is speaking of the fire of the Spirit of love. Our hearts should burn with love for God and others. Remember the two great commandments: **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself.** “Jesus added a new commandment: **“Love one another as I have loved you.”** That’s plenty of love!

It is said that love is wishing the good of another. God wishes good for us, not evil. The Lord, through his body on earth, the Church, provides us with so many ways of entering more deeply into the mystery of God’s love: The Mass: the word of God, the Holy Eucharist (Body and Blood of Jesus), Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Rosary, Lives of the Saints, the Diary of St. Faustina (Divine Mercy message), holy water, and much more. Let’s use all these spiritual gifts to grow in love for the Lord each day.

## **1.9 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

We are to be consumed not only by the love of God, but by the merciful love of God. In other words, we understand that we are in need of spiritual cleansing, our sins to be washed away. God is rich in mercy. He is slow to anger and quick to forgive. We just need to come to him as a loving Father and he will always embrace us, forgive us, and fill us with his love. We can have great confidence in the mercy and love of the Father, for he loves all his children and desires that we all come to an intimate and trusting relationship with him.

Jesus taught us to pray, **“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”** Amen. We should pray the Our Father every day. We love you, Father. Thank you for making us your children.

## **1.10 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

There is a prayer that says “Blood of Christ, inebriate me.” Yes, we should be “drunk” with the precious Blood of Jesus. What a blessing it is to go to a church that gives the precious Blood. The Blood of Jesus will consume our impurities and give us vibrant spiritual life, love and peace. O Blood of Jesus, fill us with the fire of your love and run through our veins, transforming us day by day into your image. We love you. Help us to love you more.

The “rays of mercy” that flowed out of the heart of Jesus in St. Faustina’s vision are not just cool decorations or Divine visual effects so that we could print fancy holy cards and book covers. No, these rays of Blood and Water and meant for each one of us, to cleanse us spiritually and give us spiritual life, eternal life, the Divine life of Jesus with the Father and the Sweet Spirit of God.

## **1.11 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Love leads to love. That is, the more we love God, the more we will experience the wonder of his love. God loves us even when we are in the depths of mortal (deadly) sin, but we will only be able to rejoice in the love of God when we have escaped the snare of deadly sin through sincere sorrow, repentance and confession. God is generous with his love! He wants to shower all his children with love. He wants all his children to love him in return and to love one another as his Son Jesus loves them.

Love is an adventure! You could create a board game called "Love" and the object would be who could love the most! I think it could develop into some very creative, interesting and sweet expressions of love! There would need to be rules, though, but I'm not sure what the rules would be. Perhaps St. Augustine's advice, "Love, and do what you will," would be the only rule of the game :) Now, we are called first to love God, and to love others as we love ourselves. We are to love those who hurt us, and forgive them. That is a real test of love, isn't it? Don't give up on love, for Love does not give up on you. Hope in Love. Love never fails. Love always wins. Thank you, Love!

## 1.12 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God

God's love is radical: it goes to the roots of our being and transforms us from within. Jesus said **"the kingdom of God is within you."** This means God is always with us. It is also why we must have a deep love for ourselves, for how can we love others and God if we hate ourselves?

Do you love yourself? If not, why not? Know that God will forgive you for anything you have done in the past: anything, no matter how horrible. Remember, **"GOD IS LOVE."** GOD IS MERCY. GOD IS MERCIFUL LOVE. We can never exhaust the love and mercy of God in this lifetime or in eternity. It is profound, deep and eternal. Father, help us to love ourselves, others and you. We love you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

## **1.13 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

St. Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face was full of love for God. Her last dying words about God were “I love Him!” The more we make acts of love towards God and others, flowing from a deep self love, the more we will be consumed by the merciful love of God. God’s love brings a real peace; a peace that the world cannot give. Money can allow us to buy things and help others, but it cannot replace love.

Love makes us stable. When we sin we should use St. Therese’s words: “Punish me with a kiss!” Yes, she had such awareness that God is her loving Father that she had the nerve to ask for a kiss for punishment for her fault or sin. I’ve tried it a few times and I like it. Jesus wants us to trust in him and not be afraid of the Father, but to come to the Father as little children, full of love, trust and hope.

## **1.14 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Just as the body needs exercise, so love needs exercise. The more we walk, the more weight we lose and become physically fit. The more we love God, and others, the more sin we lose and we become spiritually fit. It's that easy. Scripture says "Love covers a multitude of sins." A multitude is a lot! So, if you have many sins, then start loving God more and your sins will be covered, i.e., washed away.

God's love is like a huge ocean: it never ends and is deeper than the deepest ocean. All we must do is jump in and plunge ourselves in the ocean of God's love and mercy, the Blood and Water that flowed from the pierced side of Jesus on the cross. We should be drunk on the Blood of Christ and filled with the living water of the Spirit. Drinking wine and beer is great, but it does not compare with drinking the Precious Blood. Catholics who attend daily mass know this, at least in churches where they offer the Precious Blood. Live in love and Love will live in you.

## 1.15 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God

I love hot tubs and massages. It is such an awesome feeling to be submerged in hot water and to feel the muscles release and relax from stored up tension. My whole body relaxes and I come out feeling renewed, relaxed and stress-free. Well, it's the same with the love of God: we can be submerged in it. How? By prayer. Prayer from the heart, from the core of our being. Prayer is not just words or thoughts: it is an expression of our inner person, our spirit, our soul, yearning for Love to captivate us, to penetrate us, to consume us with the flames of burning, passionate Divine Love.

God is the Lover of lovers. There is no greater Lover than God. **“God is Spirit,”** and, as Scripture says, **“those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”** Love and truth go together. The truth sets us free. The truth is that God is love and he calls us to love one another as he (Jesus) has loved us. God's love is strong and radical. The Holy Spirit, the breath of God, is a Warrior of Love and she wants to capture your heart!

## **1.16 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Cars, trucks and jets need to be refueled or they will not run anymore. Its like that with you and me regarding God's love: We need to be refilled with God's love every day. The best gas station for God's love is at mass, where we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus. Reading God's word is another excellent way to be renewed in God's love. Scripture enlightens us and prepares us for the Banquet of God's love, the mass.

In every mass there is the Liturgy (work) of the Word and Liturgy (work) of the Eucharist (the Body and Blood of Jesus. The Word part is kind of like storytelling to little children, except the stories are all true. The Eucharist part is like cookies and milk for children after the stories. But, drinking the Blood of Jesus and eating his Flesh blow away cookies and milk. The Blood looks like wine, tastes like wine, smells like wine but it is truly the Blood of Jesus. The Eucharist looks like bread and tastes like bread but it is the Flesh of Jesus. Let's eat, drink and be merry! I'm just being Frank with you :)

## **1.17 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Shakespeare spoke of music as being the food of love. Sacred Music, i.e. music that contains the Word of God, is a great way to fan the flames of Divine Love in our hearts. Music transcends borders, race, nationality and creed and colour: It speaks directly to the heart, the emotions. God is able to use music to lead us to sorrow for our sins and to a desire to love Him more deeply.

My favorite Christian musician is John Michael Talbot. His songs are profound, rooted in Scripture and minister in a mighty way. I heard one of his songs as a Communion meditation today and it totally lifted my spirit, heart, mind and soul to the Lord. Make it a habit to listen to good Christian music even once a day or, even better, sing to the Lord yourself in your heart and even play an instrument if you can. As Scripture says, "Make a joyful noise to the Lord." God doesn't care if you are a poor singer: He wants your heart and will delight in whatever you offer from a loving heart.

## **1.18 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

All love comes from God. There is no exception. The love a man feels for a woman comes from God. The love a woman feels for a man comes from God. It is human love but it springs from a Divine Source. If we “live in love,” as the Bible says, we will “live in God.” What a wonderful way to live: in love. This does not mean that, in this life, we will not experience suffering, pain and hardship. Love, though, will see us through all these things and more, for nothing can withstand the power of love, for it reflects the power of God, who is Almighty, all-knowing, ever-present and not limited to space or time or anything.

God hates only one thing: sin. Sin is an offense against God, who is love. Whatever is opposed to love is a sin. St. Augustine said “love, and do what you will.” He had a wild background, a mistress and a child out of wedlock, yet he became a priest and a bishop and a great writer for the glory of God. God can use anyone and anything to spread the Kingdom of Love on earth.

## **1.19 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

When we love someone we kiss them and hug them  
xox. It is very simple and sweet. God loves us so  
much that he wants to give us eternal kisses and  
hugs in heaven, but starting on earth. How does  
God, who is Spirit, kiss us? In many ways: through  
his Body on earth: the church. Jesus gave us a new  
commandment: **“Love one another as I have loved  
you.”**

As disciples of Jesus we are to give each other the  
“kiss of peace.” We are not talking about making out  
with each other in a romantic sense of the word! No,  
this is a purely spiritual kiss but it is also physical,  
for the early church kissed each other on the lips at  
every Lord’s supper, or mass. That was one way that  
they really showed their love for one another as Jesus  
had taught them. Now, at least in North America, we  
shake hands or hug and spouses and friends will  
often kiss. Time brings change, though, so we may  
find we become more expressive of our mutual love  
during mass at the kiss of peace and everywhere  
else!

## **1.20 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Love seeks to give. God is so loving that he gave everyone on the planet the gift of life, the gift of family, the gift of food, water and a place to lay our heads. It is true, there are homeless people and hungry people in the world but this is not God's fault; it is the fault of our fallen humanity, where greed takes precedence over justice. Before the Fall of humanity in Adam and Eve, there was no hunger, thirst or homelessness. Sin brought suffering and injustice into the world.

God loves us so much he did not leave us in our sins: He sent us his only begotten Son, Jesus, to teach us and show us how to love God and one another as he loved us while he was on earth for thirty-three years. I suggest you read the gospel of John, for it is the most mysterious and interesting, in my humble opinion. God showed and continues to show his love for us in Jesus; in his words, in every mass, in the Blessed Sacrament and in his body, the church. Let's spread the love to each other and to the world!

## **1.21 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Love is often symbolized by a heart. You never see a brain as a symbol of love or a mouth or eyes or ears; it is usually a heart. God has a heart: Jesus, when he became a man, received a human heart after his conception in the virginal womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The heart of Jesus is a symbol of God's love for us. The heart of Jesus was filled, and is still filled, with great love for each person, saint or sinner. It is especially for sinners that the heart of Jesus is filled with love for.

Jesus' heart was pierced by a Roman centurion's lance after he died on the cross. The Romans wanted to be sure that Jesus was dead. Pontius Pilate, more specifically, wanted to be sure he was dead. Out of the pierced heart of Jesus flowed two things: blood and water. This is symbolic of the Eucharist (Blood of Jesus) and Baptism (which is done with water). God wants us to be filled with his love, and he goes as far as giving us the Blood of Jesus to drink. It is drinking love.

## 1.22 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God

God's love is faithful, constant and true. He never lets us down. We can count on the Lord to continue to love us, even when we mess up. Every birthday is a chance to start again, to be reborn spiritually. Actually, every day is a chance to start again. Jesus said that we must be "**born again,**" i.e., of the Holy Spirit, the Breath of God. Physical birth is a wonderful thing but spiritual birth is even better.

The first gift of love that we receive from God is our conception in our mother's womb. Then, later, we are born into this world. Then, hopefully, we are baptized and begin a new spiritual adventure with God with the help of our parents. God uses our mother and our father to show his love. It is very sad that some people have a negative experience of their mother and/or father. This is not God's plan for us. Parents have a great responsibility to show the love of God for their children and teach them the Christian faith.

## **1.23 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

God makes decisions and his decisions are always correct. God decided to create us all out of love. He also decided to rescue us from the penalty of sin by sending his only begotten Son, Jesus. We decided whether we will respond to God's love or not. We can, if we choose, decide to ignore the Lord and his desire to fill us with his love, joy and peace.

The reality is, though, that apart from a loving relationship with God we will not experience true love, joy and peace. Yes, we can have loads of fun with the things and people of this world, but no one and nothing but the God of love can fill us to the full with ultimate peace. The world cannot give us the peace that Jesus, as the Son of God, offers us. True peace comes from a right relationship with God in Jesus through the Holy Spirit. God's love brings us peace.

## **1.24 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

If we want to be consumed by God's love we must have a deep love for truth. Why? Because genuine spiritual love must be based on truth, not falsehood. God has given each one of us a precious gift: a conscience. In our deepest heart we know what is right and what is wrong. When we attempt to live a lie by justifying sin in the guise of it being something okay to do, then our relationship with the Lord will suffer. We will not progress in our love of God and will regress into more sin and deeper iniquity.

Jesus said **“the truth will set you free.”** He also said **“I am the way, truth and life.”** Jesus is the truth that sets us free and he always speaks the truth to us, even when it challenges us. The Devil is known as the **“Father of lies.”** Why? Because, for one, he lied to Eve in the Garden of Eden, about the forbidden fruit. He made it a good thing to disobey God's clear command not to eat the forbidden fruit. Let's always live, love and speak the truth, for then we will walk in true freedom.

## **1.25 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

St. Faustina had a great love for Jesus and for souls. She wanted to work for the good of souls on earth when she arrived in Heaven. Jesus told her that her death was just the start of her mission. I believe that St. Faustina and St. Therese of the Child Jesus have a mission together; a mission of spreading merciful love on earth.

St. Faustina loved her fellow sisters, even though she was often ridiculed by some of them and called an eccentric visionary. They did not understand that St. Faustina was a chosen soul. St. Faustina kept a diary of her encounters with Jesus and how he communicated with her soul interiorly and with visions. She knew that love consisted in doing the will of God, not her own will. She was willing, for the sake of Love, to do whatever Jesus called her to do and to suffer. It is a good idea for us to keep a spiritual journal as well.

## 1.26 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God

When we were about to hold a Song of the Lamb concert at a church in New Brunswick, I decided to spend some quiet time alone with the Lord to seek his guidance for the evening. At one point I heard the Lord say to me **“Love them, and give yourself to them.”** It was an interesting word for me. I was being reminded by God that I did not have to “perform” well or sing great songs; more important than this is to love the people we were playing and singing for and give myself to them.

God has loved us this way. He has given himself to us in his Son, Jesus, who loved us to the very end of his life. Jesus continues to love us from his throne at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. God wants you to love the people in your life: your friends, your family, your spouse, your children, your coworkers and so on. God wants you to give yourself to others in the same way that Jesus gave himself to others: to serve, in love. Each holy communion Jesus gives himself to us in love. Use your gifts and talents to be a blessing to others.

## **1.27 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

St. Therese once said that she did not fear God because he is a God of love and mercy. This does not mean she felt it was fine to sin, but simply that she was so deeply aware of the truth that God is love and mercy, and she did not have to fear coming to him in any situation. We should have the same confidence in the love of God for us. We should have a sense of the great majesty and awesomeness of God, but we should never lose sight of the even greater reality that God is love and full of mercy.

The confessional is kind of a fire pit where the wood of our sins is burned up and forgotten by God. We come, burdened with the weight of sin and guilt and we leave renewed and refreshed. Confession is an experience of the mercy and love of God. Priests are representatives of Jesus, the merciful Priest. We should trust in the mercy and love of God that is shown in Jesus, especially in the Blood and Water that flowed out of his pierced heart on the cross.

## **1.28 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Now that we are near the end of our first “month” of reading I thought it would be good to remember that life is short. It passes quickly and then we enter eternity. Our goal is the Kingdom of Love, where Love reigns supreme and all the citizens love God and one another. It sounds like a fantasy but it is true. This is our destiny: to live and love God forever and love one another forever. There are so many ways of showing love: by thought, word and action. The highest level is action.

Imagine how the saints in heaven love one another! There are no character defects there, no weaknesses, no impatience, no sin, lying, cheating or stealing. There are no worries, no bills to pay, no burdensome tasks to perform. It is simply love, love and more love. I believe the saints have the freedom to pursue their unique and personal interests, e.g. painting, singing, composing music, drawing, design, architecture, modeling, acting, massage, horse riding, golf, tennis, bowling, pool, swimming, hot tubs, beer, wine tasting, cigars and so on. This is a wonderful idea and a great mystery.

## **1.29 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

We show our love for God by our thoughts, words and actions. God shows his love for us in the same way. Before we were conceived God loved us in his thoughts, for he was thinking of us. Jesus, the Word made flesh, spoke God's word of love for us while he was on earth. God showed his love for us in his actions through Jesus when he forgave sinners, healed the sick, fed the hungry, taught the ignorant and died on the cross for us.

God also shows his love for us through others: our mother and father, our brothers and sisters, spouse, our family, friends and, in a very special way, our brothers and sisters in the church, the family of God. We just need to open ourselves every day and every moment to the love of God. We must not put up blocks to the love of God. When we do, we just need to ask the Lord to remove them and help us to live in his love always.

### **1.30 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

God loves us as unique individuals and he also loves us as a body, a family, the church. God loves everyone in the world and that is why he sent his Son Jesus to us, so that everyone who believes in him will not be separated from God but will have eternal life in heaven. Every gathering of Christians on earth is a foretaste of the joys of heaven, where we will praise God forever. In this life we have suffering, pain, loss, sorrow and other such things.

In heaven, there will be no more sorrow, no more tears, no more loss, no injustice. Love will reign in heaven forever. We can grow in our love for God. All we have to do is open our hearts wider to the love of God and avoid sinning. The saints are people who loved God until the end of their lives in a deep way, and loved others. Saints like Kateri Tekakwitha loved to pray. Prayer is a way of showing our love for God. The more we pray, the more we will grow in God's love.

## 1.31 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God

The Lord God wants to consume us with the fire of his love. All we need to do is say “yes” to God for this to happen. We need to say yes every day, every hour, every minute and every second. We need to be open to God’s love flowing in our hearts, souls, minds and bodies. It is good for us to establish good holy habits that will expose us to God’s love each day.

These habits include: prayer from the heart, reading the Bible, going to daily mass if possible and receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus, praying the rosary, praying the chaplet of Divine Mercy and other spiritual practices like making acts of love to God with short prayers like “I love you Jesus,” **“Jesus, I trust in You,”** I love you Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,” “Consume me with your love, O God.” The more we make acts of love to God, the more we will experience God’s love for us. We cannot outgive God in love; He will always pour more love into us than we can imagine.

## **2.1 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Our theme for this month is “Love Jesus with a burning love.” Jesus said that if we love him we will “keep” his words. What does this mean? I believe it means that loving Jesus is not something purely sentimental. No, it requires obedience to what he taught in his ministry on earth and what he continues to teach through his Body, the Church. Proof of our love for Jesus is to keep his words in our daily life. Here is where we need to be sensitive to our conscience each day and see where, in thought, word, action or omission we failed to keep the words of Jesus.

Jesus said that if we “abide” in him we will bear much fruit. The key to loving Jesus is to be spiritually in union with him through love, by obeying his teachings in the gospels and by receiving him in holy communion. The Holy Spirit, who dwells within us, will help us to love Jesus. As long as we don’t grieve the Holy Spirit through deliberate sin, we can count on the Holy Spirit to help us to love Jesus with our whole heart.

## **2.2 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

If we fail to love Jesus as we should we must not give up. It is said that the “just man” sins seven times a day. No one can escape falling into small ways of sinning. Sometimes we even make a big mistake and sin in a very serious way. Even then, we must quickly ask the Lord for pardon and get up and carry on loving him. Jesus said that whoever has been forgiven more will love more.

Jesus is the merciful Savior: He loves sinners and spent much of his time with the people others rejected: the prostitutes, the tax collectors, the party loving people and so on. If Jesus were ministering in person on earth today I don't think he would spend the majority of his time teaching in churches. I believe he would also be in pubs mingling with everyone, loving them and guiding them by his example and his words.

## **2.3 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Today I would like us to focus on loving Jesus with our thoughts. Our thoughts are important. They determine our words and our actions. If we have good, holy and positive thoughts, our words and actions will be good, holy and positive. Other people can't know our thoughts, but God knows them all. People can guess what we are thinking but the Lord knows exactly what we are thinking. We can tell Jesus we love him in our mind and he will "hear" us do so. Jesus also knows when we have judgemental thoughts or proud thoughts and so on.

Many of the saints had a habit of repeating a certain interior prayer of love to the Lord. One thing we can do to show our love for Jesus with our thoughts is make a spiritual act of communion: "I love you Jesus, in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Come now spiritually into my heart. Amen." We can make up our own interior prayers, like "I love you Jesus," "Consume me with love, O God," "Fill me with the fire of your love" and so on.

## **2.4 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Pope Saint John Paul II was an amazing man in so many ways. He proclaimed the love and mercy of God by his life and by his words. When he was shot by a man he recovered and visited him in prison, where he embraced him, prayed for him and forgave him. It was a wonderful example of the love of Jesus, even for those who hurt us seriously. After all, Jesus himself forgave those who were crucifying him. He excused them, saying that they did not really know what they were doing.

The saints, like Pope Saint John Paul II, are witnesses of love for Jesus. They all loved Jesus very deeply. The actions flowed from the love in their hearts and souls for God, nourished especially by the Body and Blood of Jesus, the food of love. Shakespeare called music the food of love, but in a deeper way, Jesus' flesh and blood, in holy communion, is the food of love. Music is a wonderful gift and can help us to grow in love for Jesus and spread Jesus' love. Jesus invites all to love.

## **2.5 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

A common symbol for love is a heart. You see bumper stickers like “I (heart) my cocker spaniel.” When we speak of loving Jesus with a burning love, then, we are really focusing on our heart. It is from our heart that our love for Jesus should flow. We can only love Jesus because he first loved us. Jesus started the fire of love in our hearts, not us. It is, however, our job to keep that flame of Divine love burning forever in our heart.

When you have a campfire you need to do certain things to keep it burning until the time you want to go to bed. You need to move the logs around, add more logs and so on. Well, with loving Jesus we need to add more “logs” like acts of love, such as speaking words of love to Jesus, simple things like kissing an image of Jesus, blowing Jesus a kiss, spending silent time of loving adoration before the tabernacle or monstrance, loving others (when we love others we automatically love Jesus at the same time) and many other ways. Let’s keep the fire burning brightly and love deeply!

## 2.6 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God

There are bumper stickers that read “Whoever dies with the most toys wins.” I suppose they might win the “most toys at death” award but it would not get them into heaven. Life is not a race to acquire as much wealth, riches and power. A better bumper sticker would read “Whoever dies with the most love wins.” God judges us at the end of our lives by love. How much did we love God, others and, yes, ourselves.

Jesus asked Peter “**Do you love me?**” three times. Peter said he loved Jesus three times. Jesus asks you and me the same question every day: **Do you love me?** If we do love Jesus we must show this love by our words and actions. I don’t always love Jesus as I should, but I quickly get back on track with God’s help and try to do better. Jesus is very merciful and understands our weakness. We must never give up loving Jesus no matter what happens in our lives, for he is our treasure forever, along with the Father and Spirit of love.

## **2.7 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

If we are going to love Jesus with a burning love we must let go of our attachment to sin. This can be hard to do, even for people who became great saints like St. Augustine. St. Augustine once prayed, “Make me chaste, Lord, but not yet.” He enjoyed the sin of illicit sexual pleasure and knew how hard it would be to go without these pleasures so he kind of bargained with God.

Is there some sin that is holding you back from really and truly loving Jesus? Are you willing to let go of this sin now? Make your choice for Jesus over earthly pleasure and make a good confession and walk on the path of purity and holiness. The rewards of virtue far outweigh the temporary benefits of sin. We need to be radical, i.e., we need to go to the roots of our hearts and souls and ask the Lord to root out our sin and replace it with his grace, love, purity and peace. One of the best ways we can show we love Jesus is to reject sin, Satan and the empty pleasures of this world.

## **2.8 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

One way of showing our love for Jesus is by giving him our time. When we take time to read the words of Jesus in the gospel, or sit in stillness listening for his voice, or meditating on a Scripture passage we are showing love for him. We spend time with those we love. Every Sunday we are called by the church to attend Sunday mass.

It is often said that we must give the 3 Ts to God: Our time, treasure and talent. The first is our time. It is not enough to donate money to the church or charities. We must also give our time. Along with this, we must use our talents for Jesus. Whatever your talents are, use them for Jesus. Use them to spread his words, his love, his mercy to the world around you. The more we give of our time, treasure and talents to Jesus, the more he will increase them in our lives so that we can give more away.

## **2.9 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Time is a gift of God's love. We cannot change the past and the future is not yet here. All we have is the present time to love Jesus and love others. Yesterday we looked at using our time well. Today let's look at treasure. How we spend our money reflects what kind of person we are. The church encourages us to give a portion of our income every Sunday at mass. Some people give 10% and others give less or considerably more than that. We are to give according to our means.

Besides giving to the church each week, Missionaries of Merciful Love are encouraged to give financially once a month at MML meetings. We may not have a lot to give but we should give what we can. We have expenses like the printing of Divine Mercy cards and Song of the Lamb cards, our music ministry. When we treat others to lunch or a cup of coffee or tea we are using our money well and what we do for others we do for Jesus. Money is like the talents in the gospel: we are to use our money in a wise way and not hide it.

## **2.10 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Today we will consider our talents and using them to love Jesus with. Everyone has talents given by God. Some can sing, write, paint, dance, speak, serve, cook, clean, sew, draw, design, build and so on. Whatever talent or gift you have from God should be used to spread the love of Jesus. Some gifts are more visible than others.

Most people can type on a computer keyboard. We can use the computer and the internet to share the love of Jesus with others. This can be on Facebook, Twitter or email. It is a good idea to subscribe to some solid Catholic pages on Facebook and Twitter so that you can forward interesting and holy articles and pictures to your friends. Use your talents for the glory of God and the love of Jesus! The Lord will increase your talents if you use the ones you have in his service.

## **2.11 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Love is faithful to the end. The last words of St. Therese before she died were “I love Him!” St. Therese loved Jesus until her death and she continues to love him in Heaven. If we are going to have a burning love for Jesus we must be sure to be faithful to Jesus every day until the day of our death. We should grow in love for Jesus every day of our lives. To do this we need to pray every day, read the Scriptures, meditate on God’s word, if possible attend Mass daily and receive holy communion.

Jesus loved us until the end. Even on the cross he showed us mercy and love. Sometimes all we need to do to show love for Jesus is simply gaze at him, especially during adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus knows our hearts and our thoughts and we can love him with our eyes. When we drink the Blood of Jesus it is like drinking pure Love. When we eat the body of Jesus it is like eating the food of love. Jesus himself helps us to love him increasingly each day.

## **2.12 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

St. Faustina also had a burning love for Jesus. She writes in her Diary: “You thereby open in my soul and heart an abyss of love and desire for You, my God, and this bottomless abyss, this total desiring of God, cannot be completely filled on this earth” (1600). We learn from St. Faustina’s words that we can never grow in love for God enough in this life. We can always go deeper in God’s love.

When a man meets a beautiful woman and falls in love with her, he spends so much time thinking about her, desiring her company, talking with her, listening to her and so on. The same is even more true of our relationship with Jesus: when we first meet him, we are filled with love for him and a desire to spend time with him. Sometimes, if we are not careful, our first love for the Lord can start to fade and even get to the point where we no longer pray very much. We must get back up and renew our love for Jesus and see each day as a new beginning.

## **2.13 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

“Love covers a multitude of sins,” as Scripture says. Love always prevails, for it is stronger than hatred, sin and even death. Jesus is the King of Love, for he loved us more than anyone else on earth because he is truly God and man. St. Faustina speaks again of love “Only love has meaning: it raises up our smallest actions into infinity” (502). Blessed Mother Teresa used to say “we must do small things with great love.” This is far better than doing great things with little love.

Jesus said that the more we are forgiven, the more we will love. Some of the greatest saints were previously some of the greatest sinners. They saw the light. Jesus changed their ways from sinful to holy. Jesus can do the same with us. Once, when I was living in Saskatoon and going to university there, I saw a girl and the Lord led me to speak to her about his love for her. I approached her and she was deeply touched and ended up joining our Catholic charismatic prayer meeting and having a wonderful spiritual renewal in her life.

## **2.14 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

When we truly love Jesus we are willing to do anything he asks of us and endure whatever we need to endure according to the will of God. St. Faustina speaks of her deep love for Jesus “Whatever You do with me, Jesus, I will always love you, for I am Yours. . . It is with love that I abandon myself to Your most wise decrees, O God, and Your will” (1145) St. Faustina longed for Heaven. Loving Jesus on earth was not enough for her; She had to see him face to face.

We too need to abandon ourselves to the Lord, to tell him we will always love him. St. Faustina went through over a year of what is called the “dark night” of the soul, even to the point where she felt rejected by God. It was not easy for her to go through all this but she remained faithful to Jesus, to prayer and to trusting that God was somehow still with her in the midst of her great darkness. When we go through difficult times in our spiritual lives we must always trust in Jesus and pray, for it will eventually end and we will grow from it all.

## 2.15 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God

A popular image of love is a little cherub called Cupid holding a bow and arrow. St. Faustina had a similar experience: “When I took the issue of the Weekly into my hands, an arrow of love pierced my soul (Jesus said to her) **“For the sake of your ardent desires, I am hastening the Feast of Mercy.”** My spirit burst into such a powerful flame of love that it seemed to me that I was totally dissolved in God” (1082). In this story, it was God who “shot the arrow” into St. Faustina’s heart. Jesus loves us first and then we return his love.

We can always ask God to fill us with love for him, love for the Father, love for Jesus, love for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Love that flows from the Heart of Jesus into our hearts. The Holy Trinity is a community of Love, of one Love, one Heart, One Spirit. After her dark night experience St. Faustina had a much deeper union with God. She was purified and enlightened in a very deep way.

## 2.16 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God

When we deeply love Jesus we can move him to act or not act in certain situations. St. Faustina writes “Today, I have heard these words: **My daughter, delight of My Heart, it is with pleasure that I look into your soul. I bestow many graces only because of you. I also withhold My punishments only because of you. You restrain Me, and I cannot vindicate the claims of My justice. You bind My hands with your love.**” (1193) St. Faustina had powerful prayers because she prayed from a pure and holy heart, not weighed down with attachment to sin.

If we want our family and friends to be blessed in a special way by God we should love Jesus increasingly deeply from our hearts. Jesus once praised St. Faustina because she showed that she loved him for himself and not for what he could give her. She had a pure love for Jesus and he took great delight in her love. Let’s say today from our heart “Jesus, I love you.”

## **2.17 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

We learn from the writings and life of St. Faustina that our love for Jesus must be humble, pure and undivided. Like St. Therese of the Child Jesus, St. Faustina did not want to be known in the world as a holy person or saint. Both deeply desired and achieved sanctity, but they wanted to remain hidden while on earth. St. Faustina writes, “In silence, and unseen, I will empty myself before You; 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. You are the Lord of lords, but You delight in innocent and humble souls” (1564).

Jesus taught us that whoever humbles himself will be exalted. This was the case with St. Faustina. Many of her Sisters in her order were surprized, after her death, to hear of some of the mystical experiences she had with Jesus. Humility is really nothing more than the truth. We don't need to put ourselves down or wear shabby clothing. We just need to humbly love Jesus.

## **2.18 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Scripture teaches us that God is Love. God is also eternal. Therefore, God is Eternal Love. This is the title for the Lord that Saint Faustina used in her Diary one day: “O Eternal Love, You who enkindle a new life within me, a life of love and of mercy. Support me with Your grace, so that I may worthily answer Your call, so that what You Yourself have intended to accomplish in souls through me, might indeed be accomplished” (1365)

We see here clearly that it is only by God’s grace, or Divine help, that we will be able to live a life of merciful love. We cannot love and show mercy on our own strength. We need God’s help to be holy and spread love and mercy to others. We also see that there are certain souls, or people, that God wants to reach only through us. You are called to reach people that someone else is not called to reach. This is why it is so important that each of us is holy and full of the love of Jesus and his mercy, for then God can use us as instruments of merciful love in the world.

## 2.19 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God

Scripture proclaims that perfect love casts out fear. Jesus said these words. Jesus also said that fear is useless and what we need is trust. St. Faustina came to understand and live the words of Jesus in a deep way. “Love casts out fear. Since I came to love God with my whole being and with all the strength of my heart, fear has left me. Even if I were to hear the most terrifying things about God’s justice, I would not fear Him at all, because I have come to know Him well. God is love, and His Spirit is peace” (589).

St. Therese of the Child Jesus had similar words when she said that she did not fear a God who is mercy and love itself. Jesus showed people who saw him perfect love: He forgave sinners, healed the sick, fed the hungry and taught the ignorant. Even his rebukes of certain people are signs of his love for them, for Jesus does not want anyone to remain in sin. Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery “**I don’t condemn you. Sin no more.**” We can show our love and trust in Jesus by rejecting sin and loving him with our whole being.

## **2.20 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

We all have thoughts, words and deeds or actions. Our love for Jesus should be reflected in all three: loving thoughts, loving words and loving deeds or actions. St. Faustina saw the importance of being filled with Divine love “I see now that my deeds which have flowed from love are more perfect than those which I have done out of fear. I have placed my trust in God and fear nothing. I have given myself over to His holy will; let Him do with me as He wishes, and I will still love Him” (589).

Sunday mass is a good example. As Catholics we are required to attend mass every Sunday unless we are sick or somehow prevented from going. Even though we are required to go we should go out of love for Jesus, not simply because we “have to” go. Prayer is another example. We are taught by Jesus that we need to pray every day, but we should pray because we love Jesus, not because we have to pray. There are many other things that show we need to do them out of love. Like St. Faustina, let’s abandon our wills to God’s will.

## **2.21 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

If we want to change something in our lives or to help someone else change in some way, we just need to turn to growing in love for Jesus. The greater our love for the Lord, the greater the power we have to see positive changes in our lives. St. Faustina teaches us “Great love can change small things into great ones, and it is only love which lends value to our actions . . . I am never so happy as when I suffer for Jesus, whom I love with every beat of my heart” (303). If we have a campfire in our back yard that is a small fire how do we make it a larger fire? By adding more wood.

If we have a small love for Jesus how to we make it better? By adding more loving thoughts, words and actions. We can place our hand over our heart and say “Jesus, help me to love you with every beat of my heart.” What a blessed life if we truly loved Jesus with every beat of our heart! There is no room for sin in such a life. When we do sin in some way we can quickly place our hand on our heart and say, “Jesus, I’m sorry. Help me to love you more,” or other similar words.

## **2.22 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Love is like spiritual glue that binds us forever to Jesus. St. Faustina experienced the power of God's love "My part is to love Him to folly; all works are nothing more than a tiny drop before Him. It is love that has meaning and power and merit. He has opened up great horizons in my soul – love compensates for the chasms" (822). Let's follow St. Faustina's example in loving Jesus with our whole being.

We all have weaknesses and areas in our spiritual lives that we sometimes struggle with. Jesus understands us and knows our weakness and supports us with his powerful love. God's love is truly amazing. All creation, visible and invisible, exists because God loved everything into being. Jesus did not leave us alone when he ascended into heaven: He sent us the Holy Spirit, the Fire of Love, to come into our hearts. As Catholics we received the fullness of the Spirit at our Confirmation. We can always pray for more love in our hearts through a deeper filling from the Spirit of Love.

## **2.23 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

If we love Jesus deeply we will desire to make sacrifices for his love. These sacrifices can help others to be converted, healed or strengthened in some way. Still, love must accompany all our sacrifices or they will not have value. St. Faustina writes, “It is only by means of sacrifice that souls can become useful. It is my self-sacrifice which, in my relationship with my neighbor, can give glory to God, but God’s love must flow through this sacrifice, because everything is concentrated in this love and takes its value from it” (1358).

We can sacrifice our time for others, our treasures, and our talents. We can sacrifice our own will for God’s will. Jesus said that he wants obedience from us, not sacrifice. In our modern society the notion of sacrifice is somewhat rare. We are used to getting everything we want and as quickly as we want it. With the click of the mouse we can order books, music, furniture, TVs and so on. As a way of showing our love for Jesus in others we can give to charity some of our belongings.

## **2.24 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

The more pure our souls are, the deeper our love for Jesus will be. St. Faustina says “O Jesus, incomprehensible beauty, it is with pure souls that You communicate best, because they alone are capable of heroism and sacrifice. O sweet, rose-red blood of Jesus, ennoble my blood and change it into Your own blood, and let this be done to me according to Your good pleasure” (1575). We can be pure if we want to be pure, with God’s help. We need to decide to be holy and ask Jesus for this gift.

When we receive the Precious Blood of Jesus at holy communion we are filled with the Love of God. Still, if our souls are not pure then we hinder the action of the Holy Spirit in our soul. Here we must make a good confession and receive the Holy Eucharist in a state of grace, i.,e in a state of being in a right relationship with God, a loving relationship. Venial sin (less than serious sin) weakens this relationship. Mortal sin (Serious sin), destroys this relationship. There is hope, though, for God is merciful and will forgive us.

## 2.25 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God

The three phrases that appear in the Missionaries of Merciful Love logo, inside the heart, are “God’s Will, Simplicity, and Prayer.” In the following section of her Diary St. Faustina speaks of the importance of doing God’s will and its relationship to love: “On Thursday, when I went to my cell, I saw over me the Sacred Host in great brightness. Then I heard a voice that seemed to be coming from above the Host: **“In the Host is your power; It will defend you.”** After these words, the vision disappeared, but a strange power entered my soul, and a strange light as to what our love for God consists in: namely, in doing His will” (616)

All the saints did the will of God, and therefore each of them also loved God. St. Faustina links these two realities: God’s will and love for God. This is why we have placed God’s will as the first thing for us to focus on as Missionaries of Merciful Love. After this comes Simplicity and then Prayer. To do God’s will, that is, to love God, we must also be simple and we must pray. The more we pray, the more we will love.

