

SPIRITUAL WARFARE
AND DIVINE MERCY

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The Weapons for Our Times

Fr. Ken Geraci, CPM

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Ken Geraci

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¹ This applies to the examination of conscience found in the back of the book.

*In loving memory of John Moorehouse,
Catholic husband, father of five, and editor of TAN Books*

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PREFACE

After several years of crisscrossing the United States as a mission preacher and retreat master, I have been tempted to set aside all of my preaching material and speak exclusively on the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Though a slightly impulsive sentiment, I believe we have entered some final chapters of our Faith that would merit such an action (CCC 675–677).

It is no surprise to anyone reading this book that the Catholic faith is suffering worldwide. My personal experience of the general cross-section of the Faith in America is that it has a grim outlook. There are only a few examples of dioceses in the United States that are flourishing, and even fewer countries that have been able to maintain and grow their Catholic identity. As a traveling missionary, it is rare that I find myself in a parish bursting with zealous parishioners. More often than not, I find myself at parishes in a state of attrition, where parishioners are mostly in their sixties and young families make up only a fraction of the congregation. Most of the faithful will tell us that it has been years since they have heard sermons on the Eucharist, sin, hell and the devil, the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, and other vital elements that make up our Faith. As clearly represented in our culture, the Faith is under siege. We are losing.

Do not take my word for it; simply examine your own experience with family and friends. Everywhere I go, without exception, people are asking for prayers for their family members or friends who have fallen away from the Faith. Far too many lament the fact that their children no longer practice their Catholic faith, or that their grandchildren have never received the sacraments or get to hear the Holy Name of Jesus and His teachings in their homes. Every one of us knows the pain of having those we love inch closer to eternal damnation because they have abandoned Jesus Christ and conformed themselves to the world.

When faced with these realities, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and helpless. However, we have been given weapons from heaven to battle against the powers of hell and *win*. War has been declared on us (see Rv 12:17), and we have two choices: surrender or fight.

When speaking on these subjects, there are those who are blindly optimistic. They say to me, “But Father, what’s the big deal? I have read the last chapter of the Bible and we win!” To which I simply retort, “*But what is the score?*” Did your children make it to the winning side? Did your loved ones make it? What about our enemies or those who persecuted us; where are they?” Our Lady of Fatima tells us that souls are falling into hell like snowflakes in winter because there is no one to offer prayers or sacrifices for them.

This book hopes to open our minds to the reality of spiritual warfare and the role the Divine Mercy message can play in your victory. It will open our minds to a greater awareness of the assaults of the devil and the weapons we have at our disposal to combat him. This journey will help to inform

and equip you to engage in this battle, to protect ourselves and our loved ones, and to rescue souls that have fallen into darkness.

This book will begin with a basic overview of spiritual warfare, followed by an outline of the spiritual weapons we have available, specifically as it relates to the four weapons given to us by Jesus through the Divine Mercy message. The most important chapters will be on the Divine Mercy Chaplet as an extension of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Sacrifice of the Mass, and how the Chaplet of Divine Mercy makes present the graces of Calvary. For many of you, this teaching will be new and enable you to pray the Chaplet with greater intentionality, vigor, and power. We are fighting not only for our own souls when we pray but for *those of the whole world*.

Like my previous book, *Why Be Catholic?*, this book is an adaptation of the preaching and conferences I have given over the years. It is my sincere hope to expand your knowledge of spiritual warfare and help equip you for the battle so that one day you may look upon the Face of God.

AN INTRODUCTION TO SAINT FAUSTINA AND THE DIVINE MERCY DEVOTION

Some of my readers may already be familiar with the story of Saint Faustina Kowalska and the Divine Mercy Devotion, but others may not. Still others may simply need a refresher. While I will of course go into more detail in the chapters that follow, it is probably prudent here to introduce you to this wonderful Polish nun and the devotion that Christ instituted through her; a devotion that has swept across the world in the last half-century.²

Maria Faustina (birth name Helena) Kowalska was born on August 25, 1905, in Glogowiec, Poland, into a Catholic family. She was always an ordinary girl: a good daughter, sibling, and friend. Yet, there was a particular set of graces dwelling in her soul that gave her a deeper spiritual sensitivity than others. At the age of seven, Helena first felt the promptings towards religious life. Around the age of eighteen, Helena approached her parents about entering the convent; for whatever reason, her parents were adamantly against the idea and denied her permission to pursue religious life. Discouraged and hurt by this, she tried to drown

² If you feel you are already sufficiently familiar with this background, feel free to skip ahead to chapter 1.

out her calling by immersing herself in the vain things of life. But in July of 1924, while at a dance with friends, in the midst of the crowded room and music, Jesus Christ appeared to her. We read in her diary:

While everybody was having