## **2.26 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Divine Love is like a consuming fire, as we have seen in the first month of our meditations. It is so important that we do not let the light of faith and the fire of God's love go out in our hearts through deliberate sin. If we do we must rouse ourselves to make a good confession and again burn with love for Jesus and for souls. St. Faustina writes of this burning love "Everlasting love, pure flame, burn in my heart ceaselessly and deify my whole being, according to Your infinite pleasure by which You summoned me into existence and called me to take part in Your everlasting happiness . . . What a delight it is to love with all the force of one's soul and to be loved even more in return, to feel and experience this with the full consciousness of one's being. There are no words to express this" (1523).

Let's make our own the words of St. Faustina and ask the Lord of Love to burn forever in our heart. The Scriptures teach us that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Decide to love today.

## **2.27 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

Jesus taught that the greatest commandments are to Love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves. He also gave us a new commandment for us to love one another as He has loved us. St. Faustina highlights the great importance of love: “You demand love. Love, love and again, love of God – there is nothing greater in heaven or on earth. The greatest greatness is to love God, true greatness is in loving God; real wisdom is to love God” (990).

The Scriptures teach us that faith will pass away, hope will pass away but love will remain. These are the three “theological virtues.” It is interesting that only love will remain. There is no need for faith in Heaven, for the saints see God face to face. There is no need for hope in Heaven, for Heaven is the fulfillment of all our hopes. Love, however, remains forever in Heaven, for God loves us forever and we shall love him forever and all the saints and angels in heaven.

## **2.28 Be Consumed by the Merciful Love of God**

St. Therese desired to love Jesus with a love that no one ever had for him before. St. Faustina wanted the same thing! St. Faustina said, “O my Jesus, You know that I desire to love you with a love that no soul has ever before loved You with. I would like the whole world to be transformed into love for You, my Betrothed” (1771). St. Therese and St. Faustina had a holy competition going on! In another section of her Diary Jesus placed St. Faustina first in the company of Virgins in Heaven. St. Therese is probably right beside her. In another vision, St. Faustina was led to see her place in Heaven, very near to the throne of God, but it was very misty and hard for her to see her throne.

I read a poster online that said, “Champions think big.” I would say also “Saints think big” Saints like Therese and Faustina had global vision. They wanted to evangelize the whole world, not just their local neighbourhood. Just think what both of them would have done in our Internet age. I believe St. Therese and St. Faustina would spread love online.

### **3.1 Show merciful love to others**

This month we are called to reflect on our calling to show merciful love to others. It is the very merciful love of God that we must show, not simply human love. When I was in high school in Burnaby, BC I went to see Mother Theresa of Calcutta speak in a big stadium. I remember her touching each one of her fingers and thumb with the words “You did it to me.” She said each night we should do this on our fingers to remember that what we do to other people we do to Jesus, either good or bad. I met Mother Theresa in a large church in Rome during the kiss of peace at Mass and I kissed her hand as a sign of love and respect but she didn’t seem too excited about that! I should have just shook her hand or hugged her.

Jesus taught St. Faustina about the three degrees of mercy. They are Prayer, Words, Actions. Actions are the highest degree of mercy. If we cannot perform a merciful action, perhaps we can call someone on the phone and speak merciful words. If we cannot do this we can at least show merciful love through our prayers for others, especially those going through hard times in any way. We are to be vessels of merciful love for all.

## **3.2 Show merciful love to others**

Jesus taught us that we are to be merciful to others in the same way that God the Father is merciful. Only when we have been consumed with the love of God and have a burning love for Jesus will we really be able to reflect the merciful love of Jesus to others. There is a saying, “You can’t give what you don’t have.” If we have the merciful love of Jesus flowing in our hearts and souls we will be able to be used by the Lord as pure vessels of mercy and love to others. This is why it is important for us to always be pure in heart.

Why should we show merciful love to others? Well, for starters, Jesus said we should. Also, he told the parable of the man who was forgiven a great debt but he did not in turn forgive a very small debt that was owed to him by someone else. He was punished for his lack of mercy in the end. How can we show merciful love? With a smile, a handshake, a hug, a kind word, a prayer, encouragement and many other ways. The death of Jesus on the cross is the greatest act of merciful love.

### **3.3 Show merciful love to others**

One day I was outside of a church in Saskatoon, SK when I saw a native man crying “Nobody loves me.” I asked him what was wrong. He said he wanted to sleep in the church overnight, for it was bitterly cold out, probably 40 below zero, but they would not let him sleep in the church. He was drinking a bottle of Listerine. I was moved by his words and his tears and said, “I love you. You can come and stay at my place tonight.”

He smiled and we walked across the street to my room and I gave him my bed and I slept on the floor. I made him something to eat and poured his bottle of Listerine down the toilet. He ended up staying a few days and had some friends come and visit and we prayed together. I truly could see Jesus in this man’s distressing disguise, as Mother Teresa used to say. God wants to use each of us to spread his love to others, especially to the poor, the sick and those without hope. What we do to them we do to Jesus.

### **3.4 Show merciful love to others**

We can become, in a way, the love of Jesus for others. St. Faustina prayed that she would become the love of Jesus: “Today, I want to be transformed, whole and entire, into the love of Jesus and to offer myself, together with Him, to the Heavenly Father” (1820). Love is meant to be given away, not held on to. We should be overflowing with the love of God to the point where we “spill over” God’s love to others, our family, friends, coworkers, strangers, young and old.

St. Faustina had great desires and she wrote them down. It is a good idea for us to have a spiritual journal or diary, for we can see areas we need to grow in as well as areas the Lord is making us grow in. I have kept such a journal since the early 1980s and I am glad I did so. Our diary is not meant for others, but for ourselves. St. Faustina’s diary was meant, at first, just for herself, but then it was meant for the world to read because Jesus chose her to be the instrument of his message of Divine Mercy to the world. God has a special role for you in this world that only you can fill.

### **3.5 Show merciful love to others**

The more we love God the more we will love souls, for each one of us is made in the image and likeness of God. The saints were able to recognize Jesus in everyone, no matter what they were like. St. Faustina prayed to grow in God's love "With love and joy I carry out his will, and the more I come to know Him, the more I desire to love Him. I burn with the desire to love Him ever more and more" (525). As we burn with the desire to love God we will grow in our desire to show God's love to others.

It is good to notice that St. Faustina said she wanted to do God's will with love and joy. To love is very important and it is also important that we be joyful when carrying out God's will. God does not want us to be miserable. We all have days where we feel down, even really down, but we must have faith and trust in Jesus and do our best to overcome the temptation to dwell on negative things. God's will includes the duty of loving others, especially those in most need. We should see ourselves as vessels of God's merciful love.

### **3.6 Show merciful love to others**

Our love for others must flow from the pure love of God and not be mixed with self-interest or a hidden motive of gain. St. Faustina speaks eloquently of pure love: “Pure love is capable of great deeds, and it is not broken by difficulty or adversity. As it remains strong in the midst of great difficulties, so too it perseveres in the toilsome and drab life of each day. It knows that only one thing is needed to please God: to do even the smallest things out of great love – love, and always love” (140).

If we have pure love we can do great things, for love is one of the greatest spiritual powers God has given us. Prayer is also a great power, but prayer with pure love is even stronger. Love is so great and powerful because it is the very essence of God’s identity: LOVE. Love is a mystery because God is a mystery. We cannot “figure out” love, we can only enter into it and grow in it day by day. Even the smallest good deeds we do can be infused by love if we live out our calling to love always. Pure love cannot be broken. It endures forever.

### 3.7 Show merciful love to others

St. Faustina continues with her theme of pure love: “Pure love never errs. Its light is strangely plentiful. It will not do anything that might displease God. It is ingenious at doing what is more pleasing to God, and no one will equal it. It is happy when it can empty itself and burn like a pure offering. The more it gives of itself, the happier it is. But no one can sense dangers from afar as can love; it knows how to unmask and also knows with whom it has to deal” (140).

The test of our love for God is our desire not to displease God in anything. This may seem impossible but if we live minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, then we can be faithful to God’s call to love and holiness. Sometimes we can choose between two things which are pleasing to God: We should choose whatever is most pleasing to God. The more we give of ourselves to God and to helping and loving others the more happier we will be. Jesus said, **“Give and it will be given to you.”** We have received God’s merciful love so let’s share it.

### **3.8 Show merciful love to others**

The more we are united with Jesus, who is Love and Mercy itself, the more we will be able to be poured out as vessels of mercy to others. St. Faustina writes, “At present, the topic of my particular examen is my union with the Merciful Christ. This practice gives me unusual strength; my heart is always united with the One it desires, and its actions are regulated by mercy, which flows from love” (703). The examen is a focal point in meditation which St. Faustina tried to live out. We should have the habit of meditating each day on a brief passage of Scripture, even for only a few minutes. Scripture is like a mirror where we can see the face of Jesus reflected and examine our ability to reflect the face, love and mercy of Jesus.

What a wonderful state St. Faustina was in: to be always united with the One she desires, i.e., always united with Jesus. We can enjoy the same union with Jesus if we desire it with our whole heart. Even the saints slipped up and fell into sin sometimes, though it was usually only venial sin. Let’s love Jesus always.

### **3.9 Show merciful love to others**

The greatest part of every day can be when we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus at mass. It is truly the food of love. Jesus, Love incarnate, gives himself to us in the form of bread and wine, truly turned into his Body and Blood, to fill us with his love, joy and peace. St. Faustina had a great love for Holy Communion “After Holy Communion, I communed for a while with the Heavenly Father. My soul was drawn into the glowing center of love. I understood that no exterior works could stand comparison with pure love of God” (1121).

One of the dismissals after mass is “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” Some priests add “and others.” We are blessed by God with his gifts so that we may go out and share these gifts with others. My wife Cyndie and I have started to go out on Sunday afternoons in our city and sometimes others to walk and meet people and share with them a bookmark of the Divine Mercy image with a link to our Missionaries of Merciful Love website. It is a simple way of sharing the love of Jesus with others. Love should inspire our actions.

### **3.10 Show merciful love to others**

The closer we come to know, love and serve God, the more our desire to be one with him is. We can be led to long to be mystically one with him in a way that could be called a Spiritual Marriage. St. Faustina reached this state, as did St. Therese of Lisieux and St. Catherine of Sienna and many other saints. St. Faustina writes “I understood the spiritual espousal of a soul with God, which has no exterior manifestation. It is a purely interior act between the soul and God. This grace has drawn me into the very burning center of God’s love” (1020).

Heaven has been called a marriage feast. The Lamb is wedded to his Bride, the Church. In a way, each one of us is called to spiritual marriage with Christ, although in a different way according to our state in life. Some single women pledge themselves to Jesus as consecrated virgins. Other women become nuns or sisters. Married people, too, can share in a spiritual marriage, for marriage to someone is not a barrier to a mystical spiritual marriage with Christ.

### **3.11 Show merciful love to others**

Jesus taught St. Faustina about love. He said to her one day **“My daughter, love has brought Me here, and love keeps Me here. My daughter, if you knew what great merit and reward is earned by one act of pure love for Me, you would die of joy. I am saying this that you may constantly unite yourself with Me through love, for this is the goal of the life of your soul”** (576). Love unites us with Jesus, so we should, every day, grow in love in thought, word and deed. We must not let the fire of God’s love be extinguished in our hearts. Jesus teaches us the goal of the life of our souls: Love in union with Jesus.

We know that it was love that made God give us his only begotten Son to the world so that we would not perish but have eternal life (Cf. John 3:16). God the Father is truly the Father of Love. Jesus is Love made flesh. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Love. Still, God is One. God is LOVE. The mystery of the Holy Trinity is a mystery of eternal LOVE. Jesus calls us to deep intimate union with himself and wants us to bring his love to others.

### **3.12 Show merciful love to others**

Holy Communion is like the fuel of our love for God and others. When we come to experience how wonderful it is to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus every day, we don't want to miss a mass. Sometimes it takes us a while to get the point of daily mass, but it is worth it. Not everyone can attend daily mass because they have to work early and so on. St. Faustina had a burning love for Holy Communion and it enabled her to reflect the love of Jesus to her sisters and others who met her.

St. Faustina writes "After Holy Communion my spirit was drowned in the Lord as in the sole object of its love" (802). There is a prayer after Holy Communion that says "Blood of Christ, inebriate me." God's love is so profound that we be overwhelmed by it and feel as if all that exists and God and ourselves. These are special moments, kind of mountain top moments. Still, we must come down the mountain and enter the daily grind of the world, meet people and be a blessing to them. God's love and gifts are meant to be shared.

### **3.13 Show merciful love to others**

Actions speak louder than words. Our loving actions towards others are even better than loving words to them. Both are great, but actions carry more weight. Jesus not only taught us how to live and love he showed us by his example, especially his bitter Passion and Death. St. Faustina longed to love Jesus ever more deeply “Lock me in your depths, and do You Yourself teach me to love you! Eternal Love, do You Yourself form my soul that it be made capable of returning Your love. O living Love, enable me to love You forever. I yearn to eternally reciprocate Your love” (1631).

Jesus can teach us how to love him and he can also teach us how to love others. Even further, Jesus can teach us how to love ourselves. We are told to love our neighbours as ourselves. Sometimes we need to forgive ourselves, embrace ourselves and “love” ourselves. This may mean something like saying to ourselves “I love you. I forgive you. I cherish you.” From a healthy self-love flows love of neighbour.

### **3.14 Show merciful love to others**

When Jesus lives and acts in us then we do loving things for others. Our actions will flow from the rich source of the Heart of Jesus, so full of love for us, especially sinners. The Heart of Jesus is full of compassion for us, especially when we stray away from his love, trying to find happiness in things rather than a loving relationship with the Lord.

St. Therese had a deep love for Jesus and she wanted her actions to reflect this love: St. Therese wrote “I ask Jesus to draw me into the fire of his love, and to unite me so closely to himself that he may live and act in me.” The closer we come to a campfire, the warmer we will get. If we enter into the fire we will catch fire ourselves! Now, Jesus wants us to come so close to him that we will “catch fire” from his burning love. Yes, we are to be living flames of love in this world, for then we will spread the light of Christ that flows from his love. His love is a blazing fire in our hearts that will never go out unless we willingly choose serious sin. Let’s make the choice to draw closer to Jesus’ fire.

### **3.15 Show merciful love to others**

It is interesting that St. Therese said “I wish to spend my Heaven doing good on earth.” Not very many saints have said anything quite like that. I can’t think of a single one who expressed the same desire. Jesus told St. Faustina that her mission would just begin after her death, so she is the closest to St. Therese concerning a mission on earth. This is one reason why St. Faustina and St. Therese are the co-patrons of the Missionaries of Merciful Love. They really complement each other in their life and spirituality and emphasis on love and mercy and merciful love.

How does St. Therese work on earth? Well, she prays for us, especially those in most need of mercy and love. She has a Facebook page where her words and photos are posted on a daily basis, inspiring others to love Jesus as she did. Her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, continues to inspire young men and women. St. Faustina’s *Diary* has been printed in many languages and the Lord uses it to spread Divine Mercy.

### **3.16 Show merciful love to others**

We do not always have to do great thing for others. Small things done with great love are all that is needed. St. Therese writes “The smallest actions done for His love are those which charm His Heart.” What are these small actions? A smile, a handshake, a hug, a short prayer for someone in need, buying a cup of coffee or tea for someone, and so on. The key is that all these things need to be done for the love of Jesus. Our time on earth is limited. We have only so many years, months, days, minutes and seconds. Only so many heartbeats. We must make good use of our time to spread the love of Jesus to others, for at the moment of death we will no longer be able to reach people on earth in the same way.

True, in Heaven and even in Purgatory we can greatly help people on earth with our prayers, but we should live in the present moment, do good in the present moment and not put off until tomorrow what good should be done today. To show merciful love to others implies that the person is suffering in some way.

### **3.17 Show merciful love to others**

Jesus wants to reach certain people you have contact with. There are people in your home, neighbourhood, workplace, school, town, city, province, state, country that only you can reach in the specific way the Lord wants to reach them, because we are all unique. St. Faustina knew that the Lord wanted to bless souls through her: “O Eternal Love, You who enkindle a new life within me, a life of love and mercy. Support me with your grace, so that I may worthily answer your call, so that what You Yourself have intended to accomplish in souls through me, might indeed be accomplished” (1365).

Yes, we are called, like St. Faustina, to “a life of love and mercy.” This is why we are called Missionaries of Merciful Love. We need God’s grace to spread love to others, and grace is a gift from God that we receive at Baptism and in all the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist. St. Faustina wanted souls to be touched in the way Jesus wanted to through her. She had a short life on earth, only thirty-three years.

### **3.18 Show merciful love to others**

It is hard for us to understand it, but ingratitude by various people deeply wounds the Heart of Jesus. We tend to think that because God is Almighty he is beyond feeling sadness at human indifference. St. Faustina spoke on this topic “During Holy Hour today, Jesus complained to me about the ingratitude of souls” **‘In return for My blessings, I get ingratitude. In return for My love, I get forgetfulness and indifference. My Heart cannot bear this’ ”** (1537).

When Jesus healed the ten lepers only one of them came back to give thanks and Jesus noticed the absence of the other nine. We should always give thanks to Jesus every day for all the blessings we have received: life, his love, food, shelter, clothing, family, friends, and so on. We can console the Heart of Jesus by our gratitude and acts of love and sacrifices. Making a Holy Hour of Eucharistic adoration is an excellent way to offer love and praise to Jesus. Let’s make every day a day of thanks and praise to Jesus.

### **3.19 Show merciful love to others**

The three children Our Lady of Fatima appeared to in 1917 were taught a prayer to say when making some kind of sacrifice or act of penance: “O my Jesus, I offer this for love of thee, for the conversion of sinners and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.” After the children were shown a vision of Hell they willingly did various acts of penance such as fasting and praying more. We cannot help the poor souls in hell but we can assist the holy souls in Purgatory and people living on earth.

St. Faustina responded to Jesus’ complaints about ungrateful souls: “At that moment, love for Jesus was enkindled so strongly in my heart that, offering myself for ungrateful souls, I immersed myself completely in Him. When I came to my senses, the Lord allowed me to taste a little of the ingratitude which flooded His Heart” (1538). The word “Eucharist” means thanksgiving in Greek. The greatest act of thanksgiving we can make is to receive the Holy Eucharist with a grateful heart and a pure soul.

### **3.20 Show merciful love to others**

St. Therese focused on one thing: Love. She said that wanted to “be love” in the church and rejoiced that she had at last found her place in the church. She found her mission as well: Love. She wrote “I understand clearly that through love alone can we become pleasing to God, and my sole ambition is to acquire it.” Near the end of her life on earth St. Therese made her act of oblation to Merciful Love. It is wonderful that she tied mercy and love together in this beautiful prayer.

St. Faustina, in a way, can be linked to mercy and St. Therese to love. Both saints were full of love and mercy, but St. Faustina seemed to emphasize mercy and St. Therese seemed to emphasize love. I believe they come together in a beautiful way, in the phrase merciful love. St. Therese once appeared to Sister Faustina in a dream and she told her, after Sister Faustina asked her, that she would become a saint, even a canonized saint. We are called to be merciful love in the church and in the world. This is the vocation of each member of the MML. MERCIFUL LOVE.

### 3.21 Show merciful love to others

Love begins with God. He loves us first and then, with his help, we return his love and, in turn, share his love with others. St. Faustina was amazed at how God's love helped her in various ways "It is enough for me to know that I am loved and that I love. Pure love enables me to know God and understand many mysteries" (293). Jesus once appeared to St. Faustina as a shabby beggar looking for some food. St. Faustina had great compassion for him, took him inside, and made a hearty meal for him. Then Jesus revealed himself to her and she was amazed. Jesus said he wanted to experience her kindness personally.

So we see, St. Faustina was concerned about others. Still, her union with Jesus and his merciful love is what kept her spiritual life strong. She did not fall into the error of going around doing all kinds of exterior works and neglecting prayer. Jesus said **"Apart from me you can do nothing."** St. Faustina knew this and never wanted to be apart from Jesus. Do we know we are loved by God? Do we love? Do we see Jesus in others?

### **3.22 Show merciful love to others**

We all have desires in this life. Sometimes we want a new loving relationship with someone, a new home, a new car, a job promotion, and so on. The saints had desires too but they were usually centered on spiritual realities. Some of the Saints needed material things, such as St. Maximilian Kolbe and his printing presses. St. Therese desired one thing: Love. “I no longer have any great desires, beyond that of loving till I die of love.” What were her previous “great desires?” One of them was to be a missionary in Canada! When St. Therese died her last words were “I love Him!”

Once there was a criminal in France who was to be executed. St. Therese made it her personal mission to intercede for him in prayer until he expressed sorrow for his sins. The day came for him to be hanged and when the priest approached the criminal kissed the crucifix. St. Therese’s prayers won the victory! She was so happy to see his conversion. This was a great act of merciful love by St. Therese. She was not just concerned about her own spiritual progress.

### **3.23 Show merciful love to others**

Even in convents not everyone there is living a holy life. Some are full of anger, jealousy and even hatred. St. Faustina experienced the challenge of living with sisters who had malice towards her: “A sincere and mutual love reigned among us . . . In general, the sisters wished me great love, which is that which I desire above all. I saw that these wishes truly came from their hearts, except for one sister, who had a concealed malice in her wishes, although this did not cause me much pain, for my soul was pervaded by God” (1440). Even Jesus had Judas to betray him. We will have, if we don't already, people in our lives who dislike us. This is an opportunity to grow, to pray for them and be merciful.

Like St. Faustina we should desire love above all else and wish that our loved ones also be full of love. Sin causes division but love brings people together. The church is called to be a community of love. Jesus said that the world would know we are his disciples by our love for one another. Let's love one another deeply!

### **3.24 Show merciful love to others**

Sometimes we can get discouraged when we fall into some sin or imperfection. We must not allow these things to discourage us. We must turn away from sin, confess our sins, do penance and keep following Jesus. St. Therese speaks of her own imperfections: "Oh, how happy I am to see myself imperfect and to be in need of God's mercy at the moment of my death." If we were perfect we may become proud and fail to see our need for God's mercy. Our imperfections and our sins remind us of our constant need for God's mercy.

We need to be gracious with the sins and imperfections of others. St. Therese said something about true charity consisting in bearing with our neighbours faults. Even holy people can have annoying imperfections that bother us. St. Therese used to get irritated by another sisters constant rattling of her rosary! Another sister that caused some irritation in St. Therese would accidentally splash St. Therese when they were doing the laundry together. St. Therese put up with these small things with great love.

### **3.25 Show merciful love to others**

Life has been described as a battle. The spiritual life is no different: it truly is a battle between good and evil in our souls. The battle does not stop until our death, according to St. Padre Pio. Then it is a time of reward or punishment, according to our deeds in life. St. Therese talked about the spiritual battle: “The Lord has given me the grace never to fear the conflict, to do my duty no matter what the cost.”

We must have great confidence in God and keep faithful to prayer. Both St. Therese and St. Faustina had a great confidence in God. They also saw how weak they were apart from God. They had a regular life of prayer. We need to help others to have confidence in God. We can pray with others and share good spiritual books.

### 3.26 Show merciful love to others

Love can even have a kind of power over God. Jesus told St. Faustina some interesting things one day: “The day of the renewal of vows. The presence of God flooded my soul. During Holy Mass I saw Jesus, and He said to me, **You are My great joy; your love and your humility make Me leave the heavenly throne and unite Myself with you. Love fills up the abyss that exists between My greatness and your nothingness**” (512). This wonderful story reminds me of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the holy and pure Virgin who alone was conceived without sin to be the Mother of Jesus, our Messiah.

Apart from God, we are nothing, we have nothing and we can do nothing. With God we can do all things. Jesus is so pleased when we, in our nothingness, show love for him. He is also pleased when we show love to others, especially the poor, the sick, the blind, the lame, the weak, those caught up in sin, the prisoners and so on. We should pray that our family members and friends and others come to love Jesus more.

### **3.27 Show merciful love to others**

Sometimes we get tired in our efforts to minister to others. St. Faustina was no stranger to physical weakness: “Jesus, You see that I am neither gravely ill nor in good health. You fill my soul with enthusiasm for action, and I have no strength. The fire of Your love burns in me, and for what I cannot accomplish by physical strength, love will compensate” (760). God does not look at our health, he looks at our love. If our love is strong we can be wonderful instruments of love to others, even in physical weakness.

St. Faustina had enthusiasm for action. She lived in a cloister and could not, of her own will, travel throughout the city and talking to people. Still, she did have times when she met people from the outside and she did her best to love them and help them. To be enthusiastic is to have the fire of God in our hearts and souls. St. Faustina longed to see the whole world on fire for Divine Mercy, turning from sin, and trusting in Jesus. She continues this mission in Heaven through her prayers for us on earth.

### **3.28 Show merciful love to others**

God's love is strong, not weak. When we receive God's love into our small hearts, the Lord expands our hearts and makes them capable of burning with Divine Love for God and for souls. St. Faustina had a special meeting with Jesus in this regard: "As I was meditating on the blessings of God, my heart was burning with a love so strong that it seemed my breast would burst" (1705). The two disciples on the road to Emmaus said something similar, after they had been talking with Jesus, "Are not our hearts burning within us?"

Jesus wants each one of us to have a heart that is burning brightly with love for him and for the souls he has redeemed at such a great price. If we have but little love we should ask the Lord to increase our love. Scripture says that we don't have because we don't ask. **"Ask and you shall receive,"** Jesus says to us. If our love for others is weak, we can ask the Lord to give us his own love for them. Human love is good, but when it is united with God's love it is elevated.

### **3.29 Show merciful love to others**

Music was called the “Food of love” by William Shakespeare. St. Faustina experienced the power of beautiful music one day: “Today, when I heard the hymn, ‘Good night, Holy Head of My Jesus,’ on the radio, my spirit was suddenly drowned in God, and divine love flooded my soul; I dwelt for a moment with the heavenly Father” (994). We can help others come to grow in love with Jesus when we share Christian music with them.

We could play a Christian music radio station when driving with someone, or play a Christian music CD in the car or at home or, even better, have friends over and play Gospel music on the guitar or piano and sing. Sacred harp music is really healing to listen to. Music has a way of reaching people in a deep way that words alone cannot. God’s word is all-powerful and when we combine it with beautiful music it creates a wonderful way to touch others very deeply in a spiritual way. I have seen people start to weep during a song I was playing on the mandolin or guitar. Sometimes we never know what is touching another person.

### **3.30 Show merciful love to others**

One word that is not that popular today, even in Catholic circles, is “sacrifice.” We may have no problem acknowledging Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, and the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass, but when we are called upon to make sacrifices we can get uncomfortable. St. Faustina knew and loved sacrifice: “Where there is genuine virtue, there must be sacrifice as well; one’s whole life must be a sacrifice. It is only by means of sacrifice that souls can become useful. It is my self-sacrifice which, in my relationship with my neighbor, can give glory to God, but God’s love must flow through this sacrifice, because everything is concentrated in this love and takes its value from it” (1358).

We see, then, that we must have self-sacrifice to become useful to our neighbor. Even more, we must have God’s love flowing through our sacrifice. Examples of sacrifice are: faithful prayer, daily mass, fasting (e.g. bread and water), giving up TV for a time, and so on. Rising early is a good sacrifice.

### **3.31 Show merciful love to others**

St. Faustina had a burning desire that all souls would come to know and love Jesus. She was willing to go to great extremes for such a thing to take place: “Why do souls avoid You, Jesus? – I don’t understand that. Oh, if I could only cut my heart into tiny pieces and in this way offer to You, O Jesus, each piece as a heart whole and entire, to make up in part for the hearts that do not love you! I love You, Jesus, with every drop of my blood, and I would gladly shed my blood for You to give You a proof of the sincerity of my love” (57).

Let’s rouse ourselves to a fervent love of Jesus through prayer, sacrifice and every other way. We must realize that every person alive on the earth today is going to live eternally either in Heaven or in Hell. We can help others leave the kingdom of Darkness, and discover the Light of Christ. Many have not heard the Gospel message of God’s love in Jesus as our Savior.

## 4.1 Do God's will joyfully

God's will is the first thing in the heart logo of the Missionaries of Merciful Love. Why is God's will so important? Well, Jesus said it is not people who say **"Lord, Lord,"** who enter the kingdom of God but people **who do the will of the Father.** Jesus taught us to pray, in the Our Father, **"Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven."** St. Faustina knew, loved and did the will of God on earth and is a shining example, along with St. Therese, to us. St. Faustina wrote "Oh, how good it is to abandon oneself totally to God and to give Him full freedom to act in one's soul!" (134).

Have we abandoned ourselves totally to God? Have we given full freedom to God to act in our soul? If not, let's start now! We can say, "I renounce my own will and accept your will, O God. I give you full freedom to act in my soul, O God." God knows what is best for our life, our family, our vocation and our spiritual lives. We can trust God as our loving Father to take care of all of our needs, especially our spiritual needs. Along with doing God's will, in the MML we must do it with joy. :)

## **4.2 Do God's will joyfully**

There is a powerful story in St. Faustina's Diary that teaches us the importance of doing God's will and how doing it brings us joy: "In the evening, when I was walking in the garden saying my rosary and came to the cemetery, I opened the gate a little and began to pray for a while, and I asked them (the holy souls) interiorly, 'You are very happy are you not?' Then I heard the words, 'We are happy in the measure that we have fulfilled God's will' and then silence as before. I became introspective and reflected for a long time on how I am fulfilling God's will and how I am profiting from the time that God has given me" (515).

We have limited time in our lives to do God's will. It is truly a waste of our time when we are not doing God's will, but rather our own, chasing foolish things and so on. God's will is perfect and brings us true happiness, both in this life and in the next. The reason we should do God's will joyfully is that we should see it is a privilege to do God's will, a great blessing and a source of true spiritual joy.

### **4.3 Do God's will joyfully**

St. Faustina saw that her happiness consisted in doing God's will: "+ My goal is God . . . and my happiness is in accomplishing His will, and nothing in the world can disturb this happiness for me: now power, no force of any kind" (775). Is our happiness in doing the will of God, or is it in something else? The lure of desiring excessive amounts of money, pleasure and power can sway us from wanting to do God's will. St. Faustina was like a horse with blinders on it, seeing only the finish line: God. She was in the race to win and she did win! She became a canonized saint, just like she wanted to, by God's grace and mercy.

It can be seen in reading St. Faustina's Diary as well as accounts from sisters who lived with her and knew her, that St. Faustina was generally a very happy person to be around. She did her best to conceal her interior suffering, when she was going through it. She would ask the Lord to give her the sufferings that other people were going through, such as certain sisters or her spiritual director. She saw all of this as part of God's will.

## **4.4 Do God's will joyfully**

Each one of us is a unique creation of God. There is no one like you on earth, nor has there ever been, nor will there ever be another you. For this reason, God's will in our lives is custom designed just for each one of us. St. Therese knew this amazing truth: "My God, by how many different ways you lead souls!" We do not need to be concerned with how God is leading our neighbour; we should be concerned with how well we are cooperating with God's will in our own life.

We should rejoice at the diverse ways that God works in each person. God is patient with each one of us. He waits for us to open our heart to him and express our desire, like St. Faustina, to do his will alone. We don't have to be a nun or a priest to be holy or do God's will. All Christians are called to holiness, young and old, married, single, divorced and so on. There is no excuse for not living a life of love. Scripture says that we should "rejoice in the Lord always!" When we sing praises to the Lord we look beyond our problems and focus on the Heart of Jesus and the glory of God.

## **4.5 Do God's will joyfully**

If we do God's will we are showing our love for God, and for Jesus his Son. There is a song that goes "I will enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart. I will enter his courts with praise." St. Therese wrote "Jesus Christ alone is singularly to be loved, who alone is found good and faithful above all friends." Our friends can let us down and we can let our friends down, but Jesus will never let us down. I like the song "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." Still, having friends is a great blessing and we can support each other, comfort each other and love each other.

Jesus said that he did not call us servants, but friends. Friends are a great blessing, especially when they share our love for Jesus and desire to do God's will. A faithful friend is a treasure. St. Therese wrote to a number of missionary priests and shared a spiritual friendship with them and encouraged them with her words and her prayers to serve the Lord in their ministry. I believe that St. Therese and St. Faustina are very close friends in heaven and probably have their thrones right next to each other.

## **4.6 Do God's will joyfully**

Change is a part of our daily existence: the weather changes, time changes, people change, and so on. Only God remains the same, yesterday, today and forever. St. Therese noted that “We can lean on nothing but Our Lord, for He alone is immutable.” Immutable means unchanging. Our mood changes: one day we are happy but another day we may feel sad about something. The Lord is always there for us to turn to when we struggle with the changes and challenges of life.

The fact that God is so faithful and reliable and unchanging in his goodness and mercy should help us to want to do his will with joy in our hearts, for we can be sure that when we do the will of God we are doing what is the best for us and our loved ones. God’s will never steer us in the wrong direction and never leads us to do anything that will be bad for our welfare. It can be challenging to do the Lord’s will, but it is always rewarding.

## **4.7 Do God's will joyfully**

God has a unique plan for each one of us. Some are called to do great things in the world, like St. Joan of Arc. Others are called to a more hidden life, like St. Therese of Liseux. St. Therese wanted to do great things but the Lord had another plan: “I would like to do heroic deeds. I would gladly die in defense of the Church.” St. Therese did not lack the ambition to be a martyr but it was not God’s will that she die a martyr’s death. In a way, she was a martyr of Love, for she died loving God with all her being at the young age of twenty-four.

St. Faustina also wanted to do great things for the Lord in the world but ended up dying at only thirty-three years old, before she could establish the new congregation Jesus called her to start. She wanted to travel all over the world to spread Divine Mercy, but she never left the convents she was assigned to. Still, Jesus said her mission would only begin at her death, which means, in a mysterious way, that St. Faustina is on her mission of Divine Mercy in the world from her place in Heaven. St. Therese is on her mission to “do good on earth.”

## 4.8 Do God's will joyfully

God asked King Solomon what he wanted. Solomon said that he wanted wisdom and God gave him what he asked for. Jesus offered St. Faustina a new world for her alone, but she told him she only wanted him. St. Therese wrote “I am a child of the Church. I do not ask for riches or glory, not even for the glory of heaven.” St. Therese has been declared by the Pope to be the “greatest saint of the twentieth century.” St. Therese desired only to love God. Love alone was enough for her, the Love of God. She is the favorite Saint of Pope Francis, apparently, and often brings him white roses in answer to his prayer requests.

When we do God’s will it is important to examine our motives: why am I doing this, saying this, writing this, and so on. Sometimes we can have a hidden motive, even when serving the Lord, to be seen as holy by others, or wise, intelligent, funny, and so on. Jesus warned against seeking to appear holy to gain the praises of others. Sin brings sadness. God’s will brings true spiritual joy. Let’s embrace God’s will for our lives with all our being and live it out day by day.

## **4.9 Do God's will joyfully**

Sometimes we fall away from God's will by choosing to sin. We must not be discouraged by our weaknesses. We should not be surprised when we fall, knowing how weak we truly are and so much in need of God's help to accomplish anything good. St. Therese wrote "To remain a child before God means to recognize our nothingness, to expect everything from God. It is not to become discouraged over our failings, for children fall often, but they are too little to hurt themselves very much." Jesus said that we must become like little children if we want to enter the kingdom of God.

The more we recognize our own nothingness and that we can trust God for everything in our lives, the less we will seriously wander away from God's will. It is only when we place too much confidence in our own strength that the Lord allows us sometimes to get into a real mess, spiritually speaking, to get us to wake up to the truth of who we are apart from him. With God we can overcome all temptations.

## **4.10 Do God's will joyfully**

We often make New Year's resolutions: lose weight, exercise, and so on. How about spiritual resolutions? It is good for us to make solid spiritual resolutions. I would suggest that every saint, at one point in their life, made a resolution to become a saint. St. Therese did and so did St. Faustina. St. Therese writes "I made a resolution never to wander far away from the glance of Jesus in order to travel peacefully toward the eternal shore!" To desire to be a saint, i.e., a holy person, is the equivalent to desiring to do God's will always, for they go together like bread and butter.

We should make a firm resolution to do God's will every day, one day at a time. Sometime God's will is that we repent of our sins in thought, word, action or omission. When we express sorrow for our sins, go to confession, do penance and move on, we will have great joy because of our conversion. Olympic athletes always go for the gold. Who would only aim to get bronze? So to, Christians should "go for the gold," i.e. holiness, for to desire to be mediocre makes no sense.

## 4.11 Do God's will joyfully

Mary is the Queen of all saints. She did the will of God perfectly throughout her whole life and she never, by the grace of God, committed a single sin. Mary can teach us how to do the will of God and do it joyfully. She said “My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” St. Therese had a deep love for Our Lady: “It is true that Our Lady is Queen of Heaven and earth, but at the same time she is more Mother than Queen.” Mary’s prayer to God, “Be it done unto me according to your word,” is a great example for us to pray the same. We should offer our whole being to God to do with as he pleases.

Mary is our Mother because Jesus is the head of his body, the Church, and we are the members. So, the Mother of the head is also the Mother of the body. On the cross Jesus told St. John, referring to Mary, “**Behold, your Mother.**” When we ask Our Lady to pray for us, to help us to do God’s will joyfully, she will always come through with her prayers, which are very powerful. She knows our needs and is happy to help us to love and obey Jesus, her Son: “Do whatever He tells you.”

## **4.12 Do God's will joyfully**

God's will is not always easy to do. Sometimes it is the Lord's will that we experience some kind of trial, in mind, body or spirit. These things test our love and obedience to God. God purifies us in many ways and helps us to grow. Growth involves change and change is not always easy to endure. St. Therese wrote "I give thanks to my Jesus for making me walk in darkness, and in this darkness I enjoy profound peace. I only desire that my darkness may obtain light for sinners." St. Faustina, too, endured spiritual darkness for over eighteen months, and she remained faithful to God and did not fall into despair, even when she felt completely rejected by God.

St. Francis of Assisi taught that perfect joy did not consist in consolations but in severe trials that are accepted for the love of God. The wisdom of God is not the wisdom of the world. If we can find joy in God while experiencing rejection, ridicule, insults and other such things then we have found perfect joy. Scripture says "rejoice in the Lord always."

## 4.13 Do God's will joyfully

What is the opposite of doing God's will joyfully? I suppose it is doing God's will sorrowfully. Now, there are times in our lives when we cannot help being sorrowful: if we experience a serious loss or death of a loved one, or if we experience clinical depression, and so on. We cannot always be full of joy. Still, we can choose to do God's will joyfully or not. We can grudgingly do God's will because we "have to" do it. God does not want that. He wants us to joyfully do what he calls us to do. Really, it is in our best interest to do God's will joyfully, for we will be much happier as a result.

St. Therese noticed the similarities and differences we share in the spiritual life: "I realized that all souls have more or less the same battles to fight, but no two souls are exactly the same." Our battle is to do the will of God. To do it joyfully is another dimension of the battle. It has been said that Satan hates joy and he hates it when Christians are full of joy, because joy is contagious and can lead others to come to know Jesus.

## **4.14 Do God's will joyfully**

A priest friend of mine once said to me “A saint sad is a sad saint.” It is an interesting saying. What it means is that God wants us to be examples of happiness in knowing, loving and serving him. It is easy, in a way, to be a “sad saint,” because there is so much in the world to be sad about. It takes a happy saint to be optimistic about life, even in the face of great trials. St. Therese and St. Faustina were, and are, “Happy saints,” i.e, they radiated the joy of the Lord. Sister Faustina’s sisters used to say that, “Sister Faustina is in love with Jesus.”

Everyone should be able to say the same about us as followers of Jesus, as Missionaries of Merciful Love: “He/She is in love with Jesus.” Are we in love with Jesus? Do we truly know his love in a personal way? Did we once love Jesus but now have fallen away from his love? Let’s rouse our spirits to love Jesus as he deserved to be loved: with all our hearts! Let us love him in word and in deed always. Let’s love him with our heart, mind, soul and body.

## **4.15 Do God's will joyfully**

St. Paul wrote that Christ did not “please himself,” but rather he did the will of his Father. St. Francis of Assisi said that conquering ourselves and renouncing our own will is the greatest gift we can receive from God. St. Faustina loved the will of God: “It is with love that I abandon myself to your most wise decrees, O God, and your will, O Lord, is my daily nourishment” (1145). We are called, as Missionaries of Merciful Love, to abandon ourselves to God and seek his will, not our own.

Like St. Faustina, we are called to do this with love, and not simply because we have to. Every day is a new day and a new opportunity to abandon ourselves to God’s will. Every day is a spiritual battle. Some days are more of a battle than others. The practice we have of a monthly silent retreat, either at home or at a retreat centre, helps us to discern the voice of the Lord in our lives. Even if we can only spare a few hours for a retreat once a month it can be very helpful to our spiritual growth. Jesus prayed often in the mountains to his Father. Let’s follow the example of Jesus and seek God.

## 4.16 Do God's will joyfully

Jesus said that he was not seeking to do his own will but the will of his Father who sent him to the world (John 5:30). St. John of the Cross points out that there is no value in giving God one thing when the Lord is asking us for something else. St. John said we should simply find out what God wants us to do and do it. He points out that our heart will be much happier than if we did our own will. Doing God's will brings true joy. Doing our own will brings frustration, emptiness and sadness in the end.

The Lord revealed the benefit of doing his will to St. Faustina one day "Today, my soul entered into close union with the Lord. He made known to me how I should always abandon myself to His holy will: **In one moment, I can give you more than you are able to desire**" (1169). It is important for us to have trust in the Lord do surrender to his will. If we trust God, we will have confidence in surrendering our lives to him and our plans. If our trust is weak, we will not want to let go of our own agenda and find it hard to trust God.

## 4.17 Do God's will joyfully

St. Cyprian of Carthage said that it would be a travesty if we prayed that God's will be done and we did God's will only halfheartedly out of a sense of obligation, and not out of love for God. Jesus did the will of God his Father joyfully. Even though Jesus enduring much opposition, hatred, judgement and eventually torture and death, he remained, deep down, in a spirit of joyful surrender to God. St. Faustina shared, in various ways, in the Lord's Passion: "Holy Thursday. During Holy Mass, I saw the Lord, who said to me, Lead your head on my breast and rest. The Lord pressed me to His Heart and said, **'I shall give you a small portion of My Passion, but do not be afraid, be brave; do not seek relief, but accept everything with submission to My will'**" (1053).

Sometimes it is God's will that we endure pain and suffering, for the good of others and ourselves. Doing God's will at these times is not as pleasant as when it involves spiritual joy, consolations and other such things. Jesus did not back down from his Passion.

## **4.18 Do God's will joyfully**

We do not need to rely on our own abilities to do God's will. We can ask God to accomplish his will in us. This is what St. John of the Cross taught. He also said that we should do our best to be pleasing to God in every way. This includes our thoughts, words, actions and things we don't do. St. Faustina reflected on how she would carry out God's will in a practical way:

“I want to live in the spirit of faith. I accept everything that comes my way as given me by the loving will of God, who sincerely desires my happiness. And so I will accept with submission and gratitude everything that God sends me. I will pay no attention to the voice of nature and to the promptings of self-love. Before each important action, I will stop to consider for a moment what relationship it has to eternal life and what may be the main reason for my undertaking it: is it for the glory of God, or for the good of my own soul, or for the good of the souls of others? If my heart says yes, then I will not swerve from carrying out the given action, unmindful of either obstacles or sacrifices. I will not be frightened into abandoning my intention” ( 1549).

## **4.19 Do God's will joyfully**

We are not always able to accomplish much, physically, due to illness. Even in these moments, though, we can surrender to the will of God and endure our trials in union with Jesus. St. Faustina knew this truth: “I began Holy Lent in the way that Jesus wanted me to, making myself totally dependent upon His holy will and accepting with love everything that He sends me. I cannot practice any greater mortifications, because I am so very weak. This long illness has sapped my strength completely. I am uniting myself with Jesus through suffering. When I meditate on His Painful Passion, my physical sufferings are lessened” (1625).

St. Faustina had tuberculosis and eventually died from it. She knew what suffering was and united it to Jesus' Passion. I know through personal experience the challenge of going through great suffering: the feeling that God has abandoned and rejected me; anxiety; depression and other things like these. Still, we are called to continue to trust in Jesus, never give up or despair. We must pray and not lose heart. Many of the saints asked the Lord to send them suffering. We don't need to do this, as our daily lives are usually more than enough for us to handle as a cross.

## 4.20 Do God's will joyfully

One day, St. Faustina did something similar to St. Therese, and perhaps got the idea from her: She made an “Act of total abandonment to the will of God, which is for me, love and mercy itself” (1264). St. Therese made an act of Oblation to Merciful Love. St. Faustina continued: “Act of Oblation. Jesus–Host, whom I have this very moment received into my heart, through this union with You I offer myself to the heavenly Father as a sacrificial host, abandoning myself totally and completely to the most merciful and holy will of my God. ... Take my whole being; dispose of me as You please. Whatever Your fatherly hand gives me, I will accept with submission, peace and joy” (1264).

Doing the will of God brings true peace. St. Faustina felt a great peace after making her Act of Oblation: “From this moment on, I live in the deepest peace, because the Lord Himself is carrying me in the hollow of His hand. He, Lord of unfathomable mercy, knows that I desire Him alone in all things, always and everywhere” (1264). Let’s make her prayer our own.

## 4.21 Do God's will joyfully

St. Faustina adored the will of God because she loved God above all created things and only wanted to please him with her whole being and all her words and actions. “The essence of the virtues is the will of God. He who does the will of God faithfully, practices all the virtues. In all the events and circumstances of my life, I adore and bless the holy will of God. The holy will of God is the object of my love. In the most secret depths of my soul, I live according to His will. I act exteriorly according to what I recognize inwardly as the will of God. Sweeter to me are the torments, sufferings, persecutions, and all manner of adversities by divine will than popularity, praise, and esteem by my own will” (678).

Do we have the same burning love for God’s will? If not, let’s ask the Lord to give us a similar love for knowing and doing his holy will. It is interesting to see how St. Faustina based her external actions on her inward discernment of God’s will. In other words, she did not act hastily or according to human impulse. Sometimes we complicate discerning God’s will: If we deliberately choose to sin or put ourselves in an “occasion of sin,” i.e. a certain person, place or thing that leads us to sin, we are choosing to do our own will, not God’s will. It’s as simple as that.

## 4.22 Do God's will joyfully

How many of us can honestly say we have “always done God’s will?” Well, St. Faustina did write that about herself: “I understood that all striving for perfection and all sanctity consist in doing God’s will. Perfect fulfillment of God’s will is maturity in sanctity; there is no room for doubt here. To receive God’s light and recognize what God wants of us and yet not do it is a great offense against the majesty of God. Such a soul deserves to be completely forsaken by God. It resembles Lucifer, who had great light, but did not do God’s will. An extraordinary peace entered my soul when I reflected on the fact that, despite great difficulties, I had always faithfully followed God’s will as I knew it. O Jesus, grant me to the grace to put Your will into practice as I have to know it, O God” (666).

I wish I could say what St. Faustina about always doing God’s will, but I cannot. Still, I can say that after realizing I have strayed from God’s will, I did God’s will by repenting and embracing God’s holy will again. Daily prayer will help us to do God’s will. Each day presents us with the opportunity to do God’s will and let go of our desires. It is like a daily dying and rising with Jesus. A daily examination of conscience will help us rout out sinful habits. Weekly confession is also a great help in overcoming habitual sin.

## 4.23 Do God's will joyfully

To do God's will, we have to cancel out our own will. St. Faustina knew this and literally, one day, cancelled out her own will with her pen. She wrote "From today on, my own will does not exist. The moment I knelt down to cross out my own will, as the Lord had bid me to do, I heard this voice in my soul: **From today on, do not fear God's judgment, for you will not be judged.** From today on, I do the Will of God everywhere, always and in everything" (374).

Sometimes it is good for us to take concrete actions in our spiritual lives in order really to drive a point home. This may be writing out a prayer from our heart, writing down a spiritual resolution, canceling out our own will and other things. When we do God's will faithfully in our lives we have no need to fear God's judgement, for doing the will of God is pleasing to God. Virtue is a habit, in a way. In other words, the more we live a holy life day by day, the easier it should be to resist falling into serious sin. When we have overcome, with God's grace, serious sin, we then need to work on "venial" (lesser) sin and do our best to rout out deliberate venial sin from our lives. Then we can work on correcting character flaws and other such things. We have much work to do to grow in our spiritual life!

## 4.24 Do God's will joyfully

We must die to ourselves, empty ourselves, to do God's will. Jesus said we must renounce ourselves, take up our cross and follow him. Following Jesus means doing his will. We cannot follow Jesus and do our own will at the same time, for they cancel each other out. St. Faustina writes "During adoration, the Lord said to me, **Be at peace, My daughter. This Work of mercy is mine; there is nothing of you in it. It pleases me that you are carrying out faithfully what I have commanded you to do, not adding or taking away a single word.** And He gave me an interior light by which I learned that not a single word was mine; despite difficulties and adversities, I have always, always, fulfilled His will, as He has made it known to me" (1667).

Doing God's will brings joy to the Lord. He rejoices when we die to ourselves, our pride, our way of seeing things, to put on his way, his call in our lives. We also need to spend time in adoration each week to hear the Lord in our own lives, like St. Faustina. We also need to be totally honest with ourselves and the Lord. Sometimes, like a drug addict or binge drinker, we need to hit rock bottom before we work with God to clean up our act. The Devil is very cunning and knows our weakness and preferred sins and he will exploit our weakness if we are not careful in watching and praying to avoid falling into sin.

## 4.25 Do God's will joyfully

Doing the will of God is not always easy; at times it is a struggle. St. Faustina writes “In spite of the profound peace my soul is enjoying, I am struggling continuously, and it is often a hard-fought battle for me to walk faithfully along my path; that is, the path which the Lord Jesus wants me to follow. And my path is to be faithful to the will of God in all things and at all times, especially by being faithful to inner inspirations in order to be a receptive instrument in God’s hands for the carrying out of the work of His fathomless mercy” (1173).

Isn’t anything valuable in life a struggle? An Olympic athlete has to go through rigorous training and perform extremely well to get a gold medal. Every day we are called by the Lord to struggle: to get up in the morning and start the day, to pray, if possible to attend daily mass, read a passage of Scripture and meditate on it, spread Divine Mercy by our actions and words, and so on. God’s will is that we be holy. This is a possible goal, and God will help us to be holy.

## 4.26 Do God's will joyfully

We know we need to eat food every day, usually at morning, noon and evening. St. Faustina saw the will of God as her daily food: “There is one word I heed and continually ponder; it alone is everything to me; I live by it and die by it, and it is the holy will of God. It is my daily food. My whole soul listens intently to God’s wishes. I do always what God asks of me, although my nature often quakes and I feel that the magnitude of these things is beyond my strength. I know well what I am of myself, but I also know what the grace of God is, which supports me” (652).

We see from St. Faustina’s words that we need to listen deeply to God to know his will. After we have listened to the Lord then we can do his will. This is why, as Missionaries of Merciful Love, we have a monthly day of retreat. A day to listen to God and discern his will in a deeper or perhaps new way. We are weak but the Lord is strong and will help us accomplish everything he calls us to do in this life. Jesus said **“seek and you shall find.”** If we seek God’s will, we will find it.

## 4.27 Do God's will joyfully

Sin is what gets us straying from God's will, for God does not will that we sin, even venial (small) sins. St. Faustina enjoyed making retreats and learned about God's will in a deeper way on them, as well as her call to avoid sin: "In the course of this retreat, the Lord has given me the light to know His will more profoundly and to abandon myself completely to the holy will of God. This light has confirmed me in profound peace, making me understand that I should fear nothing except sin. Whatever God sends me, I accept with complete submission to His holy will" (1394).

A monthly day of retreat is a good time to reflect on the four last things: death, judgement, hell and heaven. Scripture says "In all things, remember your end and you will not sin." Leaving sin behind and completely accepting God's will brings deep spiritual peace, even in the midst of trials. The "first sin" was that of pride, from the Archangel Lucifer. The "second sin" was that of Eve and Adam, who disobeyed God's command regarding the forbidden fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Let's obey God always.

## 4.28 Do God's will joyfully

One day St. Faustina had a vision of Jesus, who taught her about the will of God: “Jesus bent toward me, looked at me kindly and spoke to me about the will of the Heavenly Father. He told me that the most perfect and holy soul is the one that does the will of my Father, but there are not many such, and that He looks with special love upon the soul who lives His will. And Jesus told me that I was doing the will of God perfectly . . . **and for this reason I am uniting Myself with you and communing with you in a special and intimate way**” (603).

Let's be those people who do the will of the Father and live by his will. Then we can be united with Jesus in a deep way, like St. Faustina. God desires all Christians to be saints, to be holy, to avoid sin and to love, know and live out the will of God always and in all things. The more we do the will of God, the more intimate our union with Jesus will be and we will hear his voice more clearly and more often in our souls. One of the challenges of living in these modern times of internet and social media is the constant chatter we are expected to be part of. Mother Theresa of Calcutta said that silence leads to prayer. Sometimes we need to shut off our devices and social media tools to sit in silence before the Lord and listen to his voice.

## **4.29 Do God's will joyfully**

A daily examination of our conscience is an excellent way to grow in doing the will of God. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can discover areas of weakness, sin and imperfection in our souls and root them out before they turn into major problems. St. Faustina examined her conscience every day: “I am experiencing a profound peace, and this peace flows from the witness of my conscience; that is to say, that I am always doing Your will, O Lord” (1328).

Again, we see that doing God’s will brings profound peace, and this peace leads to spiritual joy. Peace and joy are the byproducts of doing God’s will. Sadness and sorrow are the byproduct of sin. It is up to us to choose what is good, what is true, what is God’s will. Let’s choose God’s will always and find true peace and joy through it. Padre Pio once said that he felt he needed to go to confession once a week, or he would start to slip up, spiritually. He was a great saint, yet still saw the need for weekly confession. We should do our best to go at least once a month, but MML members should aim at once a week, if possible.

### **4.30 Do God's will joyfully**

If we are to know and do God's will we need to "drive out" all contrary thoughts, words and actions from our hearts. St. Faustina was clear on this: "Jesus, drive away from me the thoughts that are not in accord with Your will" (638). St. Faustina was serious about doing only God's will. We learn from her Diary that Jesus one day gave her a golden cincture and told her she would never have a temptation against purity again. We can assume, then, that St. Faustina had temptations against purity. She overcame them through prayer and penance and help in Confession.

Are we willing to ask Jesus to drive out all things in our thoughts and life that are not in accord with his holy will? We have to be radical for Jesus. That is, we must be ready to have rooted out in our hearts and minds and souls everything that is contrary to God's will. We live in a world of many temptations: e.g., pornography, greed, lying, cheating and many other things. Only with the help of Jesus can we have victory.

## 5.1 Be simple

Jesus was simple. His teachings were simple. His birth in a lowly manger was simple, his death on a wooden cross was simple. As his disciples, we are also called to be simple in our thoughts, words and actions. Both St. Therese and St. Faustina had simple lives and a simple spiritual life: They loved deeply and had few possessions. Our state in life may require us to own things like a house, car, furniture and so on, but we do not need to become greedy about material possessions.

God is simple. He is ultimate Simplicity. Sometimes, in our spiritual lives, we can complicate things. This is a deception, and it gets us away from a simple, pure love of Christ. St. Francis was a great example of a simple saint. He owned only his habit, yet was full of peace, joy and love to all creatures, brothers and sisters. He called the sun his brother and the moon his sister. A simple Christian does not question the Lord when he asks something from him or her. A simple disciple of Jesus seeks only to do the will of God.

## 5.2 Be simple

Jesus calls us to be like little children. Little children are simple. They do not complicate life. God wishes us to be the same way: free and uncomplicated. A simple person is the same on the outside as he or she is on the inside. In other words, we cannot be hypocrites and be simple at the same time. We cannot have a double life. Our yes must be yes and our no must be no. A simple person is not foolish. Simplicity does not mean a person cannot be highly educated and simple at the same time. No, simplicity is an attitude of the heart, a spiritual disposition.

Jesus started appearing to St. Faustina as a little Child. As this kept up for a while St. Faustina asked him why he continued to come to her as a little Child. Jesus told her that he wanted her to learn how to be humble and simple, like a child. The nativity scene, the baby Jesus with his Mother and St. Joseph and the animals, is a scene of simplicity. It was St. Francis of Assisi who started the tradition of the nativity scene. Jesus showed us from his birth his desire to be simple.

### **5.3 Be simple**

St. John Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests, taught that Jesus loves it when people come to him in the Blessed Sacrament with simplicity. Even the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus present in his Sacred Body, exposed in the monstrance, is a display of simplicity: a pure white Host. We look at Jesus, he looks at us. A holy hour of adoration is a very simple experience of prayer, yet it is very profound and the Lord can speak clearly to us during the hour.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, lived a very simple and hidden life on earth. Even though she was destined to be the Queen of Heaven, the Queen of Angels and the Queen of all Saints, Mary kept the great mysteries of God in her heart. She was content to see Jesus loved, adored and followed on earth. Mary was the spouse of a humble and simple carpenter, St. Joseph. St. Joseph led a humble and simple life and did not have a huge house or many material goods. He did, though, have a deep love for Mary and for his foster-Son Jesus. St. Joseph gave Jesus a good example of simplicity.

## **5.4 Be simple**

The angels are simple. They are pure spirits who do the will of God on earth and in heaven. They listen to God's commands and carry them out simply. Complexity can cause stress and confusion, while simplicity can help us in obedience to God's will and builds up God's kingdom on earth.

Simplicity goes hand in hand with truth. When we love the truth and live in it, we can live with simplicity. If we follow a lie, our lives will become complicated and thus we lose simplicity. In the Missionaries of Love heart logo "Simplicity" comes after "God's Will." First we learn and do God's will and then we live it out in simplicity. Simplicity is like an invisible guide that helps to keep us focused on the target of God's will.

## 5.5 Be simple

St. Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face once said that she wanted to remain a child because she felt that she was incapable of earning her livelihood, i.e, Life Eternal. Indeed, none of us can “earn” salvation: It is a gift from our loving Father, God, through his Son Jesus. I love Therese and Faustina. Why? Because both of them showed such a loving, simple and childlike way of loving Jesus.

Simplicity goes hand in hand with humility. St. Therese wanted to be hidden from the praise of the world. She only wrote her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, out of obedience to her Superior. She wanted to love Jesus like no one else had ever loved him before, but she did not seek earthly glory. Once she said that she did not even seek heavenly glory. She only desired Love, the Love of God, the Love of Jesus. She lived a simple life of Divine Love and prayed so much for the salvation of sinners. She wore a simple brown Carmelite habit. Her dying words were simple “I love Him!”

## **5.6 Be simple**

To build a simple spiritual life we can start with our thoughts. Our thoughts should be simple, not complicated. Sometimes our physical surroundings are too cluttered and we end up with confused thoughts. We should have a simple home that will enhance, not disturb our spiritual life. I must confess that my desk where I work on my laptop is often cluttered with papers, trinkets, photos, pens, books and other things. I'm working on having a simple work space! It does take time for good habits to take root and bloom.

Meditation every morning on a short passage of Scripture will greatly help us to have clear, simple and focused holy thoughts. Reading or watching the news is fine as long as it does not replace the bible and lives of the saints and other holy books. Clutter in our rooms can cause us to have cluttered minds. Let's clean out the clutter in our homes and ask the Lord to clean out the clutter in our hearts and minds.

## 5.7 Be simple

Flowing from our thoughts comes our words. If our thoughts are simple, our words will be simple. Jesus did not preach using complicated language and big words. He usually used examples from nature: trees, vines, fields and so on. Our words are important because Jesus once said that it is by our words that we will be justified and by our words that we will be condemned. Loose lips sink ships. We have to watch what we say, because our words have the power to build up or tear down our spiritual lives. In fact, Scripture says that the tongue has the power to bring life or death, so we do need to watch what we say, without being overly preoccupied with it.

St. Faustina had simple speech. She did not break the rules for silence that existed in her convent and during her retreats, even when some of her fellow sisters tried to engage her in conversation, she remained silent. Silence is golden, as they say. Silence is a great place to be before speaking, for we can better discern when we should speak and when we should remain silent, not to mention what we should say or not say. Jesus was very careful with his words and he did not speak too much or too little, but only what was necessary.

## 5.8 Be simple

From our thoughts and words comes our actions. If our thoughts are simple and our words are simple it follows that our actions will be simple. Just as Jesus taught St. Faustina that there are three degrees of mercy, there are also, in a way, three degrees of simplicity: First, our thoughts. Second, our words. Third, and most importantly, our actions. We should use our bodies and the material things we have all for the glory of God. When we use our bodies to sin or our material possessions, such as our computers, we violate God's purpose for our lives and lose simplicity. If St. Faustina had a laptop I'm sure she would have a simple screensaver and a well-organized desktop. St. Therese would probably have an iPad so she could hang out in the garden and send love messages to the world ;)

Our actions reflect what we believe. If we are holy,, our actions will reflect that. If we drink and drive drunk, use illicit drugs, watch pornography and other such things we reveal the interior darkness we are in. Thoughts are like a seed. Words are like the germination process. Actions are like the plant that grows from the seed, the thoughts.

## **5.9 Be simple**

The sum of our thoughts, words, actions and omissions constitute our life. Thanks be to God, if we know we have wasted our thoughts, words and actions by following the lure of sin and evil, we know God will welcome us back to his merciful love if we are sorry and want to change our lives. Time is a great gift from God. When we confess our sins the priest gives us a penance. This is a way for us to kind of “make up” for what we have done, even though we can never, humanly speaking, make enough reparation for what our sins truly deserve. God loves us. God is merciful. We should trust in him. If you are not Catholic, you can most likely meet with your pastor and confess your sins in that way.

We just need to examine our lives to see if we live a simple life. Perhaps we are overextended in our commitments. One danger is over-involvement, even in spiritual matters, resulting in a lack of attention to family matters. Perhaps we spend too much time on Facebook or other websites. Perhaps we waste too much time watching television or we watch immoral shows. All of these things waste the gift of time that God gave us. Merciful love should flow in our lives.

## **5.10 Be simple**

Three basic things in life are commonly known as food (and water), shelter and clothing. Really, love is the most important ingredient of life. As Missionaries of Merciful Love we should try to be simple in all these areas. This means that we should avoid excess in all three areas, except for love! We can eat healthy and nutritious food but we don't need to eat too much food or drink wine or beer excessively. We can have a house but we don't need to be striving to own a mansion somewhere when a simple four bedroom house will do. Finally, we can have good clothes but we need to resist the temptation to buy the best, the newest, the most expensive jackets, dresses, shoes, pants, and so on.

If we are overweight we should have a program of exercise and proper diet to lose weight. If our house is too cluttered with unnecessary things we should either give them to charity or sell them. If we realize we have too many clothes we should put them in bags and drop them off at a good will store or the Salvation Army. The less we have, the better off we are, spiritually speaking. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to lead us in all these matters.

## **5.11 Be simple**

One way of growing in simplicity is having a daily schedule. It could include what time to rise in the morning. Morning prayer and, if possible, daily mass, would be scheduled in. Time for physical exercise is important. Having a daily schedule eliminates the need to think about what to do and when to do it. It is important that we put priorities in place first. Our schedules should also be simple and flexible. Things don't always go as planned, so we need to be open to change. Life is mysterious. We just need to "enter the mystery" of life, taking one day at a time, one adventure at a time.

We suggest you find a Catholic charismatic prayer meeting to go to once a week and schedule it in. The charismatic renewal is a blessing for the church and Pope Paul VI called it a "chance for the church." Ask someone to pray for the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" in your life or, if possible, attend a seven week Life in the Spirit Seminar. The Holy Spirit leads us to live a simple spiritual life. God is a God of order, not confusion. "Be still and know that I am God," says the Lord.

## 5.12 Be simple

Multitasking is often seen as a good thing. Spiritually speaking, it is not a good thing. Why? Because simplicity calls us to do one thing at a time. For example, let's say you are sitting in a chapel before Jesus exposed in the Blessed Sacrament. You could be texting a friend, but that would interrupt your time with Jesus. Turn the phone off and focus on the Lord. A simple approach to life is to do one thing at a time, and do it well. Another example: if we are driving, we should turn the phone off. Even talking with the "hands free" feature has shown to increase dramatically the accident rate.

We should focus on one task at a time until it is finished, and then move on to the next task. If we are at morning mass but our minds are full of thoughts of what we want to accomplish throughout the day, we are not living a simple life. It is cluttered with thoughts. A monthly retreat is a great way to unclutter our minds, hearts and souls, along with at least a monthly confession. It is our spiritual spa. A nice hot bubble bath works great with a retreat too!

## 5.13 Be simple

Our prayer should be simple. St. John Bosco once said that if people asked him his political views he said they were the words in the “Our Father.” Jesus taught us the simple prayer, the **“Our Father.”** It contains all we need to express in prayer. It is simple, direct and powerful. Jesus, in his directions to St. Faustina regarding the painting of the image of Divine Mercy, said it should have the words **“Jesus, I Trust in You”** at the bottom of the image (**Jezu Ufam Tobie**). Simple words but powerful meaning.

The Lord did not have St. Faustina write a theological dissertation below the image, but three Polish words. Its all about trusting in Jesus. We are to trust in Jesus, for he alone is trustworthy and will never lead us astray. Another simple prayer is, “I love you Jesus.” I think Jesus first wants people to trust in him and then move on to love him deeply, all the while trusting him increasingly. Trust in Jesus leads to loving Jesus. Before we love Jesus we must first come to him with our sins and trust in his mercy and love. It is simple.

## 5.14 Be simple

To be simple is not to be simple-minded or foolish. Rather, it is to focus on what is most important in our lives and put aside things which are distractions. Order goes hand in hand with simplicity. The more simple our lives are, the more ordered they will be. The more ordered they are, the more godly they are. It can take much effort to take a life that is complicated and cluttered and turn it into a life that is simple and ordered, but it can be done, with God's help.

Again, sometimes we just have too much "stuff" in our lives: too many books, too many trinkets, too many clothes, and so on. There is a teaching on the four "Ds": Dump, Delegate, Defer, Do. That is, when something comes our way we either dump it because it is not important that we do it, or we delegate it: get someone else to do it, or we defer it: do it later, or we actually do it, because it is a priority.

## 5.15 Be simple

There is a song that talks about simplicity written by Elder Joseph:

“'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free  
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,  
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,  
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.  
When true simplicity is gain'd,  
To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,  
To turn, turn will be our delight,  
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.”

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple\\_Gifts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Gifts))

Simplicity is indeed a gift. It leads to freedom, for we are not bogged down excess in thought, word, action or material things. Just watch a child playing: they are living in simplicity, not worried about tomorrow. Jesus taught us not to worry at all about tomorrow or the future, but to live one day at a time. Every day has enough problems of its own, Jesus said. Why add to our problems by thinking of potential future ones?

## **5.16 Be simple**

Just think of a blank sheet of paper: no lines, no words, no images. It is pure simplicity. It has the potential to be cluttered with words and images. Our lives are like that: we were born with potential. As we grow older we judge some things to be important and other things not to be important. Whatever we focus on, becomes our daily reality in life. If we focus on all kinds of things our lives will become cluttered. If we focus on what is truly important, according to God's standards, our lives will be ordered and simple.

Each time we go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), we are given a blank clean slate to work with, spiritually speaking. It is up to us what will be written on our slate for the coming week, month year and beyond. We need to simply build with the Lord on the foundation of Jesus and his word. We need to put aside things which undermine God's work in our lives. It is better to give than to receive. We should regularly go through our possessions and give what we don't really need to charity.

## 5.17 Be simple

Simpleology is a wonderful business philosophy that teaches that we need to see our target, focus on it and hit it. That is the essence of Simpleology. We can apply this truth to our spiritual lives. If our target is simplicity we need to “see it,” i.e., create a mental image of what simplicity would look like in our lives. Then we need to focus on our image of simplicity and then we need to “hit” the target of simplicity with our thoughts, words and actions.

Jesus said that we should “**seek first the kingdom of God.**” He said that everything would be given to us if we did. God’s kingdom is synonymous with God’ will. God’s will is done in God’s kingdom. When we simple seek and do the will of God, we are really seeking God’s kingdom in our lives. What we need will be provided for us by the Lord. It is only when we get out of alignment with God’s will that we run into major problems and experience frustration.

## **5.18 Be simple**

Each of us has a life and a mission. Our life should be full of simplicity and our mission should be full of simplicity. Sometimes we try to have or do too much, even good and holy things. Our life should include goals: long-term, medium and short-term goals. Our goals should be achievable and simple. If our goals are too complicated we will never hit them! Our mission should flow from our life: As Missionaries of Merciful Love our mission is to spread the merciful love of Jesus to the world. We are to do this by using our talents.

St. Faustina's mission was to be an Apostle of Divine Mercy to the world, and she continues in that mission in Heaven. St. Therese's mission was to be "Love" in the church, i.e., to spread the love of Jesus everywhere. The mission of Divine Mercy and Love go hand in hand. Jesus used, and continues to use, St. Faustina to spread his mercy and St. Therese to spread his love. Together, they spread the merciful love of Jesus, which is what the Missionaries of Merciful Love is all about. In a way, the MML is a blending of their spiritualities.

## 5.19 Be simple

Music can be simple. Just think of the beauty of the simple melody of Gregorian Chant. Cyndie and I love to listen to Gregorian chant at home sometimes because it is so peaceful, prayerful and relaxing. Almost any other kind of music demands too much of our attention, unless we are in the mood to rock! The sacred words of Gregorian Chant are sung in Latin and a large group of monks, probably about forty, sing in unison. There is no harmony, only one note is shared by all. This is a kind of expression of *una voce* (One voice) of the early Christians. They also had “one heart” and “one spirit.” All these things express simplicity.

The best Christian songs are the most simple. Think of songs like Amazing Grace, How Great Thou Art, For all the Saints and other similar songs. We should do our best to listen to music that supports our goal of simplicity in our lives. What we listen to does, in some ways, determine how we think, what we say and what we do. The music we listen to should lift our spirits and draw us to glorify God or at least grow in love. There is, of course, always a time and a place to listen to regular music: rock, jazz, pop and so on. St. Faustina was moved to tears by Sacred music at times.

## 5.20 Be simple

There is a saying, “Garbage in, garbage out.” We can apply this to our desire for simplicity: “Simplicity in, simplicity out.” In other words, what we put into our lives: our thoughts, our eyes, our ears, etc., will be similar to what “fruit” we produce in our lives. If we put simple and holy things (books, music, movies, etc.) then we will reflect those things in our lives. If we put in immoral things (books, music, movies, websites, etc.) then we will produce bad fruit.

Jesus put it clearly: **“A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot produce good fruit.”** We need to be sure our “tree,” i.,e, our spiritual life, is good. It is also said that “you are what you eat.” Well, in a way, we are what we see, what we hear, and what we do. We are to eat good things, spiritually, i.,e the word of God, the Holy Eucharist, good spiritual books, such as the Diary of St. Faustina Kowalska, and so on. We need to develop “holy habits” if we want to have a simple life.

## 5.21 Be simple

Today think about three actions that would make your life more simple. Here are some categories you could think of: clothing, books, CDs, DVDs, trinkets, shoes, sports equipment, furniture, items on the computer desktop. We can start by just looking around our home: each room should be examined and simplified.

The amount of material goods we own is related to our particular calling in life. Some need to have very little while others need a lot more. Whatever your situation is, as long as you are using what you own for the good of others as well as, of course, supporting your own family, then “it’s all good.” There is a saying, “don’t be possessed by your possessions.” It’s true. This does not mean we need to give away all our clothing except for one pair of shoes, pants or a dress. It is just that we need to see material things as tools we can use for our own good and the good of others.

## 5.22 Be simple

Today simply spend some time in silent prayer. We often fall into the trap of trying to do too much in prayer. We may end up reading all sorts of good books, saying all sorts of vocal prayers, and so on, but did we really just spend some quiet time listening to the Lord? Jesus often spent time alone in prayer to the Father in the mountains in Israel. He needed to get away from the crowds and even his own disciples, to be alone with the Father. It was his personal silent retreat. If Jesus needed a silent retreat regularly then so do we.

If we try to focus on six or seven things at the same time, we will lose our focus and end up not really focusing on any of them. The best thing for us, spiritually, is to focus on one thing at a time. Remember how Jesus' friend Mary sat at his feet while her sister Martha cooked the meal? Jesus praised Mary for "choosing the better part," i.e., listening to Jesus. Yes, we need to prepare meals and clean and so on, but the higher task is to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to his words of wisdom.

## 5.23 Be simple

Today list three spiritual goals for your life. One goal could be to eliminate one of your main personal sins. If there is something you are doing in your life that is leading you to fall into sin, stop doing it. Make it one of your highest goals to rid yourself of this attachment to sin. The spiritual life is like a building: it has a foundation. With a weak or cracked foundation the whole house is in trouble and will eventually collapse to the ground.

Many of the saints say that humility is the foundation of the spiritual life. Humility is simply the truth of who we are before God. What is another spiritual goal you could have? Perhaps it could be to commit to a certain time each day for prayer: in the morning or in the evening, or both. Another spiritual goal could be to do spiritual reading: The Bible, Lives of the Saints, the Diary of St. Faustina, and so on. There are all kinds of spiritual goals we can make: pray the rosary every day, go to weekday mass when we can, weekly confession, weekly adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and so on.

## 5.24 Be simple

Today either draw something or write a few words that expresses your desire for simplicity. Take a blank piece of paper and, using a pen, pencil, paintbrush or something else, make some kind of spiritual artwork, expressing what is going on in your heart and soul. Write a spiritual poem if you feel led to. If you have a blog then write something spiritual in your blog. If you are on other social media sites then why not post something spiritual on it, perhaps a link to a Divine Mercy site?

If you have musical talent, why not pray and try to write a spiritual song on the piano, guitar or other instrument? Another idea is to buy a small blank book that you can turn into your private spiritual diary. No one has to see it but you. You will likely find keeping a spiritual journal or diary a very helpful experience, especially as you reflect over the years on the words you have written, graces received, insights from the Holy Spirit and other adventures. Pope John Paul II kept a personal diary and hoped it would be burned after his death but his secretary ended up publishing it for the instruction of the church. He said he did not have the heart to burn the Pope's inspiring words.

## 5.25 Be simple

"Be still and know that I am God," The Lord says in Scripture. As I have already mentioned, one of the greatest challenges in our day and age is being busy all the time. With all the cell phones, texting, videos, online chatting, email and so on it seems like we have no time to just "be." The Devil wants Christians to burn out with being busy. The computer and internet can be used to do God's work but they can also be a snare from the Enemy to lead people into corruption, wasting time and losing focus on God's will for their lives.

The Lord says in Scripture that we will know he is God when we are "still." Another way of putting it would be, "Be busy and don't know that I am God." Kind of strange to put the reverse meaning, but it is, in a way, true. If we are so busy in our lives with our cell phones, texting, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and so on, how can we possibly hear the voice of God or recognize God speaking to us? With the constant din of the hundreds of voices crying out to us online, on TV on radio and so on, the Lord's voice is drowned out. We must have moderation in our use of the computer and internet.

## 5.26 Be simple

What are three things you can give to charity that would make your life more simple? Perhaps you have an extra laptop? Extra clothing? Shoes you don't really need? A winter coat? Musical instruments? Books? CDs? DVDs? Bibles? Holy pictures? Look around your home and get out some garbage bags and start filling them with extra clutter you don't really need. You will start to feel a lot better with a cleaner house and have more focus in your life with less clutter in your closet and rooms.

My wife Cyndie taught me a game she calls "Pick up 100." What it entails is getting a box or garbage bag and going through each room in the house and giving away 100 items. It could be as small as some pens (each one counts as one item), booklets, small pictures, books, CDs and so on. It is not that hard to find 100 things we have lying in our drawers or in the closet that we really don't need. Others will find these things useful and the poor will be grateful to have them. You could start with "Pick up 20" and go from there.

## 5.27 Be simple

Today think and pray about one day a month that you could set aside for a silent retreat, even only a few hours. Write your decision down somewhere. Do a little research on the best place to go that is near you. Perhaps there is a local retreat centre. Perhaps there is a monastery with large grounds nearby or an hour away. Even if you have to drive an hour or more, finding a quiet place of retreat is a goldmine. If you are on a tight budget, consider making a retreat in your own home. You may need to get rid of clutter and make some space that helps you to unwind and get away from the ordinary tasks of life: hide your computer, shut off your TV, turn off the radio, and so on.

Another great idea that accompanies a monthly retreat is to find a good spiritual director. It could be a priest, a nun or lay person who is qualified. You could either see him or her on your retreat day, or on some other day during the month. Usually a person would see a spiritual director once a month. Our primary Spiritual Director is the Holy Spirit but God does use trained people to help guide us in the ways of holiness and love.

## 5.28 Be simple

Today decide how often, and when, you will go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation: once a month? Once a week? When is the last time you went to confession? A month, six months, a year, more than a year? Our suggestion for the Missionaries of Merciful Love is weekly confession, e.g. on Saturday or some other day. Once a week may seem too frequent but if you get into the habit of it you will come to like it and see it as a powerful way of growing in your walk with the Lord.

Some saints went to confession every day! We don't need to do that, but going once a week will also enable you to gain plenary indulgences every day of the week, as sacramental confession is one of the requirements for gaining a plenary indulgence, which is the full remission of temporal punishment due to sin. In other words, when done with proper motives and freedom from attachment to sin, you get to start again in the spiritual life with a "clean slate," and would not need to experience the purifying fire of Purgatory after death. For further information read about indulgences in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1471-1479).

## **5.29 Be simple**

Today try to find a small group that meets for prayer either in your church or in their homes and join them. If this can't be done then consider having a weekly prayer meeting in your home. Find a comfortable room that has enough space, put out a few chairs, play guitar, read the Bible, pray from your heart, share with other Christians and have tea and goodies at the end if you want. You could start with you and your spouse or friend. Jesus said that where two or more are gathered in his name, he is also there.

Another idea is to talk with your pastor and see if you can put a bulletin announcement seeking people who want to be a part of a Catholic charismatic prayer meeting in the parish hall. Even if only one or two people respond it is a good start! You can pray for the pastor and the people of the parish, your diocese, your Bishop and the universal church. If possible, try to attend a "Life in the Spirit Seminar," if there is one available in your diocese. It is a seven week "course" designed to lead you to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and experience the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a deeper way, including tongues and prophecy.

## 5.30 Be simple

St. Clare was a friend of St. Francis and she left all she had, her family and her possessions, to follow the spiritual way of life of St. Francis. She became the foundress of the Poor Clares, also known as the Second Franciscan Order. St. Clare had beautiful long blonde hair. St. Francis and his brothers cut it all off to symbolize her new life as a Poor Clare. She only had a poor habit to wear and lived a life of prayer and penance. She was very happy in her new life of simplicity. They would have made a great couple if they got married!

The family of St. Clare did not want her to leave and begin this new spiritual life with St. Francis. St. Francis and his brothers had to help her escape in the middle of the night. When her family eventually caught up with her they gave up when they saw she had cut all her hair off. They knew she had made a radical decision to follow Jesus in a deeper way. St. Clare lived in an old church and soon attracted other young women who were inspired by her example of holy simplicity, poverty and love. Like St. Francis, St. Clare only owned her poor habit and not much else. She radiated the joy of the Lord, as do the modern Poor Clares I have met in Mission, BC. Simplicity of life leads to spiritual joy when we follow the Lord.

## 5.31 Be simple

St. Francis of Assisi loved simplicity. He called it the “sister” of “Queen Wisdom.” He loved the kind of simplicity that led people to see that God was all we need and that everything else has little value compared to God. If we have simplicity, we will likely have wisdom. If we are worldly in our thoughts, words and actions we will lack wisdom. Scripture teaches that the “fear of the Lord” is the beginning of wisdom. We are to seek first the Lord and his kingdom and put aside everything that becomes a stumbling stone.

St. Francis had a man who became one of his brothers and he is known as John the Simple. He imitated everything St. Francis did: coughing, spitting, sighing and other things. When St. Francis asked him why he did these things he replied that he promised to do everything St. Francis did. St. Francis told him not to be copying him in every little thing, but he praised John’s spirit of simplicity. St. Francis sought to imitate Jesus in a similar way. St. Francis eliminated everything in his life that did not fit with his vision of simplicity.

## 6.1 Pray always from the heart

Jesus taught that we should **“pray always”** and **“not lose heart.”** How can we pray always? This does not mean that we are always praying vocal prayers, like the Our Father. Vocal prayer is important, but what is even more important is prayer from our heart. This is a deep, hidden way of praying that places us always in union with the Lord in the depths of our being. This kind of praying can, indeed, be done always. It will take some time, even a lifetime, to reach the point where we are always living in a state of prayerful union with God.

We should notice we are to pray always **“from the heart.”** It does not say **“from the mind,”** but **“from the heart.”** Mental prayer is good, but prayer from the heart is deeper and will unite us more intimately with the Lord. As we enter more deeply into holy simplicity, prayer from the heart becomes easier, for there are less distractions for our hearts. Both St. Therese and St. Faustina prayed deeply from their hearts to Jesus. They both had a deep, constant union with Jesus.

## **6.2 Pray always from the heart**

In Medjugorje, Our Lady is alleged to have told the children that there are five “stones” that will defeat Satan: Prayer from the Heart, Fasting, Reading the Word of God, Monthly Confession and Praying the Rosary. Prayer certainly is a powerful spiritual weapon. We are called to pray deeply, from within, from the depths of our heart.

St. Faustina prayed from her heart: “I have become interiorly united with God. His presence penetrates me to my very depths and fills me with peace, joy and amazement. After such moments of prayer, I am filled with strength and an extraordinary courage to suffer and struggle” (480). The fruit of prayer from the heart is peace, joy and amazement. It also gives us strength and courage, as we see in the case of St. Faustina. Prayer changes us and helps us to “live in” God like a fish in water, as St. Catherine of Sienna said. The MML logo, the symbol on the cover of this book, is a constant reminder of the need for us to pray from the heart, for the word “prayer” is found within the large red heart. Our heart must be in doing God’s will, living with simplicity and praying.

### 6.3 Pray always from the heart

Prayer is communication. It is a relationship. It is our communication with God that sustains our relationship. If prayer dries up, our relationship with the Lord dries up. Prayer is our daily food, along with the Holy Eucharist and doing the will of our Father. Jesus said **“apart from me you can do nothing.”** He also said that with God **“all things” are possible.** Jesus prayed regularly while he was on earth. He took time each day to be alone with his Father. No one knows exactly how those times of intimate prayer went, but we do know Jesus gave a great example of daily prayer.

The apostles prayed at regular times, in according with Jewish traditions. The Liturgy of the Hours, or Breviary, is a way for the Church to help us “pray always,” by having various Scriptures for morning, noon, evening and night. Priests and religious sisters and brothers pray these prayers but anyone can buy a Liturgy of the Hours book and start praying as well. When we read Scripture, God’s word is on our mind, on our lips and in our heart. Praying with God’s word can help us pray more deeply.

## **6.4 Pray always from the heart**

“Prayer” is the third phrase in the Missionaries of Merciful Love heart logo. Along with God’s will and simplicity, prayer forms a vital part of our spirituality. Without prayer we cannot live a life of simplicity. Without prayer we cannot know or do God’s will. We need prayer, prayer from the heart. Prayer from the heart is like a blazing furnace that heats a building. This furnace must always be fed to keep burning.

Praise is the highest form of prayer. Our hearts should be full of praise and thanksgiving to God for all his many blessings in our lives. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a wonderful symbol of his great love for us. There are flames at the top of his heart, symbolizing Divine burning love for souls. There is a beautiful prayer, “Sweet Heart of Jesus, be my love.” Jesus said that human beings look at appearances but God looks at the heart. Let’s pray always from our hearts.

## 6.5 Pray always from the heart

Jesus taught about the importance of prayer: **“Therefore I tell you, all things whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you have received them, and you shall have them.”** (Mark 11:24) There is nothing we cannot ask God for in prayer. Of course, we must surrender to what God wills is best for us. Sometimes we might ask for something but it would be bad for us to have it. This is why the Lord’s prayer says **“Thy will be done.”**

One good idea is to reflect on what our greatest spiritual weakness is. For some it may be pride, for others, greed, for others lust. Whatever our weakness is, we should pray for the opposite. We can pray for humility, generosity and purity. St. Faustina prayed for purity and it was granted to her. We can extrapolate from her diary that she likely had a lot of sexual temptations prior to a miraculous intervention by the Lord, indicating that she was a very passionate and loving person and longed to share her love, which she, with the help of Jesus, was able to channel into loving God, particularly in the Person of Jesus, the King of Mercy. What do you want to ask the Lord to give you? Why not pray for it today, right now? Believe you have received it already, in Jesus’ name.

## **6.6 Pray always from the heart**

Nothing is impossible for God. God heard the prayer of Zecharias for a son: "But the angel said to him, 'Don't be afraid, Zacharias, because your request has been heard, and your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John'" (Luke 1:13). God hears every request we make to him in prayer. I read somewhere a teaching that said God answers every prayer. He either says "yes" and grants our prayer, or "no" because it would not be good for us, or "later" because the time is not yet right for our prayer to be answered.

Only God knows the whole situation in our life. He knows things we don't know, so it is best to pray that God's will be accomplished in our lives. We cannot live in the past. It is gone forever. The future is not yet here. All we have is the present moment to live in. We cannot return to the past and do God's will there. We cannot jump into the future and do God's will there. We can only live in the "now" and do God's will "now." Let just "do it!"

## 6.7 Pray always from the heart

Jesus made prayer requests to God his Father: **“I pray not that you would take them from the world, but that you would keep them from the evil one”** (John 17:15). Jesus prayed for all of his disciples in that prayer, present and future, including you and me. Jesus does not want us to hide from the world, but he wants us protected from the evil one, or the devil. One thing that will help us to be free of the power of the evil one is that we pray always from our hearts. Prayer has great power over the devil and protects us in times of temptation.

If we have people we are responsible for, e.g. children, nephews, nieces and so on, we should pray for them every day to be protected from evil. We should also pray for our brothers and sisters and our parents. The last prayer request in the Our Father, or Lord’s Prayer, is **“deliver us from evil”** or **“deliver us from the evil one.”** The Lord’s Prayer starts with praise and ends with a petition to be protected from evil.

## 6.8 Pray always from the heart

Jesus continued to pray for his disciples, and us, **“Not for these only do I pray, but for those also who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you sent me”** (John 17:20–21). Jesus prayed that we would all be one in him with the Father, so that the world would believe that the Father sent Jesus to the world as the Savior of the world.

The early church was “one heart, one mind and one spirit.” Gradually, though, false teachings crept into various communities and did harm to the unity that Jesus came to bring. Every year the church has a week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This is an important prayer we should all join in on. Jesus taught St. Faustina the importance of Christians being together as one holy church. Humility and forgiveness are necessary to achieve Christian unity. No matter what, we can always love one another as Jesus loves us. Love always wins.

## **6.9 Pray always from the heart**

The early Christians led a life of prayer, both in common and in private: “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer” (Acts 2:42). We are called to continue steadfastly in the apostle’s teaching, fellowship, the breaking of the bread (Mass) and prayer. It is not enough to pray once or twice a year, or even once or twice a month. God’s holiness requires us to be in a daily communication through prayer. We don’t have to pray for five hours a day! Even a few minutes in the morning is better than not at all.

The more we pray, the more we will come to love to pray. As a result of the power of prayer, signs and wonders were seen in the early Christian community, who were originally called “followers of the Way,” as Jesus said “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” Only later, in Antioch, were the followers of “the way” called “Christians” by Roman leaders as a derogatory term, i.e., “worshippers of the Christ.” We too can see people healed through prayer, in the name of Jesus. We should also pray for our church leaders, priests, deacons, sisters, brothers, Bishops and laity. We should pray for government leaders: The Prime Minister, Premier, Mayor and so on. We should pray for our country and God’s blessing on it.

## **6.10 Pray always from the heart**

St. Paul proclaimed the need to be faithful in prayer: “In love of the brothers be tenderly affectionate to one another; in honor preferring one another; not lagging in diligence; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; enduring in troubles; continuing steadfastly in prayer;” (Romans 12:10–12) If we take part in a race it is not enough to make it half way: we must make it to the finish line if we want to win! It is the same with prayer; it is not enough to start praying. We must pray “to the end,” i.e., until our last day on earth.

We pray in the Hail Mary, “Pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death.” Our last hour on earth is very important because it marks a transition point from this life to eternity. That is a time for us to trust in God’s mercy and love and hopefully experience the blessing of the anointing of the sick and Viaticum, the last Holy Communion. Our Christian life is like a race and we are called to not give up, even when we fall. We need to just get back up again and keep running the race. We need to “fight the good fight” of faith until the end.

## 6.11 Pray always from the heart

The greatest gift we can pray for is love: “This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that you may approve the things that are excellent; that you may be sincere and without offense to the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9–11). If we want to be full of love and overflowing with love we need to pray more. **“Ask and you shall receive,”** Jesus taught.

The heart, of course, is a symbol of love. When we talk of praying from the heart, it means praying with love. Jesus said that wherever our heart is, that is where our treasure lies. I wrote a song called Open Your Heart and the lyrics say “Open you heart to the Lord. Open your heart to the King. Open your heart to Him and he’ll come in. Yes, he’ll come in.” It’s true, Jesus knocks at the door of our heart and will come into our hearts and lives when we open our hearts to him. He is the Light of the World and will bring light to our lives.

## **6.12 Pray always from the heart**

The fruit of prayer from the heart is peace. A peace the world cannot give. “In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7). God’s peace will guard our hearts and our thoughts in Christ. What a blessing! We cannot even fully understand God’s peace, but we can only enter into it.

There is no room for anxiety in a person who prays daily from the heart. If we have a care or concern, we only need to give it to the Lord in prayer and we can rest in the peace of God that he will take care of all our needs. On a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal, list three things you are concerned about that you want to present to the Lord. Be honest. Take some time to reflect first. Write what you feel led to write, even if it is difficult for you to write it. Perhaps you need to forgive a family member or friend. Perhaps you need to let go of attachment to a particular sin. Let it out and let God heal you.

## **6.13 Pray always from the heart**

”Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving;” (Colossians 4:2) When we pray we are to “watch” with thanksgiving. If the only thing we pray for is to win the lottery then our prayer life needs to be expanded. We can pray for the list of sick people in our church. We can also pray for the people who are sick of the church :) We can pray for family members and friends who are going through a rough time. We can thank God every day for the blessings we have: health, food, shelter, clothing, family, friends, a job, and so on.

Cyndie and I recently discovered a Catholic charismatic prayer community in a private home in Windsor that has been meeting for over ten years. Some people come and go but others have been around for years, faithfully praying. Perhaps you can start a weekly time of prayer in your home just for your family or maybe some friends. Perhaps you can join a home prayer group or a church prayer group. Let the Holy Spirit lead you as to where he wants you to be and grow.

## **6.14 Pray always from the heart**

Anger can get into the way of prayer. It is normal for us to experience anger, but it is important that we let the anger go or it will eat us up, spiritually: “I desire therefore that the men in every place pray, lifting up holy hands without anger and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8) We are also not to doubt that God will answer our prayers. We must trust in Jesus. It is good for us to use our arms and hands when praying, at times, and open them up in the “Orans” gesture, like the priest at mass during the Eucharistic Prayer.

We can pray with our bodies. Sometimes we can lie face down on the ground as a sign of surrender to the Lord, or face up as a sign of total openness to the Spirit moving in us. Sometimes we can do this and open our arms like a cross, again, as a sign of complete surrender to the Lord. Sometimes we can sit comfortably, as if sitting at the feet of Jesus, waiting for him to speak. Other times we can kneel, as a sign of reverence and adoration of the Lord. Be open to how you feel led by the Spirit to pray with your body. Another practice is to join hands with the person beside you. “Greet each other with a holy kiss,” is what Scripture says. The early followers of the way were very affectionate with each other, as so should we be as well. We all need to love and be loved.

## 6.15 Pray always from the heart

Sometimes we experience trouble in our loves. What should we do, as followers of Jesus, at these times? Pray: “Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praises” (James 5:13) Sometimes it is hard to pray when we are suffering. It seems like the last thing we want to do. God looks at our hearts, not the length of our prayers.

When Jesus was in his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed to his Father, “**Not my will be done, but yours, O Father.**” Jesus prayed when he suffered deep mental anguish, seeing what suffering was before him in the scourging, crowning with thorns, crucifixion and death on the cross. When we are feeling happy we should sing praises to the Lord. As St. Augustine said, “He who sings well, prays twice.” I guess if you sing poorly you are only praying once, but once is better than not at all! “Make a joyful noise to the Lord,” Scripture tells us. Don’t be shy! Singing is a wonderful way of praying. St. Faustina loved to sing, especially spiritual songs.

## **6.16 Pray always from the heart**

List three people or things on a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal that you want to praise and thank God for. Spend a few minutes giving thanks and praise to the Lord for these three people or things. St. Francis of Assisi loved the Rule of the Friars Minor, the religious order he started, and he rejoiced when he saw one of his friars carrying the rule and living it out. St. Francis would likely have listed the OFM (Order of Friars Minor) Rule as one thing he was very grateful to God for. He also loved the Word of God. He was not fond of books or learning, unless approached in a holy manner like St. Anthony of Padua, but he loved to hear the Word of God read and encouraged his friars to carry even a few pages of the gospels with them to read.

Here are some people and things we can be grateful for: God our Father, Jesus our brother, the Holy Spirit our sweet Sister), our spouse, children, mother and father, brothers and sisters, extended family, friends, church members, pastor, bishop, pope, political leaders and so on. We can be grateful for these things, for example: our homes, cars, clothing, food, computer, cell phone, job, school, books, music, paintings, telephone, TV, radio, electricity, water, heat and so on.

## **6.17 Pray always from the heart**

On a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal, list three people you want to pray for today. Spend a few minutes, praying from your heart, for these three people today. It could be someone you know or someone you have heard of who really needs prayer. I developed a habit of praying for each member of my family, starting with my mom and dad and then going through each brother and my sister and, of course, my Lovebird and I. I would say a Hail Mary for each of them and, for those who are deceased (my father and brother David and brother-in-law Sheridan), I would say “Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace.” I don’t always remember to pray this prayer each morning but many times I do.

Our Lady said at Fatima that “many souls go hell because there is no one to pray for them.” In other words, these are people who are clearly caught up in some kind of serious (mortal) sin that leads to hell. Because no one in their life is praying for their conversion, these poor souls end up losing their souls for all eternity. It shows us the importance of intercessory prayer. The idea of souls going to hell today is not too popular, even in many church circles, but the reality will not go away.

## **6.18 Pray always from the heart**

St. Therese knew how to pray from her heart: “Jesus, the Doctor of all doctors, teaches without words...I have never heard him speak but I know he is inside me. At each and every moment, he guides me to do what I must do.” St. Faustina often heard the voice of Jesus in her soul and had many visions of him. St. Therese is more like what most Christian’s experience: listen to the Lord inside our heart.

The Heart of Jesus speaks to our heart without words. It is the language of love. The first and greatest commandment, Jesus said, is that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. The second is that we love our neighbour as ourselves. Notice that “heart” comes before all else. The Lord wants our hearts to beat for love of him. “Create in me a clean heart, O God,” the psalmist prays. In another part of Scripture we read “A broken and contrite heart you will not despise.”

## **6.19 Pray always from the heart**

The heart is a symbol of love. St. Therese knew the love of Jesus ever since she was a young child. She would have grown up seeing the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: “Your love has gone before since I was a child. It has grown with my growth.” What a wonderful statement to be able to make: that the love of Jesus was grown with my growth. Sometimes, as we get older, we wander away from Jesus, from prayer and even from attending mass every Sunday. Not so with St. Therese. She grew in the love of Jesus year to year.

On a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal list three reasons why you love Jesus. Ponder these three reasons silently in your heart for a while. Give thanks to the Lord for these things. There is a song that says a person loves Jesus “because he first loved me.” This is a great answer. Jesus loved us first. We did not choose him: he chose us. He loved us first and enables us to love him. It is all a gift of grace from Jesus, who himself is a gift to us from God the Father, especially in the Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus.

## 6.20 Pray always from the heart

On a blank sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal, draw a picture of the Heart of Jesus and, inside it, your heart. Write any words or prayers that come to your mind. Jesus said, **“I am meek and humble of heart.”** The Lord calls us to have meek and humble hearts as well. Sometimes our hearts can be aggressive and proud, just the opposite of the Heart of Jesus. Sorrow for our sins leads to a broken and contrite heart and eventually to a meek and humble heart, a pure and holy heart full of love for Jesus and others.

Spend a little time today gazing at the image of the heart with the cross on the cover of this book. Reflect on God calling you to love, to carry your cross, to do God’s will, to live in simplicity, to pray from the heart. Ponder these words and thoughts in your heart today and listen for the voice of God in your heart and soul. Be still and know that he is God. He is Lord of your life. He is the Savior of your soul. He is the King of your heart. Enthroned Jesus in your heart now and forever by choosing him as your King and Savior, the Son of God.

## 6.21 Pray always from the heart

When his disciples asked him to teach them how to pray, Jesus taught them the Lord's Prayer (Our Father): **"Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."** Pray this prayer today in a new way: pause for a little while after each statement: e.g. **"Our Father..."** (pause) **"who art in heaven,"** (pause).

By praying the Lord's Prayer this way you will be led to a deeper understanding of the words in the prayer and the Lord will lead you closer to himself. It is a short and simple prayer, but it is very deep and spiritually powerful. The first focus is on praising God our Father and honoring his holy name. For us as Missionaries of Merciful Love it is good to see that God's will is central to the Lord's prayer: **"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done..."** Jesus did not give us a long prayer to pray every day, but a brief one, full of meaning, truth and power.

## **6.22 Pray always from the heart**

Jesus told St. Faustina that the three degrees of mercy are: Prayer, Word, Action. Today list three people on a sheet of paper that you will make a point to call on the phone either today or the next couple of days. See your call as flowing from your prayer. Second, think of three people you can pray for today. Finally, think of three actions you can take to help other over the next week or so.

The highest form of mercy is, of course, action. The second highest is by word. The “lowest” form is prayer, but it is still very important and powerful. We cannot always carry out the actions we would like to, or speak to people when we want to, but most of the time we can make time to pray for others. This is helping them and showing mercy as well. We have no idea how many people are praying for us. Sometimes people tell us they are praying for us, which is great, but that is not always the case. After he recovered from being shot in 1981, Pope John Paul II visited his would-be assassin, Mehmet Ali Ağca, in prison and forgave him. What a great example of God’s mercy and love in action.

## **6.23 Pray always from the heart**

Today, reflect on the following words below and ponder each of them in your heart and listen for the voice of the Lord speaking in the silence. Perhaps just take one phrase that speaks to you and go with it:

God is love

Jesus loves me

God loves me

**“I am meek and humble of heart”**

Rejoice in the Lord always

The Lord will provide

**“Thy will be done”**

What did you hear from the Lord from the experience you just had? Did you take some silent time to listen to God? It is a good idea to start every morning with a brief passage from God’s word. Read it aloud and then spend some silent time listening to the Lord. If you are married, try doing this with your spouse. Even five minutes is a good start to this practice.

## **6.24 Pray always from the heart**

Sometimes we have barriers to prayer from the heart. The most obvious barrier is sin, for it weakens or destroys our relationship with God. We could list things like “My house is too noisy,” or “I don’t have a place to pray,” or “I don’t have it scheduled in my day,” and other excuses. God does not put up barriers to prayer: We do. The world does. The Devil does too. We put up barriers because we are often led astray by our own passion and desire for some earthly pleasure or gain.

The world put up barriers because it does not know God or believe in the power or need for prayer. The Devil puts up barriers to prayer because he knows how powerful we are when we pray from the heart every day, so he seeks to strip the weapon of prayer away from us in a myriad of ways. No matter who puts the barriers up, God can tear them down in an instant, if we cooperate with him. St. Augustine told the Lord in prayer, “Make me chaste, Lord, but not yet.” He wanted to be pure but was not quite ready to give up pleasure with his mistress. Eventually Augustine was ready and became a great saint and bishop. He was honest with God with where he stood spiritually and the Lord waited for him.

## **6.25 Pray always from the heart**

Unresolved issues are a real barrier to prayer from the heart. They could include: lack of forgiveness towards someone who has hurt us, judging others, and so on; Are there any unresolved issues in your life that are disturbing your peace of heart and mind? Make it a point today to resolve all these issues. You will be glad you did!

A key to learning to pray from the heart is first to seek, discover and do the will of God. Then, to live a life of simplicity, getting rid of spiritual and material clutter in our lives. Finally, this will lead us to pray always from the heart, for the ground has been prepared by knowing and doing God's will and living a simple life. We cannot pray always from the heart if we don't first discern and live out God's will in simplicity of life. Of course, all these things take a lifetime, but we must remember that some of the greatest saints, like St. Faustina, St. Therese, St. Francis of Assisi and many others, lived only until their twenty's, early thirty's and forty's. True, some were worn out from harsh penance and illness, but they all became great saints.

## **6.26 Pray always from the heart**

Below are some examples of excellent ways to pray. Consider them and perhaps start doing some of them or add your own list.

Prayer from your heart

Sunday Mass

Daily mass

Daily prayer

Daily Bible reading

Daily Rosary

Daily meditation on God's word

Spiritual reading, e.g. Lives of the Saints

Diary of St. Faustina Kowalska

Chaplet of Mercy (Usually at three in the afternoon)

Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office)

Nightly Examination of Conscience

Keeping a Spiritual Journal

Praying before sacred art or a statue of Jesus

Singing songs of praise

Listening to Christian music

Listening to the Scriptures on CD

## **6.27 Pray always from the heart**

Having Sacred Images in our homes can help us to pray from the heart because they call to our minds Jesus, Mary and the Saints. Look around your house. Do you have any holy pictures on the wall, e.g. the Last Supper in your dining room, etc.?

Below is a list of suggested holy pictures for your home:

- 1) Divine Mercy image
- 2) Sacred Heart of Jesus
- 3) Immaculate Heart of Mary
- 4) The Last Supper (for your dining room)
- 5) St. Faustina and St. Therese of the Child Jesus (for MML members especially)
- 6) Angels
- 7) Palm Branches ( From Palm Sunday)

Perhaps you have your own ideas, e.g. your favorite saint, etc. “Out of sight, out of mind,” the saying goes. This is why having images of Jesus and Our Lady and the Saints can help us be more spiritually minded at home. If you are a MML member consider printing the MML logo (heart with cross and God’s Will, Simplicity and Prayer) and putting it up somewhere in your home.

## **6.28 Pray always from the heart**

Holy Water is a sacramental. It is blessed by a priest and cleanses us of venial sin when we use it with faith and it drives away evil spirits. Every Catholic home should have holy water. Do you have holy water in your home? If not, just bring a jug to your local parish and they should have a holy water container that you can get some from.

When you have holy water you can say this prayer “Lord, by this holy water and by your Precious Blood, wash away all my sins and console the Holy Souls in Purgatory.” Sprinkle holy water in your home often, even every night as you go to bed. St. Maximilian Kolbe had his infected thumb healed by God using holy water. Holy water is also a reminder of our baptism, where we were cleansed of original sin and adopted as children of God. By cleansing us from venial sins holy water helps us to pray to God with a more pure heart. Carry some in a flask in your pocket or purse. In these days of increasing spiritual darkness and diabolical deceptions its kind of like the American Express motto, “Don’t leave home without it.”

## 6.29 Pray always from the heart

We need to do our best to have a pure heart that is set apart for the Lord and not darkened by sin. The same can be said of our homes. It is important to cleanse our home of anything and everything that is contrary to the gospel. This includes books, DVDs, magazines, bookmarked websites and so on. Games such as Dungeons and Dragons should not be in the home. Ouija boards, tarot cards and other such occult items should be removed. Witchcraft paraphernalia should be removed from your home, office, car and everywhere else, and that includes Wicca. Remember, Satan can appear as an “angel of light.”

Parents need to show authority and leadership in this matter. Children need discipline, loving discipline. The Lord disciplines us, his children, because he loves us. Perhaps you need to go through your books, DVDs, magazines and so on and prayerfully consider what needs to leave your home. Statues of other religious “gods” should not be in our homes or in our gardens. Many masks, e.g., from Africa, have a purpose in voodoo or witchcraft and carry a dark spirit with them. Out they should go! Cleanse our homes, O Lord! The Lord, the Mighty One of Israel said **“YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.”** (Exodus 20:3)

### **6.30 Pray always from the heart**

Jesus said that if our right hand causes us to sin, we should cut it off. He said it is better to go through life maimed than to go into hell with a whole body. In other words, anything in our lives that leads us to sin we should cut out. Some men, due to their addiction to pornography, got rid of their computers. That was the step they had to take to stay pure. Is there anything you need to “cut out” from your life: a person that constantly leads you to sin? A place that leads you to sin? An object (computer, book, movie, etc) that leads you to sin? If so, cut it out.

On a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal, write a simple prayer asking Jesus to help you cut out anything in your life that leads you to sin. Again, when we write things down something happens in our brains: a process is started that would not happen if we just thought about the issue. Writing makes things we want to happen concrete and right before our eyes. What we write comes from our heart and allows us to “see” our spiritual goals clearly.

## 7.1 Trust in Jesus Totally

When Jesus appeared to St. Faustina as the Divine Mercy he told her: **“Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus I trust in You. I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and [then] throughout the world”** (47). Here is the first time Jesus gave these words to St. Faustina. He gave special promises attached to the veneration of this image: **“I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish. I also promise victory over [its] enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death. I Myself will defend it as My own glory”** (48).

If we trust in ourselves, we will fall. If we trust in others, we will fall. Only when we trust in Jesus will we be able to do the will of God in our lives and experience spiritual victory. To venerate something or someone means to show them respect or honour. Jesus is worthy of our veneration, for he is our Savior. We will be blessed if we hang a Divine Mercy in our home. We will be even more blessed if we hand out small cards with the Divine Mercy image on it and a prayer on the back or link to our MML website or other good Catholic websites. Feel free to contact us by email [info@mercifullove.com](mailto:info@mercifullove.com) if you would like to order small Divine Mercy cards to hand out.

## 7.2 Trust in Jesus Totally

St. Faustina had a deep trust in Jesus: “+Jesus, I trust in You; I trust in the ocean of your mercy. You are a Mother to me” (249). St. Faustina did not see the mercy of Jesus as a pond or lake; she saw it as a huge ocean. Sometimes we have a limiting view of God or his love and mercy. We may think we have sinned too much or are beyond God’s mercy. This is not true: no one is beyond God’s love and mercy.

Notice, we are to trust in Jesus “totally.” In other words, it is not enough for us to trust in Jesus partially, or some of the time, or when it is easy to trust. No, we are to trust him at all days, day or night, healthy or sick, rich or poor. Jesus gives himself to us totally in the Holy Eucharist. We receive his Body and Blood. Can we not, in return, give Jesus our whole self? Can we not give to him our body, soul, heart, mind, spirit, past, present and future? Yes, we can and we should. When we turn over to Jesus our whole life, include our time and all that we own, we will notice things start to change, for the better. The will of God will be revealed.

### **7.3 Trust in Jesus Totally**

When we are suffering it is tempting to focus on ourselves and our problems. St. Faustina knew suffering but she always turned to Jesus and trusted in him: “My tormented soul finds aid nowhere but in You, O Living Host. I place all my trust in Your merciful heart. I am waiting patiently for Your word, Lord” (1138). St. Faustina loved Jesus in the Sacred Host, i.e., Holy Communion. She knew the heart of Jesus was merciful. When we suffer let’s turn to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and receive him with faith, hope and love. We need patience when we are feeling down. If we wait on the Lord he will lift us up as on eagles’ wings.

Nothing this world can offer to us can replace Jesus. We may find temporary happiness in some created thing but only Jesus can bring lasting and true peace to our souls. The closer we come to Jesus the more we will not want to be distracted by worldly concerns. O Jesus, help us to trust in you totally. We surrender all we are and all we have to you. Do with us what you will. Mary (Miriam, in Hebrew) always points to Jesus and says we should do whatever he tells us to do. We honor her as our spiritual mother, but we certainly do not “worship” her. God alone is to be worshipped: not angels, not saints, not the mother of God, not Satan or the False Prophet or the Beast. Without God we are all nothing.

## 7.4 Trust in Jesus Totally

Jesus spoke to St. Faustina about his desire that all people trust in him: **“I desire trust from My creatures. Encourage souls to place great trust in My fathomless mercy. Let the weak, sinful soul have no fear to approach Me, for even if it had more sins than there are grains of sand in the world, all would be drowned in the unmeasurable depths of my mercy”** (1059). It is not just Catholics and other Christians that Jesus wants to trust in him: it is all people, all creatures. We are to trust in the “fathomless mercy” of Jesus. We don’t need to be afraid of coming to Jesus because of our sins. Our sins will be washed away in the ocean of his mercy and love.

We are to encourage souls to place great trust in the mercy of Jesus. We first need to come to the mercy of Jesus and be filled with his mercy and love. Then we can be used as instruments of merciful love by Jesus to reach others in the world, starting with those closest to us. The greater our trust in Jesus the more we will see God accomplishing wonderful things in our lives. In the “end times,” which I believe we are in, as did Pope John Paul II, there is developing an increasingly clear spiritual deception, fueled by Satan, in this world, of which he is the “Prince.” Jesus said Satan is the “Prince of this world.” We must “watch and pray” and stand ready for battle.

## 7.5 Trust in Jesus Totally

Jesus gave us all a precious gift in the image of Divine Mercy: **“I am offering people a vessel with which they are to keep coming for graces to the fountain of mercy. That vessel is this image with the signature: ‘Jesus, I trust in You’”** (327). A vessel is something that contains something else, such as wine or water. The image of Divine Mercy contains graces. The more we gaze at this holy image, the more blessings and graces we will receive.

The rays of red and blue, the Blood and Water, flow from a single source: The Sacred Heart of Jesus. If we could draw aside the white robe Jesus is wearing on the image of Divine Mercy, we would see his pierced Heart with the rays of red and blue coming from it, the Blood and Water of Jesus. The Heart of Jesus is an everlasting spring of graces that will never run out. The reason Jesus tells us we can keep coming to the image to receive graces is that these graces come from his very own Heart, which is full of merciful love for us and for all people.

## 7.6 Trust in Jesus Totally

Why should we trust in Jesus totally? Because Jesus is the **“way, truth and life.”** He told us, **“No one can come to the Father except through me.”** He is the only begotten Son of God. He is the Savior of the world. He died for our sins on the cross and rose from the dead on the third day. He sent us the Holy Spirit to be with us always. He continues to teach us through his church and his word. Jesus is trustworthy, for he never sinned and always taught the truth.

We can also trust Jesus totally because he is God. He is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is the Word made flesh. He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He only desires what is best for us. He will never lead us astray. He will never abandon us. Even when we have sinned and wandered away from him, he will always take us back. He is the Good Shepherd who seeks out his lost sheep to bring them back to the fold. All other religious figures, leaders, “enlightened ones,” masters, gurus, and so on are mere mortals and came into being through the Word, i.e., the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, aka Yeshua Ha Mashia, Jesus the Messiah, the Anointed One. In him all things came to be. Even Satan (aka “Lucifer” and all the fallen angels owe their very existence to the Word, who, as John writes, “was God.”

## 7.7 Trust in Jesus Totally

Sometimes we can be discouraged because of our sins, especially our habitual sins. Jesus encourages us in St. Faustina's Diary: “[Let] the **greatest sinners place their trust in My mercy. They have the right before others to trust in the abyss of My mercy**” (1146). We have no excuse not to come to Jesus. Even our most serious sins cannot force us not to come to Jesus for mercy. Jesus delights in forgiving us our sins, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). An abyss is never ending. The mercy of God is truly never ending, an eternal abyss of mercy.

Jesus does not want us to look at ourselves and our weaknesses and sins. No, he wants us to gaze at his image of Divine Mercy and say “**Jesus, I trust in you.**” In his ministry on earth Jesus was criticized by some religious leaders because he was friends with sinners and tax collectors and ate and drank with them. Jesus showed sinners his love and mercy and drew them to love him and eventually turn away from sin. Love conquers sin. To modify a popular phrase: “Sex is holy, sex ain't sin. Sin is forgiven, so sex is in.” The original statement is “Sex is evil, sex is sin. Sin is forgiven, so sex is in.” In reality, sex is not evil. Sex is not sin. It is a gift of God, an amazing gift. It is the misuse and perversion of sex that is evil and a sin.

## 7.8 Trust in Jesus Totally

In case we need to be more convinced of God's incredible mercy through Jesus, we can read in St. Faustina's Diary: **"My daughter, do you think you have written enough about My mercy? What you have written is but a drop compared to the ocean. I am Love and Mercy itself. There is no misery that could be a match for My mercy, neither will misery exhaust it, because as it is being granted – it increases. The soul that trusts in My mercy is most fortunate, because I Myself take care of it"** (1273). We are in excellent hands when we trust in the mercy of Jesus, because he himself will take care of us.

We see here that Jesus is Love and Mercy itself. This is a powerful truth. Scripture teaches that, "God is love." We know that Jesus is God, so therefore Jesus is Love. Scripture proclaims that God is full of mercy and that his mercy endures forever. Jesus is Mercy. His heart is a heart of Love and Mercy. His loving and merciful Heart was pierced by a soldier's lance on the cross, causing Blood and Water to gush forth.

We have a Myztery song from our Song of the Lamb album called "Trust in the Lord:" "Trust in the Lord, for he is good. Trust in the Lord like you know you should. Trust him. Trust him." It's good advice! Ya? Oui!

## 7.9 Trust in Jesus Totally

Jesus said to St. Faustina “[Urge] all souls to trust in the unfathomable abyss of My mercy, because I want to save them all. On the cross, the fountain of My mercy was opened wide by the lance for all souls – no one have I excluded!” (1182) The love of Jesus is truly universal, in encompasses everyone. We have the freedom to respond to his love or reject it. Fountains are beautiful to watch, but some fountains are for drinking from.

The fountain of mercy from Jesus is both something to be looked at and something to drink from. We can literally drink from the stream of Precious Blood even every day at mass. We can renew our baptismal vows every day with holy water. The fountain of mercy is for the whole world, all people, all sinners, great or small. Everyone is invited to come to Jesus for mercy and love and eternal life in Heaven. We just have to be willing to let go of our sins, trust in him and do what he tells us.

There are many false prophets in the world and in the church today. The world stage is set for the Antichrist, the False Prophet and the Beast to fulfill their parts to play as outlined in Scripture, specifically the Book of Revelation. I suggest you either read Revelation from start to finish or get an audio DVD and listen to it while you drive.

## 7.10 Trust in Jesus Totally

If we want to have peace in our hearts, our homes and our world, we need to trust in the mercy of Jesus: **“Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to My mercy. Oh, how much I am hurt by a soul’s distrust! Such a soul professes that I am Holy and Just, but does not believe that I am Mercy and does not trust in My Goodness”** (300). Peace on earth will not come from human efforts, religious dialogue, good works and so on. It will only come when humanity turns with trust to God’s mercy. This means that humanity must be aware of its sin and God’s remedy for sin in Jesus’ Passion, death and resurrection.

If we distrust Jesus, we offend him and hurt him. This is an amazing truth. Jesus cares so much for each one of us that we have the capacity to bring him joy or pain. God the Father of Jesus is truly the Father of Mercy and the Father of Goodness. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Mercy and the Spirit of Goodness. Jesus is the Lord of Mercy and the Lord of Goodness. Let’s trust in him.

With regards to the devil, Jesus said, **“He was a murderer from the beginning, and doesn’t stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks on his own; for he is a liar, and its father”** (John 8:44).

## 7.11 Trust in Jesus Totally

Trust and belief are identical. Jesus said, **"Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me"** (John 14:1). In other words, trust in God and trust in me, is what Jesus is saying. We should not allow our hearts to be troubled by the challenges of life. The opposite of a trusting heart is a troubled heart. It is up to us to choose what kind of heart we will have.

The Apostles' Creed begins with the words "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord." Faith in God is a gift from God. Some people have never heard the good news of God's love in Jesus his Son. It is our job on earth to spread the faith to everyone we meet in our actions and in our words. The Church is the community of belief and of trust in God. It is also the community of love and mercy.

## 7.12 Trust in Jesus Totally

Trusting in Jesus leads to hope, joy, peace and power: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13). Who doesn’t want joy and peace in their lives? The answer to having these gifts is belief, or trust, in Jesus. Hope comes from God. The Holy Spirit fills us with hope.

Jesus told St. Faustina how much he values trust: **“The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is – trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive. Souls that trust boundlessly are a great comfort to Me, because I pour all the treasures of My graces into them”** (1578). Jesus went on to say that he rejoices when souls ask him for much because he desires to give much, very much. He said he is said when souls ask for little, when they narrow their hearts. Let’s open our hearts today and ask Jesus for much, very much! Think of your greatest needs and ask Jesus for help. There is no problem beyond his capacity to help us.

## 7.13 Trust in Jesus Totally

God calls us to be trustworthy: "So let a man think of us as Christ's servants, and stewards of God's mysteries. Here, moreover, it is required of stewards, that they be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). The more we place our trust in Jesus, the more trustworthy we will become. The Coat of Arms of Canada contains the verse of Psalm 72:8 "A Mare Usque Ad Mare," "From Sea to Sea." The whole verse is "May he (the Messiah) have dominion from sea to sea." It is a prayer that Jesus will reign in Canada from coast to coast.

When we trust in Jesus with our whole being, he has dominion over our hearts, minds and souls. It is a wonderful state to be in, for Jesus is the King of Mercy and he always brings us good things in our lives when we allow him to reign over our hearts. Jesus promised special assistance for dying souls who trust in his mercy: **"Sooner would heaven and earth turn into nothingness than would My mercy not embrace a trusting soul"** (1777).

## 7.14 Trust in Jesus Totally

The Psalms are full of encouragement to trust in God: “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness. Put your trust in God” (Psalm 4:5). We are to strive to live a holy life, to avoid sin and occasions of sin. Some saints have said that we would have great spiritual victory if we only avoid the occasions of sin. All we have to do is think of people, places or things that are present immediately before we fall into sin. Then, if we say that these things are a direct link to our fall, we need to avoid these things.

USA money contains the phrase “In God We Trust.” It is a good saying. The temptation, though, is for us to trust in money, power and things rather than God. St. Faustina wrote in her Diary “O my Jesus, midst the great miseries of this life, You shine like a star, O Jesus, protecting me from shipwreck. And though my miseries be great, I have great trust in the power of Your mercy” (1479). Let’s turn to Jesus with trust when our ship is being battered by wind and waves. Jesus will not allow our ship to sink when we trust Him.

## 7.15 Trust in Jesus Totally

The Scriptures tell us that if we seek the Lord we will find him. “Those who know your name will put their trust in you, for you, O God, have not forsaken those who seek you” (Psalm 9:10). We are never to put off until tomorrow what we need to do today: today is the day to reject sin, to reject Satan, to reject evil. Today is the day to “put on” the Lord Jesus Christ. Today is the day to trust Jesus totally. Today is the day to find hope in the Lord and joy in the Holy Spirit.

St. Faustina wanted to encourage souls to trust even when she arrived in heaven: “Although I feel that I will be immediately drowned in God as in an ocean of happiness, that will not be an obstacle to my returning to earth to encourage souls and incite them to trust in God’s mercy. Indeed, this immersion in God will give me the possibility of boundless action” (1582). Like St. Therese, St. Faustina wanted to do good on earth while she was in Heaven. St. Faustina encourages you and me to trust in God’s mercy. St. Therese encourages us to trust in God’s merciful love.

## 7.16 Trust in Jesus Totally

The Lord is loving and kind: “But I trust in your loving kindness. My heart rejoices in your salvation” (Psalm 13:5). It would be hard for us to trust in someone who is full of hate and is harsh towards others. Jesus is just the opposite: he is full of mercy and love and is gentle with us. We should rejoice in the salvation that Jesus brings us. “Rejoice in the Lord always,” Scriptures tell us. One of the greatest joys we can have is singing with others the praises of the Lord with instruments playing loudly. When we do things like that our troubles seem to melt away, for we are taking our eyes off ourselves and our problems and fixing them on Jesus, where they belong.

Jesus said to St. Faustina **“The greatest sinners would achieve great sanctity, if only they would trust in My mercy”** (1784). What an amazing promise Jesus makes here! He did not say that we have to perform great deeds, fast a lot, spend hours in prayer. No, we just need to trust in his mercy. Jesus went on to say that he delights in filling human souls with his mercy.

## 7.17 Trust in Jesus Totally

”Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we trust the name of the Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7). The name of our God is Jesus. He is the Son of God. Jesus called his Father **“Abba,”** and encouraged us to call God our Father (Abba) too, in the Lord’s Prayer: **“Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.”** A modern day equivalent chariots and horses would be cars and motorcycles. There is nothing wrong with having a good car or motorcycle, but if we spend more time working on them, cleaning them and so on, instead of our relationship with God then we have our priorities wrong.

Jesus shared with St. Faustina his burning desire for souls: **“After Holy Communion today, Jesus said, My daughter give Me souls. Know that it is your mission to win souls for Me by prayer and sacrifice, and by encouraging them to trust in My mercy”** (1690). By our trust in Jesus we can bring souls to him as well, by our prayer and sacrifice and encouraging them to trust in his mercy.

## 7.18 Trust in Jesus Totally

When we put our trust in Jesus, we will be delivered from all our trials. We still have to go through times that are tough, and we have to carry our cross and follow Jesus, but in the end we will always find victory in the Lord: "Our fathers trusted in you. They trusted, and you delivered them" (Psalm 22:4). God will never let down those who trust in him. His ways are not our ways. We may not understand something in our lives but God understands all and can bring good out of even the most darkest situation.

The Lord wants us to totally trust him and promises that, if we do so, he will work in a mighty way in our lives: **"Encourage the souls with whom you come in contact to trust in My infinite mercy. Oh, how I love those souls who have complete confidence in Me - I will do everything for them"** (294). Everything for them. Jesus makes an amazing promise here. He did not say he would do "many things" for them, but "everything. That means all we need, in body, mind and spirit, Jesus will take care of if we only trust in him completely.

## 7.19 Trust in Jesus Totally

Once we have trusted totally in the Lord, we enter into a kind of covenant or agreement with him: We offer him our complete trust, and he takes care of everything in our lives. Scripture proclaims, "My God, I have trusted in you. Don't let me be shamed. Don't let my enemies triumph over me" (Psalm 25:2). God will never let us down when we trust in him. If we examine our lives we should be able to see clearly that it is only at times when we trusted ourselves, not God, that things went wrong and we had a fall. This is why Jesus said that if we want to be his follower we must "**deny**" ourselves.

Praying the chaplet of mercy can help others trust in the Lord, not to mention ourselves: "Today, the Lord came to me and said, **My daughter, help Me to save souls. You will go to a dying sinner, and you will continue to recite the chaplet, and in this way you will obtain for him trust in My mercy, for he is already in despair**" (1797). This is called intercessory prayer. We too can save souls by prayer, especially with the chaplet of mercy for the dying.

## **7.20 Trust in Jesus Totally**

"But I trust in you, Lord. I said, "You are my God" (Psalm 31:14). Today, on a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal, make a list of five areas in your life that you will trust in Jesus totally for. Examples include health, finances, work, relationships, etc. Pray, "Today, and always, I will trust Jesus totally in these areas." We can trust the past with Jesus: we can let go of hanging on to regrets about things we did or things we said that were wrong. When God forgives us he wipes the slate clean. We need to let go of the past, for we cannot change it.

We can trust Jesus with our present situation. No matter who we are or what challenges we face, Jesus knows the solution to our problems and will guide us through even the darkness of nights. We can trust Jesus with our future, for he is the Lord of Providence and knows all of our future needs and will never abandon us. We need to seek the Lord each day, trust him each day, and follow him each day.

## 7.21 Trust in Jesus Totally

"For our heart rejoices in him, because we have trusted in his holy name" (Psalm 33:21). The Blessed Virgin Mary rejoiced in the name of the Lord because she trusted in him for everything. She was full of the joy of the Holy Spirit because he always did the will of God. We too can have the joy of the Holy Spirit when we live according to God's will, trusting in the name of the Lord Jesus. Our Lady trusted that she would conceive a Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. Nothing like this had ever happened in history, but the Blessed Virgin Mary trusted in the Lord and it took place as foretold.

Jesus made another great promise to St. Faustina: "Today the Lord said to me, **My daughter, write down these words: All those souls who will glorify My mercy and spread its worship, encouraging others to trust in My mercy, will not experience terror at the hour of death. My mercy will shield them in that final battle...**" (1540). As Missionaries of Merciful Love, we pledge to spread the merciful love of Jesus throughout our whole life. It is a very important task.

## 7.22 Trust in Jesus Totally

"Trust in the Lord, and do good. Dwell in the land, and enjoy safe pasture. Also delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:3-4). When we trust in the Lord we are called to "do good." Our daily words and actions should show that we trust in Jesus. Jesus said that he is the vine and we are the branches. We are to bear good fruit for the kingdom of God.

Jesus taught St. Faustina how he comes to the aid of dying souls, to help them trust in his mercy: **"Write this for the benefit of distressed souls; when a soul sees and realizes the gravity of its sins, when the whole abyss of the misery into which it immersed itself is displayed before its eyes, let it not despair, but with trust let it throw itself into the arms of My mercy, as a child into the arms of its beloved mother"** (1541). There is no greater peace on earth than that which comes right after one has received absolution for all one's sins in confession. Jesus is the Prince of Peace and wants us to be at peace.

## 7.23 Trust in Jesus Totally

“Commit your way to the Lord. Trust also in him, and he will do this: he will make your righteousness go out as the light, and your justice as the noon day sun” (Psalm 37:5–6). Every aspect of our lives, our relationships, our finances, our health, our material possessions and so on, should be handed over to Jesus. I believe that when we do this we will find a growing simplicity in our lives and we will come to know that, “less is more.” When we have less clutter in our homes we can more easily focus on what is most important: Mass, daily prayer, fellowship and so on.

Jesus said that we are the light of the world. He also said that we should let our light shine before others, so that they would see our good works and give praise to our Heavenly Father. All this is possible, and more, when we trust in Jesus totally for all our needs. We can give Jesus our past, for his mercy upon it. Our present, and our future. We can give Jesus our good works, past, present and future. We can trust him with our souls, our bodies, our minds and our hearts.

## **7.24 Trust in Jesus Totally**

“He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God. Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord” (Psalm 40:3). Music is a wonderful way to bear witness to the joy of trusting in Jesus. The Lord gives us a “new song” to sing; a song of praise to God. Christian songs can lead others to come to know, love and serve Jesus and trust in him as well. It is amazing to think that our words and actions can help others to come to trust in the Lord. God uses his children to reach out to those in the world who do not yet know him or his love.

What talents has God given you that you could offer in his service? Music? Songwriting? Painting? Sculpting? Poetry? Novels? The list goes on. Whatever your talents are, know that they can be used by the Lord to reach people in the world and help them to place their trust in Jesus. Offer your talents to Jesus. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you with your talents. Perhaps you have talents you don't yet know about. Step out in trust and faith and try something new for the Lord.

## 7.25 Trust in Jesus Totally

“But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in God’s house. I trust in God’s loving kindness forever and ever” (Psalm 52:8). How long are we to trust God? Forever. We are to trust in his “loving kindness” forever and ever. What a wonderful image of what Heaven is like: to experience the kindness and love of God as well as the company of all the saints and angels. This is our destiny. It is the destiny of all who trust in Jesus. Jesus said there are many mansions in Heaven and that God has prepared a place for us. St. Faustina was shown her place in Heaven, very close to the throne of God, although it was very misty when she saw it.

Confession is a place where we express our deep trust in the mercy of Jesus, who works through the priest: **“Every time you go to confession, immerse yourself entirely in My mercy, with great trust, so that I may pour the bounty of My grace upon your soul . . . Tell souls that from this fount of mercy souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great, there is no limit to My generosity”** (1602).

## 7.26 Trust in Jesus Totally

“In God, I praise his word. In God, I put my trust. I will not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? “ (Psalm 56:4). God’s word builds up our faith and trust in Jesus. We should have our own bible that we read every day, even just a short passage. God’s word is Divinely inspired and builds up our faith and trust in God. There is no reason for us to be afraid of anyone or anything. God will provide for all of our needs, both spiritual and physical. We still have to do our part: pray, work, study and so on, be we do all things while trusting totally in Jesus.

In the space below, write the words “Jesus, I trust in You,” and sign it with your name. This is your own written testimony of trust in Jesus.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

## **7.27 Trust in Jesus Totally**

“I have put my trust in God. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? “ (Psalm 56:11). Jesus said that fear is useless; what is needed is trust. Fear and trust don’t go together. When we are afraid we show that we don’t trust the Lord. When we trust in Jesus we show that we are not afraid. We don’t look to ourselves or our circumstances; we look to Jesus. He can calm the raging seas in our life. He can multiply food to feed us. He can heal us of our illnesses.

St. Faustina came to see that love casts out fear: “I have placed my trust in God and fear nothing. I have given myself over to His holy will; let Him do with me as He wishes, and I will still love Him” (589). It is only when we have placed all our trust in God that we will experience freedom from fear. Imperfect love means our trust will be imperfect and we will struggle with a certain degree of fear. God is patient and will continue to lead us to trust more completely and arrive at pure love and freedom from fear.

## 7.28 Trust in Jesus Totally

“Trust in him at all times, you people. Pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us” (Psalm 62:8). When are we to trust God? Always. This means difficult times as much as happy times. It means during times of illness and times of good health. It means times when we are popular with others and times when other avoid us. We are to “pour out” our hearts before the Lord. This is really another way of saying prayer from the heart.

God is indeed our refuge. Whatever trials we have to face in this life, God is always there, always present, always a strong refuge for us. St. Faustina was encouraged by Jesus to fight: **“Do not fear, My little child, you are not alone. Fight bravely, because My arm is supporting you; fight for the salvation of souls, exhorting them to trust in My mercy, as that is your task in this life and in the life to come. After these words, I received a deeper understanding of divine mercy. Only that soul who wants it will be damned, for God condemns no one”** (1452).

## **7.29 Trust in Jesus Totally**

St. Faustina came to experience the wonderful truth of how good and mysterious God is: “Have confidence in God, for He is good and inconceivable. His mercy surpasses our understanding” (880). Jesus, who is God, is good. He is also “inconceivable,” i.e., mysterious, beyond our ability to completely understand him and his ways. God’s ways are not our ways. His ways are much higher, much purer, much more loving and merciful than our ways.

On a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal, list five ways that God has been good to you. Examples of God’s goodness include: our life, our family, our baptism, our faith, our First Holy Communion, our Confirmation, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Communion of Saints, our friends, food to eat, clothing to wear, a house to live in, a school to learn in, a place to work, a car to drive in and many other things.

## 7.30 Trust in Jesus Totally

St. Faustina wrote a number of spiritual poems about the mercy of God:

“Come, indelible beauty of all the earth,  
And, with great humility, adore your Creator,  
For all things are locked in His mercy,  
With one mighty voice all things cry out; how great  
is the mercy of God.

But, above all these beauties,  
A more pleasing praise to God  
Is a soul innocent and filled with childlike trust,  
Which, through grace, is closely bound to  
Him” (1750)

We are called to have childlike trust in Jesus. Jesus told us that we must become like little children if we wish to enter the kingdom of God. We are also to be “innocent.” A pure and trusting soul is more pleasing to God than all the majesty of nature. God gives us his grace, his life, in our souls to sanctify us and make us pure and holy.

## **7.31 Trust in Jesus Totally**

The Blessed Virgin Mary replied to the Archangel Gabriel “Be it done unto me according to your word.” She said yes to being the Mother of the Messiah, Jesus, the only Son of God. Mary showed great trust in God. She knew that God is love and that God had promised a Messiah, a Savior, to save his people Israel and all nations from sin. Each one of us is called to give our own “yes” to the Lord. “Yes” to whatever he wills in our life. Have you surrendered your life to the Lord? Have you told God you will do whatever he wants to do with your life?

Don't be afraid of surrendering your life to God, for he only wants what is best for you. Each one of us has a Divine calling: something God wants us to do in life. Major life callings include Marriage, Priesthood, Religious Life and so on. Some are meant to serve the Lord as single Christians. We are all called to be holy. Really, we are all called to be saints. We have been made holy by God's word, by Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist. Let's always trust in Jesus.

## 8.1 Be Humble

Jesus said **“Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.”** Jesus is our greatest example and model of humility. He was born in humility in a manger, lived a humble life and died a humble death on a cross. Jesus wants us to learn from him. What does he want us to learn? Meekness and humility. This is a lifelong lesson we have to learn. When we go through humiliations we grow in humility. We just need to look at a crucifix if we want to see an example of the humility of Jesus. We need to remember that Jesus is the Son of God, yet he died for us on a wooden cross.

The Virgin Mary appeared to St. Faustina one day to teach her about humility and other virtues: “I desire that each one distinguish herself by the following virtues: humility and meekness; chastity and love of God and neighbor; compassion and mercy” (1244). It is telling that humility was the first virtue that the Virgin Mary spoke to St. Faustina about. Humility is the foundation of the spiritual life. O Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like your own.

## 8.2 Be Humble

Fr. Sopocko, the spiritual director of St. Faustina, taught her that, “Without humility, we cannot be pleasing to God” (270). We see how important humility is here. We could be great speakers, have gifts of healing and prophecy, even work miracles, but without humility we will not be pleasing to God. We can ask the Lord to give us deeper humility.

Humility is truth: the truth of who we are and the truth of who God is. We see clearly our weaknesses, our sins, our faults, our imperfections, yet we do not despair, for we trust in the love and mercy of God. To be humble is to be fully grounded in our humanity. It is a solid knowledge of ourselves. We know that all the good we do is because of God’s grace. When we are praised for this or that we immediately give praise to God, where it is due, even if only in our heart. The greater our humility, the greater our union with Jesus and our holiness.

## 8.3 Be Humble

St. Faustina loved humility and practiced it to a very high degree: “O humility, lovely flower, I see how few souls possess you. Is it because you are so beautiful and at the same time so difficult to attain? O yes, it is both the one and the other. Even God takes great pleasure in her. The floodgates of heaven are open to a humble soul, and a sea of graces flow down upon her. O how beautiful is a humble soul! . . . O humility, strike deep roots in my whole being. O Virgin most pure, but also most humble, help me to attain deep humility. Now I understand why there are so few saints; it is because so few souls are deeply humble” (1306).

The opposite of humility is pride. It is said that pride comes before a fall. It is true. God casts down the proud and lifts up the humble. When we take delight in the gifts God has given us but fail to acknowledge God as the source of our gifts, we become proud. The Lord will not use a proud soul to do his work on earth. God chooses the humble to do great things through. Let’s humble ourselves in the presence of God.

## 8.4 Be Humble

“Today, as God’s Majesty swept over me, my soul understood that the Lord, so very great though He is, delights in humble souls. The more a soul humbles itself, the greater the kindness with which the Lord approaches it. Uniting himself closely with it, He raises it to His very throne” (1092). This is one reason why the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) is so good for us: it helps us to realize how small we are and how much we need God for everything, including our very breath and every heartbeat.

Jesus chose humble fishermen to be his Apostles. They were exalted before all and forever will be honored as those close companions of Jesus. Some saints were big sinners before their conversion, like St. Augustine. Even St. Francis lived a wild life before his conversion. St. Paul, formerly known as Saul, persecuted the church before his conversion. Jesus chose all these men because he knew they would be humble servants in his name. He chose Faustina because she also was very humble.

## 8.5 Be Humble

St. Faustina wanted to be like a little child: “I know that He will guard me, even jealously, but only as long as I remain little, because it is with such that the great Lord likes to commune. As to proud souls, he watches them from afar and opposes them” (1440). If we are humble Jesus will protect our souls from all evil. If we become proud we will no longer be under his special protection, for we make ourselves strong in our own eyes. In this case, God wants us to fall so that we may become humble, and rely on him.

If we are proud, God will oppose us. This is not a good spiritual state to be in. We can be proud of many things: our looks, our material possessions, our talents, our financial situation, our position in life and so on. Every good thing comes from God and we should always remember that and give God thanks and praise for all his blessings to us. No one likes to hear a person boasting about how great they are or how beautiful or handsome they are. God is the same. We should boast of our weaknesses and of God’s mercy.

## 8.6 Be Humble

Jesus will go to great lengths to help us to become humble, and when we are humble he comes to us in a wonderful way, as St. Faustina discovered: “O Jesus, my heart stops beating when I think of all You are doing for me! I am amazed at You, Lord, that You would stoop so low to my wretched soul! What inconceivable means You take to convince me!” (460). If we stop and reflect for a few moments, we too will be amazed at how many wonderful ways Jesus has come to our help, has blessed us, forgiven our sins, filled us with his love, peace, joy and hope.

Jesus, even though he is seated at the right hand of the Father in majesty in heaven, stooped down to be with St. Faustina, to commune with her soul. If we are silent and wait for the Lord, he will speak to us to. It may be only one word, like “trust,” or it may be something like “I love you. Forgive him” or a personal message. Jesus said that his sheep hear his voice and they know him and they follow him. We are the sheep of the Lord and we can hear his voice in our hearts if we only listen.

## **8.7 Be Humble**

Being humble helps us to have victory in spiritual combat: “Satan defeats only the proud and the cowardly, because the humble are strong. Nothing will confuse or frighten a humble soul” (450). Pride brings with it weakness. Humility brings strength. If we “resist the devil,” he will take flight. The humble have great trust in God and in his power to defeat Satan. The proud think they can vanquish evil through their own efforts and thus, they fall.

Humility helps us to avoid confusion. All things are clear to a humble soul. Humble souls are filled with courage, a courage that is based on trust in the Lord and his power to overcome all evil, all sin, all darkness. For our own spiritual good it is important that we become humble and that we stay humble, for otherwise we will fall into the snares of the enemy. The Devil likes to attack souls who are in a position of reaching others with the gospel. St. Faustina was often attacked by demons in various ways but they never had a victory over her because she always was humble.

## 8.8 Be Humble

Being little and humble brings with it great benefits, both in this life and for all eternity: St. Faustina wrote “Oh, with what inconceivable favors God gifts a soul that loves him sincerely! Oh, how happy is the soul who already here on earth enjoys His special favors! And of such are the little and humble souls” (778). So, if we are little and humble God will give us wonderful “favors” now and for eternity. What are these favors? Some could be a Divine peace, joy and love. Others could be a deeper intimacy with God and a deeper and infused knowledge of God.

St. Faustina could only write these words because she experienced what they were teaching. She is that little and humble soul who received special favors from God. She was truly happy, and so we will be too if we are little and humble. The opposite is to be “big and proud.” Today we often think, “The bigger the better,” but this is not always so. Sometimes, as in the spiritual life, the smaller we become, the better.” St. Therese of the Child Jesus taught us to be like little children.

## 8.9 Be Humble

Jesus reminded St. Faustina that he is meek and humble **“I desire that you penetrate into My spirit more deeply and understand that I am meek and humble of heart”** (526). Sometimes people can put on a show of meekness and humility. In other words, they have a hidden desire that others will see them as meek and humble, so that they will be seen as holy. This is not the case with Jesus: His spirit is meek and humble of heart. Jesus is not putting on a show or an act; He is truly meek and humble.

We too are called to be, in our spirit, meek and humble of heart. This is the work of a lifetime but the more docile we are to the Holy Spirit, devoted to the Virgin Mary, listening to Jesus, we can advance more quickly to true meekness and humility, like St. Faustina and St. Therese. The Kingdom of Heaven is only a heartbeat away, and we do not know when our last day will be. We should always be focused on eternity, on God, on loving God, on mercy, on humility, on souls. On LOVE.

## 8.10 Be Humble

God is Almighty and yet he stoops down to the lowly: St. Faustina writes “Lord, although You often make known to me the thunders of Your anger, Your anger vanishes before lowly souls. Although You are great, Lord, You allow Yourself to be overcome by a lowly and deeply humble soul. O humility, the most precious of virtues, how few souls possess you! I see only a semblance of this virtue everywhere, but not the virtue itself. Lord, reduce me to nothingness in my own eyes that I may find grace in Yours” (1436).

Apart from God we are nothing, we have nothing and we can do nothing. This is a sobering and true statement. It should help us to be more grounded in humility. God created all things out of nothing. If God ceased to hold us in existence we would vanish forever. We are weak but God is strong. We are blind but God can see: God sees all. God knows all. God’s merciful love is offered to all. The more we see our nothingness, the more humble we will become. We should say “Apart from God I am nothing.”

## **8.11 Be Humble**

St. Therese was very humble and loved humility: “The Creator of the universe awaits the prayer of one poor little person to save a multitude of others, redeemed like her at the price of His Blood.” Perhaps she was thinking of herself when she wrote about “one poor little person.” The Scriptures teach us that the prayer of a holy person is powerful indeed. The prayer of a humble saint on earth is very powerful and can help others come to know the love of Jesus.

It is amazing to think that God can use the prayer of one humble person to save “a multitude” of others, but it is true. The poor in spirit are rich in God’s graces and can help others in a mighty way. St. Therese was not concerned with her own soul only; no, she was concerned about many souls, in fact, the whole world. The more humble we are, the more we will be concerned about the salvation of others. The saints continue to pray for us from their place in heaven. We can always turn to St. Therese and St. Faustina and other saints for their help with something we need.

## 8.12 Be Humble

“Without leaving the shelter of your arms or even turning my head, I will distribute your treasures to the souls who come to me asking for food.” These words of St. Therese show her strong desire to help other souls. A humble soul never wants to leave the “arms” of Jesus, i.e., his presence. St. Faustina used to do gardening with her rosary in her left hand and her gardening tool in her right hand! She was probably saying the Chaplet of Mercy and perhaps even the Rosary. A humble soul does not want to turn his or her head away from looking at Jesus. A humble soul wants to distribute the treasures of God to other souls who come asking for food.

Jesus called the will of his Father his “food.” Our food should be to do the will of God. Only when we humble ourselves will we have the spiritual clarity to know and do God’s will. Otherwise our own agenda creeps in, pride creeps in, and we don’t properly know what God is calling us to do. The simpler the better, with discerning God’s will.

## **8.13 Be Humble**

St. Therese had a great confidence in Jesus: "I am certain that even if I had on my conscience every imaginable crime, I should lose nothing of my confidence; rather I would hurry, with a heart broken with sorrow, to throw myself into the Arms of my Jesus." Only a humble soul could have this attitude. She was convinced of the amazing love and mercy of Jesus and knew that even the greatest sins could not prevent her from coming back to his arms.

Going to Confession is a humbling experience. It takes humility to kneel before another human being, a priest, and accuse ourselves of our sins in thought, word, action and omission. It takes humility and it leads to humility, for the Lord is working through the priest and he absolves us of all our sins and lifts us up to walk in his love, mercy and purity again. A daily examination of conscience will lead to a greater humility, for daily we see areas where we fail to love God and others in the way we should.

## **8.14 Be Humble**

A humble soul wants to please Jesus and make sacrifices for him, as St. Therese says “Let us give pleasure to Jesus; let us save souls for Him by our sacrifices.” Often we just think about how to please ourselves. Sometimes we think of pleasing our spouse or children, but how often do we think of pleasing Jesus? St. Faustina used to correct other nuns or her wards when they were doing something wrong with words like “This is not pleasing to Jesus.” How do we please Jesus? One way is saving souls.

St. Therese said we can save souls for Jesus by our sacrifices. We can offer our daily work as a sacrifice. We can say certain prayers. We can fast from food, television, internet and so on. There are so many ways that we can make sacrifices for Jesus. All these sacrifices add up and can lead to the salvation of a soul or even many souls. Even our contrite and sorrowful heart is a sacrifice to the Lord.

## 8.15 Be Humble

Humility causes us to want to do loving things for others, as St. Therese says “I understand now that charity consists in bearing with the faults of others, in not being surprised at their weakness, in being edified by the smallest acts of virtue we see them practice.” We have our own faults, so we should be patient with the faults of others. We are not surprised by our own weakness, so why should we be surprised at the weakness of others.

We like it when others notice our good deeds, so we should go out of our way to be edified by the acts of virtue that others do. Humility does not mean we do not strive to do great things for the Lord or become saints. St. Therese wanted to love Jesus “like no one else” had loved him before. St. Faustina said the same thing. We could ask the Lord that we love the Lord as much as St. Therese and St. Faustina. Jesus said that whoever has been forgiven much will love much. The greatest sinners can become the greatest saints. All things are possible with God.

## **8.16 Be Humble**

“I am content to sacrifice during my life all joyful thought of the home which awaits me.” St. Therese here says something kind of different: she is willing to let go of the pleasure of thinking about Heaven. Most likely she did this for the salvation of souls. Sacrifice is not made for its own sake, it is always for a good purpose. We sometimes think about retirement, vacationing in Florida, and other such things, but how often do we think of our home in Heaven?

The saints thought about Heaven a great deal, yet they did not shirk their duties here on earth. Their hearts were in Heaven but their feet were firmly on the ground. If you want a high place in heaven, seek a low place on earth! The song Do Lord says “I’ve got a place in glory land that outshine the sun!” What a wonderful thing to think about! Heaven is our destiny, our eternal home, where there will be no more tears, no more suffering and no more death. Jesus will be the light of Heaven and love, peace, truth and humility will reign.

## 8.17 Be Humble

If we want Jesus to be always present in our lives we must have humility: St. Faustina writes “And at that very moment I saw myself in some kind of a palace; and Jesus gave me His hand, sat me at His side, and said with kindness, **My bride, you always please Me by your humility. The greatest misery does not stop Me from uniting Myself to a soul, but where there is pride, I am not there**” (1563).

We can “always” please Jesus by our humility. A humble person does not place himself in a situation where he could fall into sin. A proud person often goes into occasions of sins and has many falls because he relies on himself. The church is the bride of Christ. He is our bridegroom. Heaven is an eternal wedding banquet and only the humble will be there. The greater a person’s humility was on earth, the more exalted he or she will be in the glory of heaven. As Jesus said, “The first shall be last and the last shall be first.”

## **8.18 Be Humble**

As Missionaries of Merciful Love, we are called to spread Divine Mercy and Love throughout the world. St. Faustina writes “+That beautiful soul who in spreading this work of Divine Mercy throughout the world is, by his deep humility, very pleasing to God” (1083). Who was St. Faustina talking about? Perhaps her spiritual director. Perhaps no one in particular. Her words apply to all who fit the description.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have and be called a “beautiful soul” by St. Faustina? Wouldn't it be wonderful to have deep humility and be very pleasing to God? All these things are possible by the grace of God. You can become a saint, even a great saint, for all things are possible with God. The key is, you have to desire to be a saint and put your desires into practice every day. We must set our spiritual goals high and let nothing turn us away from doing the will of God and spreading Divine Mercy and his merciful love to all.

## **8.19 Be Humble**

Sometimes we think we are not doing very well spiritually when God is quite pleased with us. St. Faustina wrote about this: “Today, Jesus is bidding me to comfort and reassure a certain soul who has opened herself to me and told me about her difficulties. This soul is pleasing to the Lord, but she is not aware of it. God is keeping her in deep humility. I have carried out the Lord’s directives” (1063).

We all need comfort and reassurance at times. Sometimes the Lord wants to use us to comfort others and sometimes we are the ones who need comforting. It is like the song “Lean On Me.” God kept that person in deep humility because she did not realize she was pleasing to God. St. Faustina did her part that God called her to do. Each day the Lord has directives for us. Do we listen to these directives? Do we carry them out? Perhaps there is a certain person the Lord wants us to call on the phone or visit in person. Be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit and he will show you what to do each day.

## 8.20 Be Humble

In this world we tend to think that true greatness lies in power, riches and other such things. Jesus appeared to St. Faustina and taught her what true greatness really is: “A moment later, I again saw the child who had awakened me. It was of wondrous beauty and repeated these words to me, **True greatness of the soul is in loving God and in humility**” (427). St. Faustina went on to ask this child how he could know such things, because he was so young and not a theologian. The child replied “**I know; I know all things. And with that, He disappeared**” (427).

Loving God includes avoiding things that offend him, i.e., sin. If we truly love God we will want to be pure in thought, word and action. We don't often hear people speaking of “greatness of soul.” We hear about great world leaders, great singers, great artists, but very little do we hear about “great souls.” Yet, that is what all the saints are: great souls. They were great because they loved God and were humble. That is where true greatness lies, according to the Child Jesus.

## 8.21 Be Humble

If we want to grow in humility, going through humiliations is one way the Lord leads us to grow in this virtue. St. Faustina saw the truth of this: “I will thank the Lord Jesus for every humiliation and will pray specially for the person who has given me the chance to be humiliated. I will immolate myself for the benefit of souls” (243). Sometimes some of the sisters would make fun of St. Faustina by calling her a nickname of a character in a play. At other times they would call her “Princess.” She replied that she was a princess because the Royal Blood of Jesus was flowing through her veins.

St. Faustina did everything “for the benefit of souls.” This is often such a foreign idea to most Christians. We think of doing things that benefit our bank accounts, our reputations, our career, our education and other such things. St. Faustina thought mainly about souls, and how her humiliations could help them. If we pray to grow in humility, we should be prepared that the Lord may send us humiliations when and where we least expect it.

## 8.22 Be Humble

One area we can try to be more humble in is our thoughts. No one but God knows our thoughts. This is our “secret” little world. Our thoughts can either be humble or proud. Perhaps we are too ambitious for fame, fortune or material things. It is good to strive for excellence and for holiness, but if we are simply trying to be number one in life without thinking of God or the salvation of souls, then we are off track.

How do we know our thoughts? Well, for one, we just have to reflect on what comes into our mind throughout the day. What do we find ourselves thinking about? Our words are also a good indicator of our thoughts, for we have to think of words before we say them. This is where it is good for us to read holy books like the Bible, the Diary of St. Faustina, The autobiography of St. Therese and other excellent books. All these books will shape our thoughts to be holy and humble. Its far better to try to be like St. Faustina than the latest pop star.

## 8.23 Be Humble

Another area where we can grow in humility is our words. Are our words humble? Are our words proud? If we find ourselves saying “I” too much then perhaps we are on the wrong track with our words. Scripture says we should be quick to listen and slow to speak. Too often we speak too soon and too much and listen to little. We need to listen to the Lord and to the person we are with. If we dominate conversations all the time then that is not a very humble thing to do. Once we speak our words, we cannot take them back. They are sealed for all eternity.

We must always speak the truth if we are going to be humble, for humility is simply the truth. Sometimes speaking the truth costs us a great deal. Nonetheless, we need to speak truthfully and humbly. Our words will determine our actions, so if we want our actions to be humble, then our thoughts and words must be humble first. Many of the saints did not speak a great deal, unless it was God’s will that they did speak a lot.

## **8.24 Be Humble**

Finally, our actions form another sphere in our life where we can show humility. First, our actions must be godly, that is, they must be in harmony with what the Bible teaches and what Jesus teaches. We know that actions speak louder than words, so, humility is most shown by our actions, more than our words and our thoughts. We can say one thing but do another. There is no mistaking, though, our actions. It is far better to be acting in a Christian way than to be talking about Christ but contradicting our words with our actions.

Words talk; Actions walk. Actions are lived out words. Words, without actions to support them, are not enough. Every day we make thousands of “little” actions and perhaps one or two very important actions. They all add up to form a representation of who we are. What we put into our minds forms our thoughts, our word and even our actions. This is why mindlessly sitting in front of a TV set is not a good idea. There are too many corrupt programs. Garbage in, garbage out.

## **8.25 Be Humble**

Jesus practiced what he preached, including humility, as St. Faustina points out “Jesus gave me to know the depth of His meekness and humility and to understand that He clearly demanded the same of me” (758). Think of Jesus washing his disciples’ feet. Think of him blessing the little children who came to him. Think of Jesus welcoming sinners and eating and drinking with them. Think of Jesus scourged at the pillar, crowned with thorns, carrying his heavy cross, nailed to the cross and dying on the cross.

If we want to know what humility looks like we just need to look at the life and death of Jesus. The saints imitated Jesus’ humility. No one can surpass the humility of Jesus. Our call to humility is not for just one day of the month, or even one day a week. No, we are called to be humble day in and day out, every day of the week, every month, every year. When we fall and become proud, we can look upon that as an opportunity to grow in humility and get right back up.

## 8.26 Be Humble

Happiness and humility go together. The more humble we become, the more happier we will become. St. Faustina explains “If there is a truly happy soul upon earth, it can only be a truly humble soul. At first, one’s self-love suffers greatly on this account, but after a soul has struggled courageously, God grants it much light by which it sees how wretched and full of deception everything is. God alone is in its heart. A humble soul does not trust itself, but places all its confidence in God. God defends the humble soul and lets Himself into its secrets, and the soul abides in unsurpassable happiness which no one can comprehend” (593).

It is hard not to trust in ourselves, but if we are honest with ourselves we will see clearly that we regularly lead ourselves astray into sin. It takes humility to distrust ourselves and trust in God. We have to wage, in a way, a war against our very selves. This struggle is really life long, but the more humble become the easier it should be to renounce ourselves and our own will and.

## 8.27 Be Humble

Having a spiritual director is a way of keeping humble, because we submit ourselves, in a way, into his guidance. St. Faustina knew the blessing that a good spiritual director can bring. He told her “It is with just such miserable souls that the Lord Jesus communes in this intimate way. And the more you humble yourself, the more the Lord Jesus will unite Himself with you” (174). So, if we want a greater union of love with Jesus, we need to humble ourselves more. Water always seeks the lowest place to fill. Humility puts us in a low place where the water of the Holy Spirit can flow.

Scripture teaches that we should put away ambitious thoughts and associate with those who are lowly. The poor and lowly can teach us a great deal about humility. They are often childlike. Mother Teresa said we have greater poverty here than in India, because we have a spiritual poverty here: people don't know God or his love. The physically poor in some Third World countries are often spiritually rich and have great faith, hope and love for God, even in their poverty.

## **8.28 Be Humble**

Jesus also shows us his humility by dwelling in the Blessed Sacrament in all the tabernacles of the world and giving himself to us in Holy Communion. St. Therese said “You returned to Your realm of light, and still remain hidden here to nourish us, in our vale of tears, with Holy Communion.” Every times we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus at Mass he humbles himself in the form of bread and wine to come into our bodies and souls and strengthen us with his very own life. He becomes our spiritual food and drink. That is great humility.

We can show our humility when we give of ourselves to others: helping a neighbour, a friend, a relative, a stranger. Sometimes just listening to someone who is hurting is a very humble thing to do that is a real blessing for the person who can talk to you. We don't always have to “say” things to people to help them or comfort them; our presence says volumes. It is helpful also if we pray and ask the Lord to make us humble. We can say, “Lord, please make me humble.”

## **8.29 Be Humble**

This life is indeed a valley of tears. Our difficulties can help us to become more humble. We should also remember that Heaven is the ultimate destination to which we are called, and the humiliations and sufferings we endure will pass away and there will be only love, peace and joy. St. Therese said "The good God has told us that on the last day He "will wipe away all tears from our eyes," (Rev 21:4), and without doubt, the more tears to be dried, the greater will be the consolation." To put it another way, the more humiliations we endure and the more humble we become, the more happier we will be in Heaven.

Time goes so swiftly. When I think of my graduation from high school in 1980 I realize that more than thirty years have gone by. We only have one life on earth to live and to do God's will and to become humble. Let's make the best of our life on earth by starting with a firm foundation of humility: don't trust ourselves, but trust totally in God and in Jesus his Son. Pray. Use our bodies and minds the way they were meant to be used.

## 8.30 Be Humble

Our imperfections and weaknesses can be a source of growing in humility. Perhaps you have an impediment of some kind, a disability, a mental illness. All of these things can cause us to become more humble people. To have to rely on doctors to help us or counsellors and other experts can also be a source of growing in humility. St. Paul had some kind of physical impairment which he said kept him from becoming proud.

St. Faustina developed tuberculosis and eventually died at it when she was only thirty-three years old. St. Therese also had tuberculosis and died when she was only twenty-four years old. Even in their short lives they both became really humble and very holy. They achieved sanctity in their youth. Both of them were blessed with humble and holy families. Neither of them, by all accounts, led a very wild and sinful life before entering the convent. We can accept our physical and mental ailments as part of our cross to carry. One day all these imperfections will cease to be.

## **8.31 Be Humble**

St. Faustina had various ideas to help her grow in humility: “Always and in all circumstances, yield the first place to others; especially during recreation listen quietly, without interrupting, even if someone tells me the same thing ten times. I will never ask questions about something that interests me very much” (789). These are practical actions that St. Faustina took to grow in humility. We often want the first place. We want to be heard. We don’t want to be interrupted. We ask questions about things that interest us. It is hard to go against these natural tendencies we have, but, with God’s grace it is possible.

Sometimes we think we are progressing well in humility and then, out of the blue, something happens: someone cuts us off in traffic, someone is rude to us, we are falsely judged, and so on. Then we react impulsively and become impatient, defensive and so on. We can humble ourselves at these times and use our mistakes as stepping stones to grow in humility.

## 9.1 Desire and Strive for Holiness

**“Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy,”** Scripture says. Why should we desire holiness? Because God wants us to be holy. He wants us to be like him. We cannot achieve anything unless we first desire it. A man cannot marry a woman unless he first desires to meet her, to get to know her, to fall in love with her. We cannot achieve holiness unless we first desire holiness. Only then will we begin to learn what it takes to be holy, what to do, what to avoid, and so on. We can never be as holy as God is but we should not let that deter us from becoming as holy as we can be.

The church teaches, in the Catechism, that there is “no limit” to Christian perfection. In other words, we can’t wake up one day and say, “Okay, that’s it! I’ve achieved perfection and I’m as holy as I will ever hope to be.” No, we can always grow in holiness. The saints give us inspiration because they shared the same struggles we do in dealing with the effects of Original Sin. All the saints started with the desire for God, for union with God, for holiness and for sanctity.

## **9.2 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

In archery, unless you aim for a bullseye, you won't hit it. In the spiritual life, unless we aim for holiness and sanctity, we won't hit it. We will only arrive at the goals we first set and then aim for. If we get sidetracked onto something else, we won't hit our target of holiness. The world has many lures to draw us away from holiness. Our own fallen nature has plenty of ways to leading us down the wrong path. The Devil has many snares for us to take us away from the path to holiness. With God's help we can overcome all these challenges and arrive at holiness.

To be holy is to be consecrated or set apart for a sacred purpose. Holy Water is ordinary water that has been blessed by a priest to have the power to cleanse us from venial sin and drive away evil spirits and bring us graces. Without the blessing from the priest, holy water would simply be ordinary water, with no power to cleanse from sin or drive away evil spirits. As Christians we have been set apart, baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit and sent on a mission of love.

### **9.3 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

As Missionaries of Merciful Love we are to both desire and strive for holiness. Desire comes first, but then we are to “strive” for holiness, much like an athlete trains hard to have perfect form and a winning time. To strive means that we will face and overcome all opposition to our goal of holiness. Every Christian has a spiritual battle to face but when we desire and strive for holiness then the battle becomes more intense, for the enemy does not want us to become more holy and more like a saint, for it poses a greater threat to his kingdom.

It has been said that the first victory is getting out of bed. In a way, this is true. Unless we get out of bed in the early morning, how can we pray in the morning and how can we go to morning mass? We need to form holy habits that will help us grow in holiness. Bad habits can be hard to break, such as sleeping in or going to be too late, but with God’s help we can have victory. St. Therese wrote “I want to be a saint.” St. Faustina wrote “I want to be a saint.” We should follow their example.

## **9.4 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

“...Grant to us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, should serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74–75). We are to serve the Lord without fear and in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. This is what St. Faustina and St. Therese did with their short lives on earth. We can do the same if we only desire it with our whole heart.

God has delivered us, through his Son Jesus, from all of our enemies: sin, death and Satan. The words of Scripture above talk about the birth of John the Baptist. He also served the Lord with holiness and he paid the ultimate price, he was beheaded for his witness to God’s truth. St. John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Jesus one day told St. Faustina that she was going to prepare the world for his Second Coming. This is an amazing statement that Jesus made. It points to the reality that the Second Coming of Jesus is not too far away. No one knows the day or the hour, though, but we must always be ready.

## **9.5 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

“I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh, for as you presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to wickedness upon wickedness, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness for sanctification (holiness). For when you were servants of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit then did you have at that time in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and having become servants of God, you have your fruit of sanctification (holiness), and the result of eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:19–23).

We are to offer our whole being to God as “servants” of holiness. Sin leads to shame and separation from God. Love and holiness leads to joy, life and union with God. Every day we have to choose “the higher way” of holiness and love and fidelity to the gospel. We cannot grow in holiness if we are deliberately clinging to sin.

## 9.6 Desire and Strive for Holiness

“Because of him, you are in Christ Jesus, who was made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification (holiness), and redemption: that, according as it is written, “He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:30–31). It is only because of Jesus that we can become holy (sanctified). Sanctus is a Latin word that means “holy.” We cannot boast of our own efforts towards holiness: it is all a gift of God through Jesus and the working of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus himself became our holiness. When we receive Holy Communion it is truly “holy,” for it is the Body and Blood of Jesus, the holy one of Israel. The Virgin Mary praised God when she said “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” She did not praise herself. Other people showed her honour for being the Mother of the Messiah, the Mother of Jesus, the Son of God “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” her cousin Elizabeth cried out.

## **9.7 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

“For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God we behaved ourselves in the world, and more abundantly toward you” (2 Corinthians 1:12). St. Paul declared that he acted in the holiness and sincerity of God, not in the wisdom of the flesh, which is really no wisdom at all. He did not say he acted in his own holiness but in the holiness of God. We can share in God’s holiness; we can’t create our own separate form of holiness by gazing at crystals or meditating a certain way. All holiness comes from God, who is the Source of holiness.

Notice St. Paul refers to his conscience. If we are going to be holy we need to be sensitive to the voice of our conscience. It tells us what is right and what is wrong. To grow in holiness we must heed what our conscience tells us: avoid this or that occasion of sin, and so on. If we avoid our conscience the Bible tells us we will make a “shipwreck” of our faith.

## **9.8 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

“I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and givings of thanks, be made for all men: for kings and all who are in high places; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness (holiness) and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who desires all people to be saved and come to full knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:1–4). Holiness is godliness. This is our calling. God wants us to pray for all people, including leaders, that they will also be holy and we may all lead a tranquil and quiet life.

It is easy to be critical of leaders such as prime ministers, presidents, mayors, church leaders and so on. It is more challenging to pray for them. Holiness is related to a tranquil (peaceful) and quiet life. St. Faustina and St. Therese lead a very quiet life. Mind you, they were both in a convent. Still, we can learn to make our own home more peaceful by turning off the TV set and computer and talking with each other, praying and reading holy books. It is time well spent.

## 9.9 Desire and Strive for Holiness

“Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed, for a few days, punished us as seemed good to them; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness” (Hebrews 12:9–10) Holiness requires discipline, and discipline is not usually a fun thing to experience. Our human fathers disciplined us because they loved us. God, our Heavenly Father, loves us even more deeply and therefore disciplines us in the areas we need it.

Self-discipline is a good thing, but God’s discipline goes beyond self-discipline. God’s discipline is deeper, full of wisdom, truth and purpose. God’s laws are meant to protect us and bring us freedom, not to bring us down or oppress us. When we cross the line, morally speaking, the Lord will discipline us one way or another, eventually. Having a spiritual director can help us to experience God’s discipline working through another person with spiritual authority.

## **9.10 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

“Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification (holiness) without which no man will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). Holiness is so important that, without it, we will not see the Lord. That is a great and eternal loss. Scripture says, “nothing undefiled” will enter the kingdom of God. In other words, nothing that is not holy will enter Heaven. The poor lost souls in hell are not holy. That cannot “see” God in the Beatific Vision of Heaven, and this is their greatest suffering, for all people were created to be in a union of love with God for all eternity. Still, we have free will and can choose not to be holy, not to love God.

The holy souls in Purgatory do love God but they do not yet enjoy the vision of God in Heaven. They are being purified for some of the sins they committed on earth and for the temporal punishment that is due these sins. Purgatory is a place of spiritual suffering but it is a holy suffering because it is purifying the souls to be more like God. Sometimes a holy soul in Purgatory would appear to St. Faustina and ask her for prayers.

## 9.11 Desire and Strive for Holiness

Ponder in your heart today the word “holy.” “Sanctus” is the Latin word for “holy.” What does holiness mean to you? Is there evidence of holiness in your life? Are your thoughts generally holy? Are your words holy? Are your actions holy? Is the time you spend online surfing the internet holy? Put your life under the lens of the Holy Spirit and allow the Spirit of holiness to show you areas you need to grow in holiness and things you need to let go of.

What Olympic athlete does not have to desire and strive to win a gold medal, or even a silver or bronze medal? It is the same with holiness: it comes at a price: a price of effort, praying, watching, hearing God’s word, listening to God’s voice, obeying God’s will and so on. It is not “easy” to become a saint like St. Therese, St. Faustina or St. Francis and the others. They gave all for God and to be holy. They were ready and willing to let go of the lure of sin to put on Jesus Christ and his purity of heart, soul and mind. We must rouse up within ourselves a firm desire for holiness and sanctity, or we will never achieve it. **“With God all things are possible,”** Jesus reminded us.

## 9.12 Desire and Strive for Holiness

Thank God today for making you holy by your faith and baptism. Sometimes the main problem we have in our spiritual life is that we don't make what the church calls a "firm resolution" to avoid certain sins. Why do we do this? Probably, like St. Augustine, we enjoy our sin and are not truly ready to part with it. Still, like St. Augustine, there must come a time when we draw a line in the sand and make a clean break with our particular habit of sin. Think of a man's tombstone: It has his name and the date of his birth and the date of his death. It is definitive: the date of death cannot be changed.

We can do something similar in our lives. One day in my life I realized that I was confessing the same habitual sins every week and not getting free. After some soul-searching I realized it was because, like St. Augustine, I was saying "not yet" to the Lord about giving up these sins. Why? Because something in me enjoyed the sin more than the idea of giving up sin and growing in holiness. Then one day I did make a firm resolution and wrote in my daily planner a certain date that I gave up two particular habits of sin and one occasion of sin. Then if the Devil tempts us to return to these sins or occasion of sin again we can point to the date in our journal and reject his attempt to make us return to our former way of iniquity.

## **9.13 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

Today turn your thoughts and heart towards Mary, your spiritual Mother. She will mold you increasingly into a holy disciple of Jesus. Mary was conceived in holiness, for she was without original sin. She still had free will, though, and had to choose to love God and others every day. She needed to pray and do all the things she needed to do as the mother of Jesus and spouse of St. Joseph. She had work to do.

Mary lived a holy life and desired to continue to grow in holiness, prayer, love and mercy. She had a very unique vocation to be the mother of the Messiah, the Son of God, Jesus our Lord. God equipped her for this role in every way possible. One day I was struggling in my life with various issues and I heard Mary say to me “God loves you. God is merciful. Trust in him.” These words from Our Lady helped me to persevere in following Jesus and living out my vocation to merciful love in the world. We all need to know that God loves us, that God is merciful and that we should trust in him.

## **9.14 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

Say today “Holy Spirit, fill me entirely, my spirit, soul, mind and body. I love You.” As Missionaries of Merciful Love we are called to be led by the Holy Spirit always. This is a very tall order, but, by the grace of God, it is possible. The more we let go of our own will, our own agenda, our attachment to sin, the more we will be free to be led by the Holy Spirit. We will be more teachable, more docile, more able to discern the “still small voice” of God in our lives.

The greatest saints were totally led by the Holy Spirit: think of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Therese, St. Joan of Arc, St. Faustina, St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Padre Pio and many more. Each of them had a deep life of prayer and a habit of listening to the Holy Spirit within their heart. We cannot hear the Spirit speaking if our lives are always noisy. A TV set can really ruin the spiritual atmosphere of our homes if we are not careful. We decided to cut out cable TV and just watch videos mainly from the public library. This decision, I believe, has fostered more prayer in our home and an atmosphere of peace and calm.

## **9.15 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

Pray that your loved ones will all grow in holiness. We should not just desire holiness for ourselves but for all our family members and friends and coworkers. No one can stop you from praying for them. First, though, it is best to get our own spiritual house in order before we try to preach to others. If we are secretly clinging to certain serious sins then we should keep quiet until we have our own conversion and sincere desire to be holy, with God's help.

Jesus came to save us and establish his church, his spiritual family. We don't worship God alone at mass, we worship with our brothers and sisters in Jesus. Some we know, some we don't. We are called to grow in love with God and with our church family on earth. Our destiny is to spend eternity loving God and one another in Heaven. Heaven is a place of holiness and there is no sin there, no occasion of sin, no sorrow and no sadness: only love, joy, peace and harmony forever. Purgatory is a place of spiritual purification of the "holy souls" there who are not yet ready to see God "face to face" (the Beatific Vision) because of the temporal punishment due to some of their sins. They love us deeply and pray for us and want us to pray for them. Time has ceased for them, so they cannot help themselves in any way. They rely on the church in Heaven and on earth for prayer.

## **9.16 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

Today sit or lie down in a quiet place, perhaps a room or at a picnic table in a park and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you in your heart. Listen. Wait. Sometimes we need a change of environment to gain a new perspective on God's action in our lives. God speaks to us in a myriad of ways: through Jesus' words in Scripture, through creation, through our spiritual leaders: the pope, bishops, priests, deacons, religious sisters and brothers, lay ministers, our parents, our children, friends, good, Catholic books, the Lives of the Saints, Christian music, sacred art and many other ways.

Think of a sailboat on the ocean. If the sail is down, it will not really go anywhere. Once the sail is up, however, and the wind is blowing, the sailboat can move with the wind's support. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to blow on the sail of our lives and lead us in the direction God is calling us to go. Often in the Book of Acts it speaks about St. Paul's intentions to visit a certain city or town but the Spirit "prevented" them from going. The Holy Spirit can prevent us from doing things we are not called to do if we are open to being led by God.

## 9.17 Desire and Strive for Holiness

Today pray: O Fire of Love, Divine Spirit, consume me completely, strip away all that is in me that is not of you. I am yours forever. Do with me what you will. When we are led to pray in such a way we can expect the Lord to move in our lives. Again, if we are sincere in our prayer and desire to be purified and sanctified and led where God wants us to be, God will work in our lives in a variety of ways: doors will open, others will close. Certain people may come into our lives and other people may move out of our lives. God knows best what to do for us. Jesus said **“Ask and you will receive.”** What have you been asking Jesus for lately, if anything?

If you can't think of what to ask God for why not start by asking the Lord to help you do God's will. Then you could ask the Lord to help you live in simplicity. Third, you could ask God to help you to live a life of constant prayer from the heart. We can and should ask for God's burning love to consume us, to fill us with his merciful love and use us to touch others with merciful love wherever we are. Sometimes we don't have much love or holiness or zeal for the Lord because we simply don't ask for it. “You don't have because you don't ask,” the Bible tells us.

## **9.18 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

Today stand up in a private place, e.g., your room, and open your arms wide in the orans gesture, i.e, the way a priest opens his arms at mass. Do this in silence, as a silent prayer to the Holy Spirit of Love to come and fill you in a deeper way. Try to pray for at least five minutes. It is good to experience prayer using our bodies and not just our minds. Of course, at mass we stand, sit and kneel, all of which is good, but who says we can't pray at home in these and other ways with our bodies? We can lie face down on the ground before the Lord. We can lie down on our backs and ask the Lord to touch us in some way. We can play guitar and sing and dance around the dining room table!

There is a Christian song that says, "Holiness, holiness is what I long for. Holiness is what I need." We need to reflect on our desires: "Do I desire holiness? Really? Or am I content with just going to Sunday mass and doing my own thing the rest of the week, maybe saying a short "good morning, Lord" every day? God has much more than just spending one hour with him at Sunday mass. The Christian life is not limited to an hour a week. It is a daily calling to walk in love, prayer, holiness and sharing the good news of Jesus with others by our words and actions.

## **9.19 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

Reflect on the truth that your body is holy. If you have a tub, take a hot bath today and sprinkle a few drops of holy water on yourself and then get in the tub to soak in more graces from the Holy Spirit. If you don't have a tub then drive to a nearby pool that has a hot tub and enjoy a good soak, all the while being open to the Holy Spirit ministering to your body, soul, mind and spirit. We are called to do holy deeds with our bodies. The saints showed us the example of our need to discipline our bodies, so that we don't become slaves of illicit pleasure. Sometimes a saint would go too far in extremes in fasting or bodily discipline, like St. Francis of Assisi, who near the end of his life apologized to his own body, calling it "Brother Ass." St. Francis realized he was too hard on his body but it was too late by then, for he was physically worn out from fasting, cold nights in caves, not to mention the five wounds of the Stigmata in his body.

Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, we are called to honor, respect and use our bodies in a holy way, whether we are single, married, priests or nuns. God's temple should be holy, clean, neat and ready for holy purposes always.

## 9.20 Desire and Strive for Holiness

Complete the following sentence and spend some time today reflecting on your answer: “I want to be holy because. . .” What reason did you think of for wanting to be holy? Do you want to be holy? If not, why not? If you don’t have a desire to be holy then you can at least pray to God to give you the desire to be holy. That is a good start. God can give us desires he wants us to have. The answer that came to me was “I want to be holy because I want to love and be loved by God and all the angels and saints in Heaven.” Nothing undefiled will enter the kingdom of Heaven. We must, then, live a holy life, a truly holy life, if we desire to enter heaven.

Otherwise, if we die with temporal punishment due to sin or attachments to venial sins, we will enter Purgatory, a holy place but also a place of great suffering and purification. The other alternative is not something we would ever want, and that is to die in a state of mortal (deadly) sin, leading to the eternal fire of hell. Some saints, like St. Faustina, got to experience for themselves what it feels like to be “rejected by God” forever. It is the most horrible experience we could ever have, and I know this from three days of spiritual suffering I went through myself, feeling completely rejected by God for all eternity. The greatest suffering in hell is the loss of God, who is Love.

## 9.21 Desire and Strive for Holiness

Today say “I let go of all my efforts at obtaining holiness and surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit in accomplishing holiness in my life.” Do whatever the Holy Spirit leads you to do today: e.g. change your daily schedule, do more, do less, and so on. We should say to the Father, like Jesus, **“Not my will, but yours be done, Father.”** Our whole life is like a constant battle within our soul between doing God’s will or our own will.” Jesus said to his Father **“Thy will be done.”** Obviously, Jesus was holy, for his is God, the source of all holiness. Still, becoming fully human, Jesus needed to pray every day, read the Scriptures, love others, serve others, teach and so on.

Fr. Bob Bedard was the founder of the Companions of the Cross and a friend of mine. He always shared with people what he called the “dangerous prayer:” “Lord, I will do whatever you want me to do.” Fr. Bob challenged his listeners to make that prayer and be obedient to whatever God asked them to do. He did not want to start a new Order, but God called him to do it, so he did it. That is obedience. What is God calling you to do? Whatever it is, do it, without delay! You will be much happier having surrendered your life to do God’s will rather than your own will.

## **9.22 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

Lie down on a sofa in your home. Say, “Love me, Holy Spirit.” Remain on the sofa and relax and let the Spirit of LOVE love you in your whole being, body, mind, soul and spirit. Stay as long as the Spirit leads you to stay. Sometimes we can find it hard to let others love us. We can even find it hard to allow God to love us, for we may protest by thinking of a litany of past sins or personal imperfections, bad habits and so on. God is love and he wants to love us every day, at all times. He wants us to receive his love in every way possible, especially through the Body and Blood of Jesus, his Son.

Our thoughts should be holy. Our words should be holy. Our actions should be holy. There are certain things we could do that we should not do to be more holy. The books we read should be holy. The music we listen to should be holy. This is not to say that we must only listen to Christian music or read Catholic books, but we should not read books that can lead us into sin or theological error or watch movies or music videos that are immoral.

## **9.23 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

Say the same words the Virgin Mary said when the Archangel Gabriel told her she was to be the Mother of the Messiah: “Be it done unto me according to your word.” Stay there as long as the Spirit leads you to stay. Listen for a word from the Lord. It is a truth of our faith that each one of us has a guardian angel to watch over us day and night. Our angel is holy and prays for us to be holy. We cannot see our guardian angel but our angel is always with us and praying for us to do God’s will, to avoid sin and practice virtue. Our angel wants to lead us to enter heaven. Only then will our guardian angel’s job be accomplished in our life.

We can pray this prayer every morning: “Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God’s love entrust me here. Ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide.” Once there was a saint who prayed that she would see her guardian angel all the time. God answered her prayer and she did see her angel all the time. After a while, though, she regretted her prayer because her angel was frequently correcting her and she found it difficult to live with such constant correction.

## 9.24 Desire and Strive for Holiness

Find a beautiful image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Find one that speaks personally to you of her love and peaceful spirit. Spend some time today just gazing at her holy face. She is truly a feminine reflection of the Face of God, for God said **“Let us make man in our own image. Male and female he made them.”** Mary is the perfect Woman who is also clothed with the sun and has the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars over her head. Listen for the voice of Mary in your heart, for as our Mother she loves to speak to her children.

Every day we should pray the Hail Mary: “Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.” This prayer is a combination of the words of the Archangel Gabriel to Mary as well as the words of Mary’s cousin Elizabeth and words from the church’s tradition. Mary was and is holy because she is “full of grace.” We are called to be filled with the grace of God. We, however, have to struggle with the effects of original sin. The spiritual life is truly a battle within.

## 9.25 Desire and Strive for Holiness

Today say “I am yours, Mary. Help me to be holy.” Listen in your heart and allow the Spirit of Love, the Breath of God (Ruah, in Hebrew) to fill your entire being with wisdom, love, peace and joy. St. Louis de Montfort, author of the classic spiritual book “True Devotion to Mary,” teaches that there are two ways to make a statue: one by carving it with a chisel and hammer: a long, difficult and potentially risky method. The other way is by using a mold: easy and risk-free.

St. Louis de Montfort goes on to teach that Mary is like the mold of God: Jesus, the Son of God, was formed within her womb. Jesus is our head and we are his members. As the head was formed, so too should the members, i.e., the mold of Mary. When we entrust ourselves, our spiritual formation, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, she takes us into her own heart and soul and “forms” the image of Jesus more deeply within us. This is one of her motherly tasks as mother of the church and of all Christians. This is a great mystery but we must always know and believe that Mary never draws us away from her Son Jesus, but always points us to him and forms his image in our lives.

## 9.26 Desire and Strive for Holiness

Today go to a mirror in your house. Look into your own eyes and say “I love you” to yourself. Then say “I love you Jesus.” Then say “Enflame me, Holy Spirit, with your all-consuming Love.” To be holy means we must also have a healthy love of self. I do not mean a selfish preoccupation with ourselves or a constant focus on our selfish desires. No, I speak of a holy self love, based on the truth that I am created in the image and likeness of God, and that everything that God created is good, including me. We sometimes struggle with self love and acceptance either because we have been treated wrongly or harshly by others, or because of certain sins or mistakes we have made in life in thought, word, action or omission.

There is a saying that we need to be “comfortable in our own skin.” This is kind of related to the idea of holy self love. Scripture teaches that we are to love our neighbour as ourselves. Well, if we are weak in love for our self, how can we possibly have a strong love for our neighbour? We are to love God above all, and then our neighbour as ourselves. Jesus said that people would know we are his disciples **“by your love for one another.”** This was the new commandment Jesus gave: **“Love one another as I have loved you.”**

## 9.27 Desire and Strive for Holiness

Pray “Spirit of Love, consume me with your burning love and sanctify my body, soul, mind and spirit.” One sad reality today is the increasing number of famous people, such as movie stars, who die because of drug overdoses like heroin. To die so young in such a way is not God’s will. The Enemy, Satan, comes to **“steal, slaughter and destroy,”** according to Jesus. Illegal drugs are destroying the lives of countless young people throughout the world. We cannot live a holy life and abuse drugs or alcohol at the same time.

Following Jesus gives us infinitely greater joy, love and peace than we will ever find in drugs or alcohol. These things bring a temporary high, a quick “fix,” which is no fix at all. Drugs lead to a need for more drugs. Abuse of alcohol leads to the need for more booze. It is a never-ending circle that only the power of God can break when we are willing to leave these addictions behind. Even “softer” drugs like marijuana are not helpful in growing in holiness, for they distort our perception of life and truth. God is a God of order, not confusion or distortion. Again, Jesus gives us a greater “high” than any drug ever will, and it is a spiritual lifting up of our heart, mind and soul to the love of God.

## **9.28 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

Today simply pray in tongues, if you have the gift of tongues. If you don't have the gift of tongues try to find a charismatic prayer meeting and ask the people there to pray over you to receive the gift of tongues. If you still don't receive this holy gift, just spend some time today praising God with your own words. Praying in tongues helps us to grow in holiness. It is truly the Holy Spirit praying through us in a heavenly language.

Tongues were given to the early church when they were gathered in the upper room, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, all the apostles and some others. The Holy Spirit came down as they were all praying in the form of tongues of fire and landed on each of them and they began to pray in foreign tongues and foreigners could understand their praises of God. This was the birthday of the church, which is universal. God invites all nations to follow Jesus his Son and to be filled with his Holy Spirit. Praying in tongues builds up the faith of the one praying and can edify believers when another interprets the meaning of the tongues. This usually takes place in a Catholic charismatic prayer meeting.

## **9.29 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

Tonight, before you go to bed, go outside and look at the stars and the moon. Spend a while in silence at the majesty of God's creation. Pray "Praise the Lord, sister moon and sister stars! Praise the Lord brother sun!" Reflect on the truth that everything God has made is good, including you. St. Francis of Assisi called the Sun "brother" and the moon "sister."

All Christian women and men are truly brothers and sisters in one holy family of Love. Heaven is our destination and it is a place of holiness, love, peace, joy, laughter, music, a wonderful banquet and the best of wine. It the dwelling place of God, who is LOVE. What could be better than that? St. Francis was even kind to criminals. One day a band of robbers treated St. Francis and his companions roughly. One of St. Francis' friars responded in an angry way. St. Francis forced this friar to go to the robbers and apologize! The robbers must have been touched by this unexpected gesture.

## **9.30 Desire and Strive for Holiness**

Today express your thanks to the Holy Spirit for making you holy:

“Thank you Sweet Spirit of Love. You are so beautiful, holy, wise, kind and loving. Forever I will be grateful for your action in my life and leading me to LOVE. Love me forever and allow me to love you forever, together with the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ and all the angels and saints. Amen.”

The Bible teaches us that the Spirit fights against the flesh and the flesh fights against the Spirit. We must choose sides: will we fight with the Spirit and overcome the lusts of the flesh, or will we fight with the flesh and grieve the Spirit? The choice is ours. There is a saying, “Whatever you feed, grows.” If we “feed” the Spirit working in our lives, we will grow in holiness, love, joy, peace and so on. If we “feed” the flesh in our lives we will grow in sin, impurity, lust, selfishness, self-gratification and other negative things.

## **10.1 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

Jesus was led by the Spirit into to the wilderness to fast and pray for forty days. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to where he wants you to be and what he wants you to do. He is the Spirit of wisdom mentioned throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. If we are not led by the Spirit of God, then we are either led by our flesh, led by the spirit of the world, or led by the evil spirit, i.e., Satan. We must arm ourselves for spiritual battle, for we will not grow in holiness without a struggle against the Evil One.

The St. Benedict medal is known as the “most powerful” holy medal in the Catholic church. Why? The reason is the powerful prayers of exorcism that are on the medal: “Crux sacra sit mihi lux! Non Draco sit mihi dux!” (The holy cross be my light! Not the Dragon be my guide!). “Vade retro Satana! Nunquam suade mihi vana! Sunt mala quae libas. Ipse venena bibas!” (Begone, Satan! Stop luring me with your fakes! Poisonous is your bait! Gulp it down yourself!” Scripture tells us “Resist the Devil and he will take flight.”

## **10.2 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

The Spirit blows where he wills. We just have to put up the sails and we will be blown in the direction we are meant to go in. We can think of our arms and hands as sails: If we lift up our hands and surrender to the Spirit of Love we will be amazed at what can happen.

Today, stick up your hands in surrender to the Spirit of LOVE and keep 'em up for at least a minute or two!

How did that feel? A bandit traditionally says "Your money or your life," after telling a person to stick up their hands. Then, the person needs to decide whether to give the bandit money or risk being shot and killed. Well, the Holy Spirit does not want or need our money, but he does want our life: our heart, mind, soul and body. It is one thing to risk losing your life over money. It is far more serious to risk falling into eternal punishment over a stubborn desire to remain in serious sin.

### **10.3 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom,” the Scriptures say. Freedom is a great thing to experience. Captivity is a drag, unless we are captive to LOVE. Is there an area in your life where you feel like a captive? Ask the Spirit of Love and Freedom to set you free. Jesus said that when he sets a person free, they are free indeed. Jesus promised his friends and disciples to send an advocate, a helper, the Holy Spirit, after he ascended to the Father. The advocate and helper is the Spirit of Love, the Peaceful Dove, the Ruah (breath of God).

Write a short prayer to the Spirit of Love on a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal, asking the Spirit to set you free from whatever holds you in captivity. In dancing, someone always has to lead, usually the man. If both try to lead there will be chaos and one or more of the dancers may well end up falling on the floor. It is the same with the Holy Spirit: either the Spirit leads us or we try to “lead” the Spirit, which is foolish on our part. We must submit to the wisdom, power and guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, for He is the Divine Dancer who knows all the dances and all the moves. He knows where we need to be led to and how.

## **10.4 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is mysterious. To be led by the Holy Spirit, the Spiritus Sanctus (Latin), is to be led by Mystery. We will never be able to “figure out” a mystery: we just need to enter into it. Today say the prayer “Lead me, Mysterious Lover, and help me to enter into the mystery of God and taste the majesty of Divine Love in visible and invisible realities.” One of the constant things in life is change: every second we are changing, moving, learning, experiencing, aging and so on. God does not change. We change. Our goal is to change for the better as time moves on, not for the worse.

We are meant to grow physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually as we age. We learn from experience more than by books. Books are fine, but the “book of life” is a far more powerful educator. This is why the lives of the saints is so powerful, because it is their lived experiences that speak so powerfully to us. It is well and good to compose beautiful prayers and hymns, but unless a person is also living a loving and holy Christian life, all the prayers and hymns in the world won't mean very much in the long run.

## **10.5 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

A little child needs to be held by the hand when walking down a busy street. We need to be like little children with the Spirit of Love holding our hands to prevent us from harm. Jesus said we must become like little children if we want to enter the kingdom of God. Many years ago I wrote a song on my classical guitar called "Child Jesus." The chorus went "Child Jesus, teach me to be like you. Child Jesus, help me to love the way you do." Jesus wants us to be like little children in his presence, totally trusting in him, listening to him and being loved and taught by him.

Jesus was always led by the Holy Spirit, from the time of his infancy to his death on the cross. He was completely filled and united with the Spirit of God, for he was and is one with the Spirit and the Father, the mystery of the Holy Trinity: One God in Three Persons. Jesus' thoughts, words and actions were guided by the Holy Spirit. Jesus often paused before answering questions from people, usually trying to trap him in his words, for he was allowing the Spirit of the Lord to guide his response. We would be wise to ponder more in our hearts and be quick to listen and slow to speak, like Jesus.

## **10.6 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

One day I was in Rome, Italy at a world youth conference and a young woman came up to me, smiled, introduced herself and blew on my face. I think she said something like “Receive the Holy Spirit.” I felt spiritual power come into me and a spirit of peace. The Holy Spirit is the breath of God. The wind is a symbol of the Spirit blowing. When a woman of faith blows on another person it is like the Spirit of Love blowing peaceful blessings. Wind moves things: it moves ships with sails. Without the wind, those ships would stay put in the water. With the wind they can sail the world.

Without the Spirit we are stuck where we are: we can't go anywhere. With the Divine Wind of the Spirit of LOVE we can go anywhere, for all things are possible with the Spirit of God. Where do you want to go today? Write your vision down on a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal. We need to remember that the Holy Spirit is a Person, and, as such, capable of being grieved. We grieve the Spirit when we choose to sin, especially “deadly” sin. We console the Spirit when we reject sin and choose holiness, prayer, love and obedience to God's word.

## **10.7 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

Scripture says that we should not “grieve” the Spirit. The only thing that truly grieves the Holy Spirit is sin, i.e., thoughts, words or actions that go against the LOVE of God. If we are proud, stubborn, judgemental and so on, we not be able to be led by the Spirit. To be led by the Spirit our “sails” have to be up and running well, not hardened by sin or rolled up and put away. The Spirit is LOVE and we can grieve our LOVER (God, who is SPIRIT). Even though God is all-powerful and all-knowing we can still grieve our Divine Lover.

Let’s resolve today to bring pleasure to our Divine Lover, the Spirit of LOVE, with our thoughts, words and actions today and every day. LOVE loves to be loved, just as we love to be Loved by LOVE and love one another as LOVE Incarnate (aka Jesus) has Loved us. People sometimes object to the idea of eternal punishment and a loving God. What they fail to understand is that for love to be real it must be based on freedom: a freedom to say an eternal “yes” to God or an eternal “no” to God. The rebellious angels knew their sin of disobedience to God and yet sinned willingly and now suffer in eternal fire. Our human freedom is a precious and powerful gift. We must use it for our good and the good of all we meet.

## **10.8 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“Jesus does not consider time, since He is eternal. He considers only Love.” These words of St. Therese also apply to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is eternal and she considers only Love. Love begets Love. The Holy Trinity is One LOVE with three Loves, .i.,e we know that “God is Love” and we also know that “God is Spirit” and God is both our Father and our Mother. Therefore, to simplify things, we could say there is Father Love, Mother Love, Son Love: The LOVE family. The family of God. Spirit Love is identical to Mother Love, for God ‘s Spirit is Ruah, the Breath of God, the feminine quality of God. (Remember, God said let us make man in our own image, and male and female he made them).

When we believe and are baptized, we join this family of love and become sons and daughters of LOVE and are called to love one another, for Love is our highest calling. Mary is our Mother because she is Mother of Jesus, the Head of the Body and we are members of that head. The Spirit is also our Mother, for we are born again of water and the Spirit.

## **10.9 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

On a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal, make a list of people, problems, ideas, plans, visions, dreams, and so on, that you would like the Holy Spirit to “blow” on, i.e., guide and direct

Pray: O Loving Divine Spirit of God, I entrust all the above to your Motherly care. Blow on me and my loved ones with your breath of LOVE and transform us.

One of the ways that the Holy Spirit speaks to us is through our dreams. Not all dreams are “revelations” from God to us, but some certainly are. It is a good idea to keep a “dream journal” where you write or type your dreams as you remember them. I have kept such a journal since 1987 when I had a dream that I was with a priest friend of mine and we were both repairing a huge church, like a basilica. There was a great deal of damage to the church, loose electrical wires, and so on. By writing down your dreams you can better discern God’s will in your life.

## **10.10 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

Breath is life. If we don't breathe, we will die. Spiritually speaking, it is the same principle: if we don't have the Breath of the Spirit in our lives, we will die, spiritually. The Spirit is the Spirit of Life, not death. The Spirit of God is so powerful that he can bring back a dead person to life. Jesus was resurrected by the power of the Spirit of Life and Love and the hand of the Father. No matter how bad or dark or sinful you may feel, there is hope with the Holy Spirit. Just surrender yourself to the Spirit of Truth and Love and Life and he will lead you back to joy, peace and hope.

We all have good days and bad days. Hopefully, we have more good ones than bad ones. Even on our bad days we can offer up our struggles for the good of others who are hurting even more than we are: people with terminal illnesses, AIDS, severe depression, cancer, heart problems, serious drug addictions, and so on. Today lie on the floor as if you were dead, i.e., a corpse. Think about death. Then think about Life and the Spirit bringing you back to life. Rise and reflect.

## **10.11 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“Love, and do what you will,” is the advice that St. Augustine gave. Very simple and very true. Another way that Scripture puts it is “to the pure, all things are pure.” The key is that we truly must love and be pure. Love and purity go together hand in hand. Getting back to dreams, it is interesting that I had a very short but vivid dream while writing this book. “I was in a small room and the Devil growled and spun a wooden desk repeatedly in midair.” At first, I did not understand the meaning of this dream or any prophetic significance. After I went to confession and received the Body and Blood of Jesus at mass, though, the Lord showed me the meaning:

I felt God showing me that the Devil was so angry because I was publishing this book, which contains a large amount from the Diary of St. Faustina Kowalska, including many words about the mercy and love of God from Jesus to her. I was reminded of one time when St. Faustina was writing her Diary when the Devil entered her room and was furious over what she was writing and starting banging something in her room loudly to vent his frustration. Satan hates God’s mercy and any books that proclaim it. I took all of these things as a good sign from God.

## **10.12 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

Hold your left hand limply in front of your face. Blow strongly on your hand and notice how it moves with the breath. When our lives are open to the breath of the Spirit we will be led in the direction the Holy Spirit is blowing us. If we harden our hearts we will not be able to be led or moved by the Holy Spirit. It is said that a bird can be tied to the earth by either a thick rope or a thin thread. Even the smallest of attachments to sin can prevent us from growing in the way the Holy Spirit wants us to.

Think also of a kite: it relies on the wind to be lifted up high in the sky. If there is no wind, we are stuck on the earth with a kite that cannot fly. We also need the “wind” of the Spirit of God to lift us up high about this earth to the glories of Heaven. It is a matter of letting the Holy Spirit control our lives. We have to let go of our control and pray that the Spirit of God will take charge of everything in our life. Yes, we still have to work, to pray, to learn, to grow, but we will be working with the Spirit, not against the Spirit. We will be led by the Holy Spirit.

## **10.13 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

Love is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our life. If we are filled with the Spirit of God, we will be full of love. The more we are filled with the Holy Spirit, the more love we will have for God and others. One of the amazing things about St. Faustina is her statement that she “always did the will of God in her life.” This is a very profound thing to say. Perhaps she was mainly speaking of her life since she entered the convent, for when she was younger the Lord did scold her for not following God’s will by entering a convent but just having fun at a dance.

How many of us can say what St. Faustina said? I know for certain that I can’t. I wish I could say it, but we cannot change the past. We learn from our past and adjust our present behavior to avoid the same pitfalls. Don’t be discouraged if you have had a past full of sin. Trust in the mercy and love of Jesus. Learn from your past. Move on. Live today, one day at a time. Some of the greatest saints also had a very checkered past, including Mary Magdalene, Augustine, Francis of Assisi and many others. The greatest sinners can become, with God’s grace, the greatest saints.

## **10.14 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

Peace is the fruit of love, therefore the Spirit of Love is the Spirit of Peace. Jesus said he will give us a peace that the world cannot give, and that peace is the Spirit of Peace, the Holy Spirit. Be at peace today. Be still. Enter into silence. Listen. Love. +  
The world cannot give us true peace. The Devil's lies and empty promises cannot give us true peace. Our own pursuit of the desires of the flesh cannot give us true peace. Only the Spirit of Jesus can give us true and lasting peace that will never fade away. Where the Spirit is, there is peace.

We are to strive to "constantly" be led by the Holy Spirit. This is another tall order. It is not a matter of being led by the Spirit once a week for an hour at mass. No, we are to, day in and day out, be led by the Spirit. Why would any Christian want to stop being led by the Holy Spirit? The only time that happens is when we deliberately want to do something sinful that is opposed to the Holy Spirit, so we don't want to feel guilty and therefore we don't pray as we should, don't listen to God as we should, and try to stifle the voice of the Spirit while we pursue our selfish course of illicit pleasure in some form or another. The good news is that the Spirit will constantly work to break down our resistance and help us come back to God's truth.

## **10.15 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

Once I was in prayer in an adoration chapel and I heard interiorly the Lord calling me: **“Proclaim my name in the wilderness”** and had me travel alone across Canada, from sea to sea (Vancouver to Newfoundland), singing and playing guitar, harp and other instruments, in churches, prayer meetings, on the street and in pubs and homes. I also handed out thousands of Divine Mercy cards I had made for the mission. I said yes to the Lord and made a forty-four day mission tour alone and it was an incredible experience. The Lord told me he would provide for me and he did: I had food and drink every day and made enough money to pay for gas all the way to Newfoundland and back for my large van.

I took a wooden cross and dipped it into the waters of the Pacific Ocean at Stanley park and quoted the Canadian National Motto: “A Mari Usque Ad Mare,” “From Sea to Sea.” It is from Psalm 72:8: “May he (the Messiah) rule from sea to sea.” It is a prayer that Jesus will reign over all of Canada. When I arrived in Newfoundland at Cape Spear, the easternmost part of Canada, I again dipped the cross in the water, this time the Atlantic Ocean, and said the same prayer. Then I saw a huge killer whale.

## **10.16 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

Keep trusting in Love! Ask Mary, the mother of Jesus, to help you to trust in Love. God is Love. On January 5, 1985, I began keeping my own spiritual journal or diary. The first words I wrote were:

“I love you Jesus. May I see you in everyone, good or bad. I worship you, I praise and thank you my Lord.”

In those early days of following Jesus I was so overcome with the love and mercy of God through Jesus that I had to write it down! I am so glad I kept a spiritual journal ever since then, for I have discerned God’s will more clearly as a result of writing my thoughts and experiences down.

When I look at my recent spiritual journal I also discover the theme of loving Jesus:

“O Jesus, help me to love you as St. Faustina and St. Therese love you. I am yours. Please speak to me through Fr. Stanislaus in confession and spiritual direction. Help me create order in my room, in my mind, heart and soul. Align me perfectly with your will, O Father” (November 3, 2013).

## **10.17 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

Love is best when you give it away. Jesus said that it's better to give than to receive. Receiving love is great, but giving love from our hearts is even better. Speaking again of the cross-Canada mission tour I did, I felt led by the Holy Spirit to write a prayer and have it printed, along with the Divine Mercy image on the front. Here is the prayer:

“We are all on a journey. The journey of our personal lives begins in our mother's wombs. Life is a precious gift that comes from God. The right to life is the most basic human right that comes before all other rights. After we are born our journey continues. Life is more than working, making money and buying things. The deepest meaning of life can be discovered only through a personal relationship with God.

Unfortunately, all human beings have fallen short of the way God wants us to live. This is called sin. Sin is any failure to love God and others as we should. God loves us so much that he sent his only Son, Jesus, to give his life as a sacrifice to forgive our sins and bring us new and everlasting life with God. Jesus loves you and he will come into your life if you ask him to. Say ‘Jesus, I trust in You,’ confess your sins, be baptized, and go to church every Sunday, pray and read the Bible.”

## **10.18 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

As I spent about fifteen minutes reflecting on God's word this morning a thought came to me: To be led by the Holy Spirit, we first have to want to be led. The scripture I was pondering was the psalmist asking God to teach him to do God's will. To learn God's will, we first must desire to learn God's will. In other words, it is important that we first look within and examine our attitudes and desires. Do we really want to be led by the Holy Spirit? Do we really want to learn and do God's will? These are important questions.

I used to teach guitar, singing and violin to students. Once I had a young student, only about seven years old. The problem was that he did not really want to learn to play guitar: his mother wanted him to learn! It was hard to teach him because he clearly lacked any interest. I ended up just by having him make noise on the guitar and he seemed to enjoy that. How can the Holy Spirit lead and teach us if we have not got any interest in learning or being led by Him? If you realize that you have no or little desire to be led by the Spirit, don't give up: Pray for the desire to be led by the Holy Spirit and God will give it to you.

## **10.19 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

In order for us to be led by the Holy Spirit, it is crucial that we guard our hearts and watch our thoughts carefully. Once we have determined to stop a certain sin and marked our decision in paper with a date, we must now allow the Devil to lead us astray. Scripture refers to this as “a dog returning to its vomit.” A man who struggled with a drinking problem should not be visiting bars where alcohol is served. For him it is an occasion of sin. The Devil is smart and will often present what appears to be a harmless situation for us to get involved with, but if we watch our thoughts and find we begin to imagine a scenario that is sinful then we need to immediately reject the thought as coming from the Evil One.

It is particularly around the time that we are making the break from sinful habits, or made them recently, that the Enemy will pull out all the stops to make us return to our habits of sin. I used to be a gardener and landscaper. I learned that if I did not get the root of weeds, they would simply grow back even stronger. Our habits of sin are like weeds: they must be pulled out completely or they will return in an even more persistent manner. Make a good confession. Examine your conscience. Avoid people, places and things that lead you to sin. You may find it hard to do this at first, but persistence will pay off.

## **10.20 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“Jesus, You are the Star that leads me on.” – St. Therese. When we read the lives of the Saints we learn how they were led by the Holy Spirit. St. Therese of the Child Jesus loved Jesus at a very young age and grew in love for him as she became older and wanted to consecrate her whole life to him as a Carmelite nun. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus and this is why St. Therese could say that Jesus is the Star that leads her on. The “Stars” of this world can sometimes lead us astray by the bad example of worldly living, sexual promiscuity, drug and alcohol abuse and other negative things.

St. Maximilian Kolbe said that Satan’s activity would be the strongest in the coming century (our century) but that God would raise up the greatest saints as well, to combat the Devil’s work. St. Padre Pio (1887–1968) is one of those “great saints.” Padre Pio had the stigmata, the wounds of Jesus, in his hands, feet and side, for over fifty years. He was a Capuchin Friar and priest from San Giovanni Rotundo in Italy. One of the things he said was “pray, hope and don’t worry.” Good advice for us.

## 10.21 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit

Be open to surprises from the Spirit! The Spirit of the Lord is always at work in the world and in the church and in our lives. The Spirit is constantly trying to get us to turn away from sin, evil and spiritual darkness towards goodness, holiness and light. We must not forget that life itself is a wonderful mystery and full of the presence of God. Sometimes, if we are not careful, we can fall prey to a distorted view of this life if we watch the news every day, read the newspapers and gossip magazines and follow various blogs, tweets or web pages.

The Scriptures remind us that, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." Sin leads us to captivity: love leads us to freedom. When Jesus sets us free we are **"free indeed."** Everyone loves freedom: in our national anthem in Canada we sing "God keep our land glorious and free." We see from our national anthem the truth that freedom is a gift from God. Jesus said **"Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin."** Sin is a cruel master and leads us only to death. The Spirit of Jesus is a gentle Guide and leads us only to life, eternal life.

## **10.22 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

St. Therese said, “Jesus points out to me the only way which leads to Love's furnace – that way is self-surrender – it is the confidence of the little child who sleeps without fear in its father's arms.” St. Therese was like a little child holder her Father's hand everywhere she went. She trusted and relied on the guidance of God always. “Our God is a consuming fire,” Scripture says, so the Holy Spirit, who is God, is also a “consuming fire.” The Spirit descended on the Apostles and the Virgin Mary and other disciples at Pentecost under the form of “tongues of fire.” The Holy Spirit truly is the Fire of God in our hearts.

We have within us this Divine Furnace, this Fire of God, who is the indwelling Holy Spirit, with the Father and the Son. It is only our sin which dampens the flames and, if we are not careful, puts them out. Even still, we can return to the Fire of God, confess our sins, and have the Flame of Love burn anew brightly in our hearts. Sailors navigate their ships in the night through the stars, so too we should navigate our ship through this life through the Star of the Spirit of Jesus, who also leads us to safe shores.

## **10.23 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“Jesus, how tenderly and gently you lead my soul!” – St. Therese. The Spirit of Love and Jesus are One with each other and the Father. When we are led by the Holy Spirit we are also being led by Jesus and the Father of Jesus, our ABBA, our Daddy. We have a Daddy in Heaven! We are born of water and the Spirit, therefore the Spirit is our Mother in Heaven! Jesus is our brother, so we have a Brother in Heaven. Mary, daughter of God, is our Sister and Mother in Heaven. The saints are our sisters and brothers in heaven. We are all in the family of Love. This is our destiny: the City of Love.

The Holy Spirit is truly tender and gentle, to quote the words of St. Therese about how Jesus leads her. No one likes to be bullied, pressured or forced to do anything. The Holy Spirit, who is Wisdom herself, knows we don't want to be pushed. Instead, the Spirit “leads” us. Our job is simply to be led, to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is why we need to have silent time for prayer each day, time to read the word of God in silence, time to examine our day in silence and reflect on the good and the bad.

## **10.24 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“This fire from heaven – You have placed it in my soul and I, too, want to spread its passion.” – St. Therese.

The Fire from heaven is the Holy Spirit. God is a “consuming fire,” the Scriptures tell us. When we believe and are baptized the consuming fire of God, the fire from heaven, comes like a blazing globe of love in our hearts to fill us with Divine love and peace and help us to spread this blazing love to all.

St. Therese shows us that it is not enough for us to be filled with the Spirit of God, the Fire from Heaven: no, we must desire and share this Divine Fire with the world! First we must be consumed by the fire of God’s love. Then we must allow ourselves to be spread like burning embers throughout the world and bring light, warmth, love and truth to others. The saints were filled with passion and we ought to be as well. A passion from God with zeal for the salvation of souls, the conversion of sinners and the glory of God.

## **10.25 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“How sweet is the way of love!” – St. Therese. The way of the Spirit is the way of Love. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is sweet! The Spirit is the Divine Bon Bon (Sweet). The Holy Spirit is our Sweet Spirit Mother. Let yourself be led by the way of love today. As St. Augustine said, “Love, and do what you will.” There is a prayer that says, “Sweet Heart of Jesus, be my love.” The Heart of Jesus is a sweet heart. Our Mother Mary is also very sweet. God’s word is sweeter than honey.

The way of sin may at first seem sweet, but it really is bitter. Sin leads to feelings of guilt, shame and remorse. The Holy Spirit convicts us when we have sinned so that we may start again on the way of love. What we need to do is begin to form good spiritual habits. Walking on the way of love is done one step at a time, one day at a time. Jesus said we should not worry about the problems of tomorrow, for today has enough of its own problems. The more we get used to being led by the Holy Spirit on the way of love, the more we will walk in that way and be faithful to the inspirations of the Spirit.

## **10.26 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“I will always bow down beneath the outpouring of divine grace, knowing that it is the gift of God. – St. Therese. The Holy Spirit is divine grace outpoured into our hearts. He is also the love of God poured into our hearts. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord. To be led by the Spirit is to be led in the ways of love and wisdom. Gifts are meant to be opened and used. God’s gifts are no different: They are given to us to be opened and used for our good and for the good of the church and the world.

What gifts has God given you? What talents? Have you “opened” these gifts? In other words, are you using them and multiplying your efforts? Are you letting your gifts from God lie dormant and unused? We have natural talents but we also have supernatural talents, or gifts, from the Lord. We first received the gift of the Holy Spirit at our Baptism. At our Confirmation we received a fuller outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Priests, and religious brothers and sisters also received special gifts, as so people called to the Sacrament of Matrimony. Single people have a gift or charism to live a chaste single life for the Lord for as long as God calls them to it.

## **10.27 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“I understood that love comprises all vocations – that love is everything, and because it is eternal, embraces all times and places. My vocation is love. It is You, O my God, who has given it to me. In the heart of the Church, my Mother, I shall be love. Thus I shall be everything and my dream will be realized” – St. Therese.

To be led by the Holy Spirit is to be led by Love. St. Therese is such a great saint because she discovered the “secret” of sanctity: to be consumed by Eternal Love and be a channel of that Love. She wanted to be “love” in the heart of the church. We also should surrender our whole being to Love and allow the Spirit of Love to consume our sins like straw in a blazing Divine Fire to make us pure gold, instruments worthy of being bearers of the Blood of Jesus in our hearts and souls.

We must not despair, give in or be discouraged if we fall back into some sin. No, we must repent immediately, get up, go to confession, and resolve ever more firmly to avoid that particular sin. We cannot remain “the same” in the spiritual life: we are either going forward or going backwards. For this reason we must always press on to doing God’s will with simplicity and prayer from the heart.

## **10.28 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“ Charity gave me the key to my vocation. I realized that love includes all vocations, is in all things, and because it is eternal, embraces every time and place.” – St. Therese.

The Holy Spirit is charity, or Love, and is therefore the key to our vocation, whatever it may be. If you are married, Love should be at the heart of your marriage, Divine Love, the Love that Jesus has for his Church. If you are single, Love should be flowing out of your heart poured out in kind words and deeds towards others. If you are a religious sister or brother, like St. Therese, Love must be at the core of your vocation, for, without love all our good deeds are worthless. If you are a priest, Love should permeate your priestly ministry, especially during the celebration of the Mass.

Jesus said to his disciples, **“If you love me, keep my commandments.”** He did not say, “If you love me, say a prayer, or go to church, or sing a song, or tell someone about me.” No, Jesus made obedience to his word, the word of God, the true mark of love for him. It is important, then, for us to know the teachings of Jesus to better keep them. His “new commandment” is **“Love one another as I have loved you.”**

## **10.29 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“What mysteries we shall one day see unveiled!” – St. Therese. The Holy Spirit is Mysterious, very mysterious. He transcends our human capacity to understand her ways. All we can do is surrender to the Spirit’s Divine mysterious ways and allow his holy Love to purify our whole being from the depths of our hearts and souls. The Spirit of God can do all things, knows all things, understands all things, embraces all things and sustains all things. In heaven we will see God “face to face,” and this includes the Mysterious Spirit of God. Even then, we will never fully fathom the amazing mystery of the Triune God: Father, Son and Spirit: a community of LOVE.

Even in this life we can have tastes of the mysteries of God. The greatest mystery we celebrate on earth is the Sacred Mystery of the Holy Eucharist, or Mass. If only we could ponder and be more aware of the truth that God is omnipresent. In other words, God is everywhere, including on earth and everyone on earth, including our city, neighbourhood and home! He is present in every room of your house. He is present in your own being, your heart and soul. God is present in the people we meet. God is present in physical creation: He sustains the rocks, the soil, the plants, animals, the sun, the moon, the stars, the universe, all cells, atoms and matter.

## **10.30 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“Our Lord does not come down from Heaven every day to lie in a golden ciborium. He comes to find another heaven which is infinitely dearer to Him – the heaven of our souls.” – St. Therese.

It is amazing to think of our souls as “another heaven” but it is true. Jesus comes to dwell in us sacramentally, i.e., through his most precious Body and Blood. Now, we would not have the Body and Blood of Jesus, aka Holy Communion, if it were not for the Holy Spirit, who transforms the ordinary elements of bread and wine into the Divine Body and Blood of Jesus at the words of the priest during the moment of consecration during mass. It is the Spirit of God who empowers the priests’ words to effect this marvelous transubstantiation, i.e., a substantial change from bread and wine to truly the Body and Blood of Jesus, yet remaining with the appearances of bread and wine. This is too a great mystery. We simply need to enter into it, not try to figure it out. We can never “figure out” any mystery of God. That’s why they are called mysteries!

Just as **“nothing undefiled enters the kingdom of Heaven,”** as Jesus said, so too we should be on guard that “nothing undefiled” enters into the heaven of our soul. Choosing to sin is like intentionally downloading a virus into our computer, i.e., our soul.

## **10.31 Constantly be Led by the Holy Spirit**

“All my strength lies in prayer and sacrifice. They are my invincible weapons, and I know, by experience, that they can soften the heart much better than words.” – St. Therese.

The Holy Spirit strengthens us. We could not pray if it were not for the Spirit of the Living God. Our sacrifices would be empty if it were not for the Divine Spirit. When we do not know how to pray as we ought to the Spirit prays through us, especially when we pray in tongues. Praying in tongues is also a powerful and invincible spiritual weapon that we should use if we have the gift of tongues. It can help us in times of temptation or times of intercession for others in their time of need. Satan hates the gift of tongues because he knows that the Spirit’s prayers are very powerful, powerful with the very power and might of Almighty God. Our own prayers are also powerful but not nearly as powerful as the Spirit’s prayers. We can also offer various kinds of sacrifices like fasting and almsgiving.

St. John Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests, said that we could not obtain the conversion of another person unless our prayer was accompanied by sacrifice.

## **11.1 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

Saint Paul the Apostle said something like “Fan into flame the gift that was imparted to you when I laid my hands on you.” At our Confirmation and, for some, also at our Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit gave us special gifts that are to be used to build up the Body of Christ, i.e., the Church. It is our duty and honour to use these gifts. They are not for our glory, but for the glory of God.

Each of us has gifts, or charisms, from God. No baptized Christian can complain that he or she has “no gifts” from God, for the Spirit is the greatest gift, dwelling in our hearts and souls. From this inner Source of infinite riches in the spiritual realm we are supplied with a variety of gifts according to our state in life, our personality and our personal mission in the church and in the world. Some charismatic gifts are extraordinary: working of miracles, raising people from the dead, healing the sick, and so on. Whatever your gifts are: use them! You’ll be glad you did!

## **11.2 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“Charism” is a Greek word that means “gift.” The charismatic gifts include prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, healing, miracles, word of knowledge, dreams, visions and discernment of spirits. What gift(s) do you have? Service, hospitality, music, writing, intercessory prayer? Have you used them lately? Daily? Write a list of your gifts, including charismatic gifts, on a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal.

Pray “Lord, thank you so much for these gifts! Please help me to use them to build up your Body, the Church and lead others to come to know, love and serve you. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

If you give someone a gift and later see them using it, doesn’t it make you feel happy? It’s like that with God our Father: He loves to see his children using the gifts he gave them for the good of others and building up the Body of Christ. There are “ordinary” gifts and there are “extraordinary” gifts (e.g. bi-location, levitation, reading of hearts). All the saints had “ordinary” gifts but some, like Padre Pio, had a variety of extraordinary gifts. Padre Pio was quick to point out that these things should not be sought after; we should only seek God and his holy will. We should accept all the gifts God gives us.

## **11.3 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

Make up your own melody, if you can, using these words “Come Holy Spirit and fill my heart.” It can be any melody, a simple melody. Sing to God from your heart. Sing to the Spirit in your heart and the Spirit will captivate your heart. Sing every day in the Spirit and you will build up your faith. Pray for the gift of tongues and keep singing. If you play guitar, piano or some other instrument play the chords that fit your melody. Record it on your computer. If you feel led, share your song with the world on the internet. Make your life a song to the Spirit of the Living God, to the glory of the Father and the Son as well.

Sometimes we need to step out in faith when exercising the charismatic gifts. I recall one time after mass I was with a woman in the sacristy and a couple of other people were there. She was struggling with something and asked us to pray with her, which we did. I saw interiorly the image of a little dog and was hesitant to share it with her, thinking it was kind of a silly thing to share. Eventually I did share this interior image and she started crying, for she recently had to put down her little dog because it was ill. The Lord used the image to console her spirit. God knows all things and what people need to hear.

## **11.4 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

How would you feel if you spent a great deal of time picking out a special gift for someone and they just left it under their tree and then put it in a closet for the whole year and never bothered to even open it? Would you give the person another gift? How do you think the Holy Spirit feels when he gives us gifts and don't "open them," i.e. don't use them? The spiritual gifts we have are not awards for outstanding achievement, nor are they Christian trophies. They are designed for the good of others.

As you reflect on gifts and giving, give thanks to the Spirit of Giving today for your spiritual gifts. Make an assessment of how well you have used or not used your spiritual gifts. If you have let them lie dormant, its time to wake them up! Try to find at least one Christian friend to use your gift(s) with. Better yet, find a prayer group and use your gifts there. Service is also a gift. The gift of encouragement is another.

## 11.5 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts

Think and reflect on these words: “I am a gift to others.”

What things came to your mind as you thought about that statement? Perhaps you asked yourself “Why am I a gift to others?” Everyone has something about them that is a gift to others, whether rich or poor, young or old, married, single, divorced, widowed, healthy or sick. Sometimes a simple smile is a great gift to someone going through a hard time. Sometimes the gift is simply listening to someone else is a real gift to them, for others seem to pass them by. Cooking a healthy and tasty supper for a couple of guests is a great blessing to them and provides a great atmosphere of Christian hospitality.

Having the attitude of being a gift for others counters the false idea that life is all about getting, not giving. So often in our lives we are bombarded about all kinds of things we “need” to buy: this new car, expensive furniture, the latest digital gadget and on and on. Jesus said, “**It is better to give than to receive.**” A husband and a wife are a mutual gift to each other. That is what marriage is all about. Spiritual gifts are far superior to material gifts. We can also give the gift of our time, treasure and talent.

## **11.6 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

As I child I remember my parents' buying me a new baseball glove. I loved it! As anyone who plays baseball knows, though, the glove is not really in top form until it gets "broken in." The only way to break in a baseball glove is to use it. It is only the action of catching baseballs that the leather will get more worn in and the glove will develop a great "feel." Once the glove is broken in you just keep using it. The gifts we have from God are kind of like that: at first they are a little "raw" and need to be "broken in," i.e., they need to be used regularly.

Over time, we will notice our spiritual and charismatic gifts from God coming to us more easily and flowing more freely, for they have been "broken in" by our regular use of them. "Use it or lose it" is a good popular saying. Another is, "No pain, no gain." The spiritual life is a discipline and calls for us to embrace trials and carry our cross and follow Jesus wherever he leads us. Have you "broken in" some or all the gifts God has given you, or are they sitting on a shelf or hanging on your wall like a trophies? If so, take them off the shelf and off the wall and get out an "play ball" with them! You'll be glad you did.

## **11.7 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

I saw a wall plaque at a friend's house once that read: The past is history, the future is a mystery and the present is a gift; that's why it's called the present. Reflect today on the present moment, minute, hour, day as a gift. Express your thanks to the Giver of the present. As long as we have time, we have hope, for we are not locked in our sinful past. Time enables us to change, to learn, to repent, to grow, to love again, to hope again, to follow Jesus again. Time is a gift from God. We all have the same amount of hours in the day to work with. Our life span, though, is a different matter. Some live a ripe old age to 100 or more, others die at birth or in infancy or childhood. We don't know how long we have on this earth to serve the Lord and bring love to others, which is why we need to make the most of every day.

For a few years I worked on my memoir. It was a time-consuming project and sometimes challenging, but I learned a lot from doing it. It is interesting because, in the end I decided not to publish it. I just printed three copies: One for Cyndie, my wife, one for myself and one just to keep at home "for the record." Consider writing your own memoir to see how God has worked throughout your life, through the good times and the bad times. You will likely learn and grow from the experience.

## **11.8 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

**“The Spirit blows where he wills,”** Jesus said. We cannot control the Holy Spirit or which direction he wants to lead us in. Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit for forty days. Sometimes the Spirit wants to lead us into a kind of “desert,” i.e., get away from the computer, the TV, the news and so on and really enter into a time, day, weekend, week of silence and prayer. We should be like Jesus and follow where the Spirit leads with no objections. We have so many “creature comforts” in our lives that we need, at times, to strip them all away and really allow the Spirit to lead us and speak to our hearts.

Jesus said, **“By their fruits you will know them,”** i.e., you can tell good people or bad people by their words and actions. The Holy Spirit brings good fruit. No bad fruit comes from the Spirit. We can “see” where the Spirit is blowing in our lives by examining our own fruit. If it is good, we are moving with and being led by the Holy Spirit. If it is bad, we are following our own flesh, the lure of the world and the temptation of the Devil. This is why a daily examination of our life: thoughts, words, actions and omissions, is vital. We should not let sin go unchecked even for one day, lest we start a habitual sin. Lets renounce Satan and sin and follow Jesus.

## **11.9 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

It is said that nature abhors a vacuum. In the spiritual life it is the same: there is no place for a void in our soul: it must be filled with good or evil. Ask the Spirit of truth, love and peace to cast out all that is within you that is evil, dark and sinful and, instead, replace it with what is good, light and holy. Think of any plants you have in your house? How would they do it you decided to water them once every two months or so? They would likely not be around too long, unless they are cactus plants. We also need the “water” of the Spirit on a daily basis, or we will dry up spiritually.

The church offers daily Mass for a reason: we need it! No, we don't have to attend the Holy Eucharist every day, but most of the saints went to daily Mass. Saint Faustina said she feared the day when she could not receive Holy Communion. We can sometimes take the Mass for granted and just attend on Sunday and get into a habit of it but not really enter into the spirit of the mass or pray much. We can even get into a habit of receiving Holy Communion but not fully appreciate Jesus coming too us, loving him, listening to him after receiving him. It should be the most spiritually intimate moment of our week or our day.

## **11.10 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

Pray and then draw a prophetic picture on a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal. Allow yourself and your writing instrument, to be guided by the Spirit. It could be very simple. What is a prophetic picture? Simply a picture you draw that has some deeper spiritual meaning behind it. You could incorporate images like a cross, heart, dove, a smile, praying hands, a mountain, a book, God's eye, a triangle (symbolic of the Holy Trinity) and other images. When you are done, reflect on what you have drawn and try to understand a deeper spiritual meaning behind the image. If possible, use colour.

Images and photographs can either lead us towards God or towards sin. The Devil uses images to lead men into lust, self-gratification and adultery with pornography. The Devil once appeared to Padre Pio as a beautiful naked woman. Padre Pio rejected the Devil's trick and the "woman" became a hideous demon. God can and does use holy images, such as the shroud of Turin, the Divine Mercy Image, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe and many others to inspire us spiritually to pray, love and seek holiness. Creating your own images or drawings is a great way to tap into your inner being and discern God's action in your life.

## **11.11 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“Now there are various kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are various kinds of service, and the same Lord. There are various kinds of workings, but the same God, who works all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the profit of all. For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, by the same Spirit; and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discerning of spirits; to another different kinds of languages; and to another the interpretation of languages. But the one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing to each one separately as he desires.” (1 Corinthians 12:4–11)

As we see, the gifts of the Spirit are for the good of all. The gifts are many but the Spirit is one. Our gifts are not meant to bring us glory but give God the glory. It seems to me foolish to seek “awards” for the gifts God has given us. Let the world seek after earthy glory and awards. Our part is to seek the glory of God, not our own. **“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled. Whoever humbles himself will be exalted,”** Jesus taught us.

## **11.12 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members don’t have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, if prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or service, let us give ourselves to service; or he who teaches, to his teaching; or he who exhorts, to his exhorting: he who gives, let him do it with liberality; he who rules, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” (Romans 12:4–8)

We are the Body of Christ. All the baptized form one body, one spirit, one heart, one mind in Jesus. Our gifts, even though they are different, are meant to support and build up each other. We are also built up spiritually when we use our gifts. Sometimes we can envy someone else’s gift: this is a mistake, for God has given each of us the gifts we should have and we don’t need to have another person’s gifts.

## **11.13 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and humility, with patience, bearing with one another in love; being eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you also were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all. But to each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ . . .

He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, shepherds and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, to the work of serving, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a full grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;” (Ephesians 4:1–7; 11–13)

The Spirit brings unity, not division. Sin leads to division in our lives and in the church. Unity in the Spirit leads to the “bond of peace,” a peace the world cannot give.

## **11.14 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“And above all things be earnest in your love among yourselves, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, employ it in serving one another, as good managers of the grace of God in its various forms. If anyone speaks, let it be as it were the very words of God. If anyone serves, let it be as of the strength which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 4:8–11)

We see from the above Scripture that, “everyone has received a gift.” So, none of us can say, “I don’t have any spiritual gifts.” No, you have at least one gift and so do I. Peter says we are to “employ it in serving one another, as good managers of the grace of God in its various forms.” Again, we see here that we must “use” the gift(s) we have from God. Jesus once taught St. Faustina that if someone did not accept a particular grace from him, he would give that grace to someone else who is willing to accept it. We see again from the above Scripture that God is to be glorified in all of our gifts, through Jesus Christ.

## **11.15 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind; for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin; that you no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past time doing the desire of the Gentiles, and having walked in lewdness, lusts, drunken binges, orgies, carousings, and abominable idolatries.” (1 Peter 4:1–3)

We are to live by the Spirit, not by the flesh. We are either doing the will of God or following the “lusts of men.” There is no middle ground. Sex is an amazing gift of God but the world has perverted it from its original purpose: to unite man and woman in the state of marriage, a holy union, where the two become one. Scripture is clear that, “Drunkards” and the “sexually immoral” will not enter the kingdom of Heaven. Even high ranking clergy members, including Bishops, are not beyond falling into the trap of sexual immorality, sexual abuse, child pornography, pornography and other harmful behaviors. It has grieved me to see some priests I know personally who fell into the trap of sexual exploitation of minors. We must pray for our priests.

## **11.16 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

While not specifically defined as spiritual gifts in the Bible, other abilities and capacities have been considered as spiritual gifts by some Christians. Some are found in the New Testament such as:

- Celibacy (I Corinthians 7:7)
- Hospitality (1 Peter 4:9–10)
- Intercession (Rom. 8:26–27)
- Marriage (I Corinthians 7:7)
- (Effective) witnessing (Acts 1:8, 5:32, 26:22, 1 John 5:6)

Others are found in the Old Testament such as:

- Craftsmanship (such as the special abilities given to artisans who constructed the Tabernacle in Exodus 35:30–33)
- Interpretation of dreams (e.g. Joseph and Daniel)
- Composing spiritual music, poetry, and prose

Cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual\\_gift](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual_gift)

What gifts listed above do you have? Give thanks to the Giver of the gifts, the Holy Spirit! Use your gifts today!

## **11.17 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“Now concerning spiritual things, brothers, I don’t want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were heathen, you were led away to those mute idols, however you might be led. Therefore I make known to you that no man speaking by God’s Spirit says, “Jesus is accursed.” No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” but by the Holy Spirit. Now there are various kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:1-4)

There are modern-day idols that can lure us in the wrong direction, if we are not careful. The idols of the pursuit of riches, power, fame, sexual immorality, the occult and many other things. The Holy Spirit always points to and leads to Jesus. Everything about our lives should say, “Jesus is Lord.” We can be ignorant of spiritual things if we neglect prayer and reading God’s word. Some of the idols of today are not mute: they speak to their adoring fans and, by their lifestyle, promote promiscuity, fornication, prostitution, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual abuse and other negative things. None of these things flow from the Holy Spirit.

## **11.18 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“There are various kinds of service, and the same Lord. There are various kinds of workings, but the same God, who works all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the profit of all. For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, by the same Spirit; and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discerning of spirits; to another different kinds of languages; and to another the interpretation of languages. But the one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing to each one separately as he desires.” (1 Corinthians 12:5–11)

The first time I attended a Catholic charismatic prayer meeting I was amazed at what was going on: people were praising God loudly, singing praise and worship songs with all their hearts, speaking and praying in tongues, prophesying, praying for healing, taking authority over unclean spirits and showing real love for one another with hugs, holding hands and sharing in snacks afterwards. It truly was the Holy Spirit at work.

## **11.19 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all given to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot would say, “Because I’m not the hand, I’m not part of the body,” it is not therefore not part of the body. If the ear would say, “Because I’m not the eye, I’m not part of the body,” it’s not therefore not part of the body.

“If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the smelling be? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body, just as he desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now they are many members, but one body.”  
(1 Corinthians 12:12–20)

Each of us has a different role in the body of Christ, the Church. We all share in the priesthood of Christ: lay people share in the royal priesthood of Christ. Priests share in the ministerial priesthood of Christ. What is important is that we live well the part God has given us in the body, with great love.

## **11.20 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“The eye can’t tell the hand, “I have no need for you,” or again the head to the feet, “I have no need for you.” No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. Those parts of the body which we think to be less honorable, on those we bestow more abundant honor; and our unpresentable parts have more abundant propriety; whereas our presentable parts have no such need. But God composed the body together, giving more abundant honor to the inferior part, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. When one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. Or when one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:21–26)

We need each other. We each have a different function in the body, but we all work together in harmony. God composed the body. The church was built by Jesus on the foundation of Peter and the rest of the Apostles. We are God’s work of art, God’s creation, God’s symphony. We all have our part to play and the melody will not be the same if we decide not to play our part.

## **11.21 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. God has set some in the assembly: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracle workers, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, and various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all miracle workers? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with various tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. Moreover, I show a most excellent way to you.” (1 Corinthians 12:27–31)

The “more excellent way” St. Paul wrote about is love. Love binds everything together into one, for God is love. St. Therese said, “At last I have discovered my vocation! I will be love in the church!” Probably the main reason St. Therese is loved so much throughout the world is her strong emphasis on love: love for God and love for one another. No matter what our gifts are, one thing we all have in common is the vocation to love. Love is kind of the crown of all of our gifts and our whole life. Mother Theresa said, “We can do no great things, just small things with great love.”

## **11.22 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“If a man loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home with him. He who doesn’t love me doesn’t keep my words. The word which you hear isn’t mine, but the Father’s who sent me. I have said these things to you, while still living with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and will remind you of all that I said to you.” (John 14:23–26)

The Holy Spirit is our Counselor or Guide. Who goes to a counselor? Someone who has some sort of problem or personal issue they are dealing with. I went to a counselor not too long ago and had a real breakthrough with a certain issue I was dealing with. I was amazed at how she was able to see the core of the problem and help me discover the resolution to it. The Holy Spirit is the greatest Counselor we could ever have, because He is God and knows all things and sees all things. The Spirit is also our Teacher. We are students of the Spirit, seeking to learn the ways of the Lord. If we allow ourselves to be taught, the Spirit will teach us the way of wisdom and love. He will also remind us of everything Jesus taught to the Apostles.

## **11.23 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

**“Jesus said, I have yet many things to tell you, but you can’t bear them now. However when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak from himself; but whatever he hears, he will speak. He will declare to you things that are coming. He will glorify me, for he will take from what is mine, and will declare it to you.” (John 16:12–14)**

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Jesus said, **“I am the way, the truth and the life.”** So, the Spirit will really guide us to Jesus and his word, for he is truth Incarnate. The Spirit points us to the future: to the Second Coming of Jesus. The Spirit says with us **“Maranatha,” “Come, Lord Jesus.”** Just as Jesus did nothing but what he saw the Father doing, so the Spirit declares nothing but what He hears Jesus speaking. The Spirit proceeds **“from the Father and the Son.”** The Spirit, then, is also the Spirit of the Father. The Spirit’s goal is to glorify Jesus, not himself, although the Spirit, being one with the Father and the Son (Jesus) receives glory whenever Jesus or the Father receives glory. Our goal should be to bring glory to Jesus in our thoughts, words and actions and our whole life and even in our death.

## **11.24 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace; because the mind of the flesh is hostile towards God; for it is not subject to God’s law, neither indeed can it be. Those who are in the flesh can’t please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if it is so that the Spirit of God dwells in you.

“But if any man doesn’t have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his. If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” (Romans 8:5–11)

The Spirit brings life, while the flesh leads to death. We should examine our minds and see what they are set on: the Spirit or the flesh? The Spirit also brings peace but the flesh brings hostility towards God. Let’s set our minds on the things of the Spirit and live.

## **11.25 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

**“Jesus answered, ‘Most certainly I tell you, unless one is born of water and spirit, he can’t enter into God’s Kingdom. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don’t marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born anew.’ The wind blows where it wants to, and you hear its sound, but don’t know where it comes from and where it is going. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’” (John 3:5–8)**

Most Catholics were baptized as infants and do not remember this great event. That is when we were born of water and spirit. The problem often is that, as we grow older, we get lured into the ways of the world and the things of the flesh, and begin to compromise our Baptismal promises. Instead of rejecting sin, we embrace sin. Thus, it is necessary that we have another spiritual rebirth or conversion experience to be truly filled and led by the Spirit of God. We can and should renew our Baptismal promises: reject Satan the Father of lies, reject sin, reject evil, believe in God the Father, Jesus his Son and the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic church and so on.

## **11.26 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“Now when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all with one accord in one place. Suddenly there came from the sky a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Tongues like fire appeared and were distributed to them, and one sat on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak.” (Acts 2:1–5)

The event described above is the “birthday of the church.” The church, the People of God, is the Body of Christ. The Spirit brings life to the Body. Without the Spirit, the Body is, as it were, “lifeless” and without power. With the Spirit filling the Body as a whole and in each individual member, power is given to the church. The Greek word used in the New Testament to refer to the power that the Spirit gives us is *dunamis*, which is where the word “dynamite” comes from. God’s Spirit is like spiritual dynamite in our lives if we are open to the Spirit and pray for a deeper outpouring of the Spirit in our lives. We’re not talking about a little firecracker! Dynamite is loud, powerful and shakes things up!

## 11.27 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts

“But this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel:

‘It will be in the last days, says God,  
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.  
Your sons and your daughters will prophesy.  
Your young men will see visions.  
Your old men will dream dreams.  
Yes, and on my servants and on my handmaidens in  
those days,  
I will pour out my Spirit, and they will prophesy.”  
(Acts 2:16–18)

Blessed Pope John Paul II once said that he believed we were living in the final days of history, where the final battle between God and Satan will take place, where the church and the anti-church engage in a final conflict. It is interesting that St. Malachi’s prophecies of all the Popes until the “last” one ends with our present Pope Francis. The Latin phrase St. Malachi uses for our current Pope is “*Petrus Romanus*,” or “Peter of Rome.” We must always be ready for the Second Coming of Jesus, for he said he will come “**like a thief in the night.**” We should pay attention to our dreams, interior visions and prophecies, for God is still pouring out his Spirit.

## **11.28 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“As for you, the anointing which you received from him remains in you, and you don’t need for anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, you will remain in him. Now, little children, remain in him, that when he appears, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.” (1 John 2:27–29)

The Spirit of the Lord has anointed us. We have been filled with graces and power to do God’s will. Every area of our life is under the guidance of the Spirit and the Spirit will teach us all we need to know. We must “remain” in the Spirit through a life of prayer and holiness and reading God’s word and obeying the teachings of Jesus. It is said, “The proof is in the pudding.” Well, the proof of a true Christian, led and filled by the Spirit, is righteousness (holiness, upright living). As Jesus said, “**A good tree bears good fruit.**” Jesus criticized some religious leaders of his day and said, “**Your father is the Devil.**” Strong words, but Jesus knew the hearts of everyone he met. Those people were leading evil lives, and thus were bearing bad fruit.

## **11.29 Use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Especially the Charismatic Gifts**

“Therefore we know no one after the flesh from now on. Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation; namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their trespasses, and having committed to us the word of reconciliation.

We are therefore ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:16–21)

Jesus was dead and his body was in the tomb. When the Spirit raised him from the dead he began his eternal reign as the Risen Lord. When we were dead in our sin, God gave us new life through our faith and baptism. He also renews our spiritual life in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and fills us with Divine life with the Body and Blood of Jesus at every mass.

## **12.1 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

Jesus said to them, “Go into all the world, and preach the Good News to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned.” (Mark 16:15–16)

The words of Jesus above are called “The Great Commission.” Jesus sends his disciples out to the world to proclaim the Good News, or Gospel, to all creation. Jesus gives you and me the same task: “Go!” Where should we go? Everywhere the Lord sends us: in our homes, our neighbours, our local parish church, our work, our school, our friends, our online community of friends and so on. Jesus promises eternal salvation to those who believe the good news and are baptized. Eternal punishment is the sorry lot of those who reject the Good News. Our task is not to judge people’s consciences, but to share the Gospel with them by our lives and our words.

Notice that Jesus said to preach the “Good” News, not the “Bad News.” No, the message of God’s love in Jesus for us is truly good news. Eternal life in Heaven with God and all the angels and saints is good news. The Gospel is “Great News.” It is good that we feed the poor and clothe the naked as a church, but it is even more important that we proclaim the Good News to all people.

## **12.2 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

“Preach the word; be urgent in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all patience and teaching. For the time will come when they will not listen to the sound doctrine, but, having itching ears, will heap up for themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside to fables. But you be sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, and fulfill your ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:2-5)

St. Paul echoes the words of Jesus: “Preach the word.” St. Paul lived an example of preaching the word in season and out of season, welcome and unwelcome. He literally lost his head because of his preaching of the word of God about Jesus. We are to have a sense of urgency in preaching to others: people’s eternal salvation is at stake. One of the main problems of our contemporary society is the loss of the sense of eternal destiny: Heaven or Hell. We tend to focus on improving our home, getting a new car, getting RRSPs TFSAs and so on. What about our “eternal bank account?” Just as St. Paul said, there are many books being sold today that are full of spiritual errors, but people buy them in droves because they simply want to have their ears tickled.

## 12.3 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus

“For if I preach the Good News, I have nothing to boast about; for necessity is laid on me; but woe is to me, if I don’t preach the Good News.”

(1 Corinthians 9:16)

St. Paul did not see preaching the Good News as an option. It was a necessary task for him. His attitude should be ours as well. I believe that if we are not in some way sharing the Good News with others it means only one thing: our relationship with Jesus is weak, at best, and we have become lax and lukewarm, led astray by the seductive and false influence of this world, or our own flesh which seeks to be pampered at all times, or the Devil, the Father of lies.

Back in the 1980s when I was studying at St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon, the Lord spoke to me interiorly and said to tell this particular young woman “**Jesus loves you.**” She was quite beautiful and tall but within she was searching for true love and meaning in her life. When I spoke with her she was deeply moved and responded by coming to a Life in the Spirit Seminar at our weekly charismatic prayer meeting. The Lord transformed her life in a very powerful way. She said that she had felt Jesus speaking the same message to her in her heart recently. It confirmed the word the Lord gave to me.

## **12.4 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

“Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are far off, even as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.” With many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation!’” (Acts 2:38–40)

St. Peter also had a burning desire to teach people about Jesus and he, too, paid for it with his life: he was crucified upside down in Rome. When we first meet Jesus in the Gospel we need to repent: to turn away from our sins, and embrace Jesus and the new way of living he taught us: the way of love for God and one another as Jesus has loved us. We need to renew our baptismal vows and live out our rejection of sin, Satan and his lies. We need to be filled with the gift of the Spirit of God and begin to produce good fruit in our lives, fruit that will last. We truly live in a very wicked generation where almost anything goes.

## **12.5 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

“And how will they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Good News of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10:15)

One of the concluding proclamations that priests can make at the end of Mass is “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!” What a great way to be “sent out!” We are not told “Go in peace to watch TV at home, go on the internet and eat and drink to your heart’s content!” No, we are told to go and “serve the Lord.” How do we serve the Lord? One of the first ways is by living a holy life. Second, we serve the Lord when we do his will. One of the main thing he wills for us to do is share the Good News with others.

We must realize that each one of us has been sent by Jesus to evangelize others in our part of the world. The Bible teaches this, the Church teaches it, the Pope teaches it and our pastors teach it. What we spend time on each day indicates what we consider a priority in our lives. If we spend time praying, prayer is a priority for us. If we spend time reading Scripture, Scripture is a priority for us. We also need to spend time sharing the Good News with others, for then it will truly also be a priority for us.

## **12.6 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

**“Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18–20)**

Jesus has all the authority “in heaven and on earth.” That is significant authority! He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords. No other religious figure comes even remotely close to the power, authority and significance of Jesus, for his is the only Son of God and only Savior of the world. The early Christians would draw a fish in the sand to show another person they were Christians. It was their secret Christian symbol. One would start the fish, the other would complete it. The Greek word for fish is “ΙΧΘΥΣ” (Ichthys) and each letter stood for the following ancient Christian creed: “Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Savior.”

We see here also the invocation of the Holy Trinity as a Baptismal formula. The Church continues to Baptize people using this Trinitarian formula. What a joy to know that Jesus is with us **“always, even to the end of the age.”**

## **12.7 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

“For I am not ashamed of the Good News of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes; for the Jew first, and also for the Greek. For in it is revealed God’s righteousness from faith to faith. As it is written, ‘But the righteous shall live by faith.’” (Romans 1:16–17)

The Good News of Jesus Christ is full of power: the power of God for our salvation, our eternal salvation. Salvation does not begin after we are dead: it begins now. Eternal life begins for us now in this life. Death is merely a transition from this life into the eternal life in Christ that we already possess. The key in all of this is belief or faith. We must believe in Jesus and his words and promises. If we are weak in faith we must ask for deeper faith.

Increasingly Jews are coming to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. The Jews for Jesus is one such group, with many members in Toronto, Ontario. Jews who believe in Jesus are called “Messianic Jews.” One of the highlights of my life was going on a pilgrimage with my parents and aunt and many others to Israel, the Holy Land, and visiting all the main places associated with Jesus: his tomb, the Gardens of Gethsemane, the Sea of Galilee, the tomb of Lazarus, Bethlehem, the Way of the Cross and many other holy places. God visited the earth.

## 12.8 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus

“For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we have set our trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things.”

(1 Timothy 4:10–11)

Our trust must be “in the living God.” Jesus told St. Faustina to have the inscription “**Jesus, I Trust in You**” at the bottom of the Divine Mercy image. Jesus is the Savior of all people, all men and women. Not all believe this, however, which is why we need to fast and pray for the conversion of sinners. We must “labor” for the Good News and even suffer for it. If Jesus labored and suffered and the Apostles labored and suffered and the Saints labored and suffered why should we get off the hook? Each of us has a cross to carry. Some crosses are heavier than others. God knows best what we need and what we can endure.

The age of martyr’s has not left the church. Last year (2013) Father François Murad was shot eight times and killed by anti-Assad rebels at St. Anthony’s monastery in Ghassanieh, Lebanon. Both St. Therese and St. Faustina wanted to die as martyrs but it was not the Lord’s will for them.

## **12.9 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God...”  
(Ephesians 2:8)

Our faith and salvation is a gift of God. Our Baptism is also a gift from God. Faith is usually handed down from generation to generation by families. There are, of course, many exceptions to this. It is by God’s grace that we have been rescued from sin and eternal death. We cannot boast of our own works to achieve salvation. We must do good works, but these are simply a reflection of our faith in Christ. Our faith is a gift that must be shared; it is not meant for us to “keep to ourselves.” No, the Gospel is meant for all to hear.

There are countless ways for us to share the Good News in our daily lives: by our example, our words, by what we wear (women especially need to be sure they are modest in their choice of clothing, for men can be led into lustful thoughts by certain fashions). Others will see what books we read, what internet links we promote, watch videos online we watch and share, what Tweets we re-tweet and so on. God is also watching everything we say and do. Just as people have lost their jobs because of what they posted online, so we can “lose” our close relationship with the Lord if we don’t guard our words and deeds.

## **12.10 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

**“For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)**

Here is the kernel of the Gospel. It is the heart of the Good News. It starts with God the Father, who shows his love for the world in a very powerful and unique way: by sending his only Son Jesus to be conceived in the womb of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be born in Bethlehem in Israel, to grow up in wisdom and age and to preach, heal and proclaim the Kingdom of God to all who would hear him and, finally, to suffer and die on the cross and rise from the dead on the third day.

The world is simply invited to believe in Jesus, to trust in him. Jesus told St. Faustina that we are currently experiencing the “door” of his mercy but later people will have to pass through the door of his justice if they do not respond to his mercy. We are all invited by Jesus to enter the door of his mercy: to come to him with our sins and worries and trust in him for healing, hope, love and mercy. He turns no one away, even the greatest sinners.

## **12.11 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

Why should we spread the good news of salvation in Jesus? Well, because Jesus told us to! Second, it is natural for us to spread good news. If a couple has a baby, they spread the news. When we discover new life in Jesus it is only natural for us to share by word and action this wonderful gift of eternal life that Jesus gives us. If you won 10 million dollars in a lottery, would you not quickly call your family members and friends? Why are we not even more excited about the Good News of Jesus and God working wonders in our lives? Perhaps we have not been praying as much as we should be, reading Scripture as much as we should be, attending mass as much as we should be.

Good things are meant to be shared: good food, good drinks, good books, good music, good art, good websites, good videos and so on. Good spiritual news is also meant for sharing, and that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The litmus test for our union with Jesus, I believe, is our desire to share him with others and see them follow and love and serve him as well. Only when we personally experience Jesus as “good news” in our lives we will see the importance of sharing Jesus with others. Allow Jesus to transform your life and use you to share his love with others.

## **12.12 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

What is salvation? It is being rescued from the power of sin, death and hell. Only Jesus has done this for us. He is the Son of God and Savior of the world. This is truly good news! We just need to believe and get baptized and then follow everything Jesus taught us to do. Have you ever met anyone who radiated the joy and love of Christ without saying a word? I have: Poor Clare nuns in Mission, BC. One of them in particular radiated the love of the Lord in a very deep way. She was a joy to be around. We too are called to radiate the love, joy and peace of Jesus in our lives to those we meet.

I once went to a huge youth rally in Rome, Italy and one of the Bishops speaking taught about the meaning of Joy. He said joy is three letters: JOY. The J stands for "Jesus," the O stands for "others," and the Y stands for "you." In other words, if we want joy in our lives we must put Jesus first, others second and ourselves last. Another way of thinking of JOY is "Jesus Over You." That is, if Jesus is Lord of our lives, he will be "over" everything we do and everything we are. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is joy. "The joy of the Lord is my strength!"

## **12.13 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

There is a saying, "Faith is caught, not taught." While there is some truth in this, there is always the need to teach the name and message of Jesus. Example alone is not enough. Still, our life must give witness to our faith, otherwise we are merely actors. As they say, "Actions speak louder than words." Jesus witnessed with his words and his actions: he fed the hungry, cured the lame and the blind, cast out demons, raised the dead, forgave sinners, walked on water, was scourged, crowned with thorns, carried a cross, was crucified, died and was buried, rose from the dead, ascended into Heaven.

When I was a little boy my mother would kneel down with me every night at my bed and say bedtime prayers with me. They were not very long but we did this every day for a long time until I got older. My mom did not simply tell me to say my prayers every night: she led the way and prayed with me. We also were taken to mass every Sunday. My parents had a book on the life of St. Francis of Assisi filled with many colour photos of Assisi and images of St. Francis and St. Clare. This book inspired me to look into joining the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) in Vancouver, BC. I also enjoyed reading the Lives of the Saints in our home and sometimes the large family Bible.

## 12.14 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus

The name

Jesus

means “Savior.”

Give thanks to Jesus for saving you! Reflect on things that Jesus has “saved” you from. Perhaps it was an addiction to drugs or alcohol. Perhaps it was an addiction to sexual immorality, pornography, lying, cheating, stealing or criminal activity. No matter how dark your life has been, or is now, Jesus is your Savior and he will rescue you from everything that oppresses you. Jesus also saves us from ourselves, i.e., a preoccupation with our own desires and agenda. Jesus said, **“When the Son of Man sets you free, you are free indeed.”**

## **12.15 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

There are many ways to spread the good news of Jesus. Here are some of them:

By our actions, by our words, Facebook posts (photos, words), Twitter, posting YouTube videos about Jesus, email, Christian songs, Christian books, the Bible (Scriptures), holy pictures, Christian websites, take a friend to church, prayer meetings, sharing your testimony of faith in Jesus, write a book, make a video, make a blog, Pintrest, Google+, Gospel music party, join a choir, Christmas caroling, singing Gospel music and Golden Oldies in nursing homes, visiting prisoners, visiting the sick, comforting the dying, praying for the conversion of sinners, praying for family members, praying for the holy souls in Purgatory, fasting for the conversion of sinners, giving money or goods to the poor or charity, and many, many more ways.

The best way of sharing the Good News of Jesus is by living the Gospel ourselves in the most radical way we can. We can take an inventory on our spiritual lives and see what we need to change, to let go of, to start doing, to stop doing, to give away and so on. People cannot dispute the witness of our lives. The more we are transformed and renewed by Jesus and the Spirit of God, the more effective and influential our Christian witness will be to the world around us.

## **12.16 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

Please fill in the blanks on a sheet of paper or in your spiritual journal:

I love Jesus because . . .

I trust Jesus because . . .

I will share the good news of Jesus because . . .

Here are some ways I plan to spread the gospel . . .

Shakespeare wrote, “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.” We should count the ways that we love Jesus, for he is our greatest love. Jesus said we must love him more than we love our spouse or children, for he is our God and the source of all love and life. We can also “count the ways” that God has loved us and we will next be able to finish the list!

Again I recommend an online program called Simpleology [www.simpleology.com](http://www.simpleology.com) They recently added a “Project” management tool that can be applied to your spiritual goals. It is free. We can view our spiritual goals in some ways like a school or work task. We list our goal and the means we will use to achieve it. We can list, e.g. occasions of sin in our life, and daily spiritual habits.

## **12.17 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

Pope Paul VI once said, “The church exists in order to evangelize.” That means, as members of the church, we also exist in order to evangelize, or bring the Good News of Jesus to others in the world. The church does not exist for us to have a social club, play bingo, have meetings, bake pancakes and so on. No, we are mainly called to evangelize, i.e. spread the good news of Jesus. Otherwise, we are simply not doing what God has called us to do.

Evangelization is not just the priest’s job: it is every Christians job. True, priests are called full time into the vineyard of the Lord and give sermons every Sunday and often at daily Mass, but we are also called, as lay faithful, to bring the word and presence of Jesus to our world: our work, our school, our community, our online world and so on. We may need to rethink our identity as Christians and as members of our parish. Is there another person you know who is Catholic who you can start to pray for evangelization efforts to begin and grow in your community? The Lord may be calling you to be a pioneer in your parish and community in a spiritual outreach to others. Mother Theresa was called to leave a comfortable convent to enter the slums of Calcutta to reach out to the poor with Christ’s love. Where is the Lord calling you to bear witness to Jesus?

## **12.18 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

Pope Francis uses Twitter to teach people, especially young people, about following Jesus. He tweeted: **“To follow Jesus means to share his merciful love for every human being.”** (September 12, 2013) Why not start your own Twitter and share your faith in Jesus? I’m sure St. Paul the Apostle would have his own Twitter account.

We see from Pope Francis’ words that following Jesus involves sharing his merciful love for others. Our faith is not meant for us alone. It is not a solo journey through life that is unrelated to anyone else. No, we are all, through faith and baptism, brothers and sisters in Jesus. We must support each other and learn from each other. Along with this we are called to reach out beyond the borders of the Church to the rest of the world: to non-Christians, to people who do not know God, to people who do not believe in God and so on. I was very happy to see the Pope talking about the merciful love of Jesus, as it fits with our name Missionaries of Merciful Love. I am seeing increasingly more online about God’s merciful love.

## **12.19 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

Pray this prayer from your heart:

Jesus, I love you. I will do whatever you want me to do, go wherever you want me to go, and say whatever you want me to say. Use me to spread your good news to others. Use my heart, my hands, my voice and all my talents to evangelize the world. I surrender everything to you: my past, my present and my future. May your Holy Spirit lead me in everything I say and do. Thank you, Jesus, for loving me so much. Jesus, I trust in your merciful love. Amen.

Every day we need to surrender to the Lord: surrender our agenda, our desires, our plans, our goals, our talents and so on. Surrendering to Jesus every day is a practical application of Jesus as Lord in our lives. If Jesus truly is Lord of your life then every area in your life should be aligned or in harmony with what God's will for your is. Otherwise, there is work for us to do: We need to conform our minds, our attitudes, our words, our actions, our plans to God's will. This takes time, prayer and discernment. A silent day of retreat would also be a big help. A monthly day of silent retreat is part of the MML way of life and is also beneficial for all Christians. Try fitting a monthly silent retreat into your life, no matter how busy you are.

## 12.20 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus

We need to let go of any attachment to sin if we want to be effective witnesses to Jesus. This includes certain people, places or things that lead us to sin. Resolve today to break free from any attachment to sin in your life: in your thoughts, words, actions or omissions. (An example of sins of omission would be for a Catholic to willingly neglect to attend Sunday mass.) Then, make a good confession and start a new life. Monthly confession is a good practice. It can help maintain our spiritual lives.

You will know if you have an attachment to sin if, when you attempt to stop a certain behavior, you feel a strong urge to return to it or even a very strong temptation to immediately commit the sin again. At these times we must pray and do whatever we need to do to get out of the situation we are in. I have read of some men who had a habit of watching pornography in hotel rooms they were staying in because of business travel remove the TV sets from their room. They knew they could not trust themselves. Other men knew that had to cancel the internet in their home and get rid of their computer. These are radical steps but good examples of the teaching of Jesus, **“If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off.”** The spiritual principal is called radical amputation. What do you need to cut out?

## **12.21 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

“They overcame him (the Devil) because of the Lamb’s blood, and because of the word of their testimony.” (Revelation 12:11)

Our testimony is our witness to what Jesus has done in our life. We give witness by what we say and what we do. Our testimony is our own experience of the good news of Jesus. Years ago I wrote out my testimony and shared it on a website I started called I Trust Jesus. It was read by many thousands of people until I decided one day to shut down the website and start other websites. My testimony, though, was picked up by a Catholic woman in Europe and she created an online slideshow of it with beautiful pictures. She also shortened it, just dealing with most of the essentials, and I am glad about that, for the focus is more on Jesus, not me. You can view this slideshow on our MML website at [www.mercifullove.com](http://www.mercifullove.com) and look for the “Pete’s Story” link on the home page.

I just added my “Story” slideshow to a new page on our MML website and so look forward to many more people reading my testimony of how Jesus has given me a new life. I also plan to publish a small booklet with the words of my “Story” as another way of sharing my testimony with others. Our testimony is a powerful weapon against the forces of evil.

## **12.22 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

**“Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28–30)**

This Scripture speaks of the great love that Jesus has for us and his desire to give us rest for our souls. Are you stressed out or tired? Come to Jesus and he will refresh you. Jesus gives us a peace that this world cannot give. Sometimes we go to other people or places when we labor and are heavily burdened: we go to a counselor, a friend, a family member or we turn to food or drinking more alcohol. Others may offer some good advice, but only Jesus can give us true rest, rest for our souls.

The world offers many things: good food, good drinks, pleasure, money, power, fun, entertainment, travel and so on. What the world cannot give us, though, is rest for our souls. The world creates unrest in our souls. Sin is a heavy spiritual burden that oppresses us. Jesus wants to take this burden away from us and place his yoke on our shoulders. He is the Good Shepherd and we are his sheep. Let’s listen to his voice and follow him.

## **12.23 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

**“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with me.” (Revelation 3:20)**

This wonderful Scripture is what I once heard Jesus speaking to me when he was calling me to open my heart to him at a time in my life when I was searching for meaning, peace and love. Jesus speaks these words to you as well. Open your heart to Jesus every day and allow him to come into your life and give you peace, joy and love. What is the door Jesus is talking about? It is your heart. How does Jesus knock? In many ways: through the Scriptures we read and hear at Mass; through our conscience; through others; through the lives of the Saints; through the teaching of the Church and a myriad of other ways.

Jesus promises that if we open the door of our hearts to him he will come in and “dine” with us. This is a reference to the Holy Eucharist, where Jesus shares his Body and Blood with us at the banquet of the Mass. Jesus is promising fellowship with him in an intimate way: sharing in his very life. This is why it is taught that the celebration of the Holy Eucharist is the culmination of evangelization, where Jesus truly reigns as Lord.

## **12.24 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. Whoever loves the Father also loves the child who is born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is loving God, that we keep his commandments. His commandments are not grievous. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world: your faith.” (1 John 5:1–4)

In Jesus we are born again. This is a spiritual birth. The Holy Spirit comes within us and makes us children of God, when we were baptized. Jesus taught us to call God our Father and to love the Father, who is full of mercy. The test of our love for God is our obedience to the words of Jesus. His new commandment is “love each other as I have loved you.”

Notice that St. John reminds us that, “His commandments are not grievous.” In other words, God is not an ogre: His is our loving Father and his commandments are meant to help, not hinder, our lives. We can celebrate that our faith gives us victory over the world! As the song proclaims, “In the name of Jesus we have the victory!”

## **12.25 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

“The saying is faithful and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. However, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might display all his patience, for an example of those who were going to believe in him for eternal life.”

(1 Timothy 1:15–16)

We should never be discouraged because of our weaknesses and sins, for Jesus came to call sinners and save them. Jesus said that the more a person is forgiven, the more he or she will love God and be grateful. Are you sad because of your current or past sins? Do you feel like there is no hope for you or you can never be holy? Have hope in Jesus! He will help you with whatever you are facing. Jesus came into our world for the very purpose of saving sinners. He did not come for the holy and wise ones. Besides, as Scripture says, “All have sinned” and we have all fallen short of the glory of God.

St. Paul “obtained mercy” and we can obtain mercy as well. We can go to the Sacrament of Mercy, i.e. confession (Reconciliation), and meet the Merciful Jesus working through the priest. Jesus is hidden by the priest by a thin veil. It is he who forgives our sins and pours out the mercy of God upon us.

## **12.26 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

(Romans 6:23)

What a wonderful gift God has given us: eternal life in Heaven with Jesus! It is a gift. We just need to believe and turn away from sin and follow Jesus, carrying our cross. Sin may seem rewarding at first but it really does not lead to anything good. It leads to death. Let's choose Jesus today and every day! Sin is like a job: we work at it and get wages. The problem is that the wages of sin are not good. They lead to death and even eternal death or hell, if we die in the state of mortal sin. Who needs a job like that?

The free gift of God is eternal life, or Heaven, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Salvation is not like working for sin. It is true that we have to “work out” our salvation “in fear and trembling,” but salvation is a gift. No one works for a gift. The gift is simply given by the giver. The Giver of all good gifts is God, working through the Holy Spirit. The world seeks the “fountain of youth.” Many people are determined to look beautiful, live a long life and other things. These people really need to see that eternal life in Jesus is far superior to simply prolonging our life or our physical attractiveness.

## **12.27 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

**“This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3)**

It is eternal life for us to know God our Father and Jesus, whom the Father sent to the world. The Father wants each of us to have a deep personal relationship with him through his Son Jesus. There is only one true God: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit: One God in Three Divine Persons. It is noteworthy that eternal life is summed up as “knowing” the only true God and Jesus Christ. Our relationship with God, then, is the main reality of eternal life. Yes, Heaven has been described as having “many mansions” and “streets of gold” and other things, but it our loving union with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that constitutes the greatest joy and glory of Heaven.

While it is important for us to respect the religious freedom and ideas of others, we must not fall into the error of thinking that, “All religions are equal” or “we all worship the same God.” A simple study of various world religions shows that the definitions and characteristics of God in non-Christian religions cannot be reconciled with the true God that Christians worship, except for the Judaism, for our God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as well.

## **12.28 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

**‘Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will not be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”’ (John 6:35)**

Jesus feeds us every time we attend mass. He feeds us with his Word and with his Body and Blood. Apart from Jesus we will be spiritually hungry and thirsty. Let’s turn to Jesus every day and receive him as the Bread of Life. Jesus is concerned with our whole lives, not just part of our lives. He offers himself as Bread to fill us with his life. Bread is a basic staple of life all over the world. The Israelites were fed by God with manna from Heaven for forty years. This mysterious “bread” kept them alive. It was a prefiguring of Jesus feeding us with the Bread of his flesh.

Again, Jesus says we have to “come to” him. He invites us to each Lord’s Supper. It is our responsibility to show up at the banquet that the Lord has prepared for us, at least every Sunday and, preferably, every day. Jesus promises that if we come to him, the Bread of Life, we will not be hungry or thirsty again. He is talking about spiritual hunger, not physical hunger. Jesus will satisfy our souls now and forever.

## **12.29 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

**“One who believes in the Son has eternal life” (John 3:36)**

Heaven, or eternal life, is something that begins in this life here and now. When we believe in Jesus, the Son of God, we receive the great gift of eternal life. To believe in Jesus means to put our trust in him, to have confidence in him, to turn to him in all our needs and trials in good times and bad times. Jesus will never let us down. He is always faithful. He is always good to us. He is always merciful. Do you believe in the Son? If so, rejoice, for you have eternal life.

It all comes down to faith or trust in Jesus. Children trust their parents because they know they have more experience in life, they are older, wiser and they love their children. Jesus has more experience than us, for he is God's Son, he is older, wiser and he loves us all as his children. We should, then, have no fear in trusting Jesus with our lives and everything in our lives. The Lord will provide all we need. He will never forsake you or abandon you. We may stray away from him but he will search us out and call us back to union with him.

## **12.30 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

**“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.”**

(Luke 19:10)

Do you ever feel lost? If so, know that Jesus came to save the lost. Sometimes we can get discouraged in our life and feel down. It is important that we don't give in to sorrow. We should turn to Jesus for strength and wisdom to know what to do. Jesus is the Way, Truth and Life. He shows us the way to the Father, to Heaven. Jesus teaches us the truth about God. Jesus gives us new life with his Holy Spirit dwelling within us. Each one of us was lost before we were found by Jesus. We were on our own, in the dark, captive to sin and blown in every direction by the spirit of the world and led astray by the Devil.

Thanks be to God that he did not leave us alone! The Father sent the Son to rescue us all from spiritual darkness and sin and death. He saved us from the deceptions of the world and the false promises of the Devil. As the writer of Amazing Grace, John Newton, wrote, “I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.” This man used to be a slave trader but had a powerful conversion experience and gave his life to Jesus. He became an Anglican cleric.

## **12.31 Spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus**

Here we are, at the end of this book! I hope you have enjoyed reading it! Remember, you can always read it again for another year! I hope that you have grown spiritually as a result of reading this book and putting various things into practice. Remember, God loves you. God is merciful. Trust in him. Jesus loves you deeply.

### **Some books I recommend you read are:**

The Bible (especially the Gospel of St. John)  
The Diary of St. Faustina Kowalska  
The Story of a Soul (Life of St. Therese)  
The Catechism of the Catholic Church  
The Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office)  
Heaven Rocks! (Cyndie's near-death experience)

I would like to end with a powerful prayer for conversion that Jesus taught St. Faustina: **“O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of Mercy for us, I trust in You.”** (187) Use this prayer for your family and friends and everyone who needs your prayers. May the Lord bless you and keep you always in his merciful love!

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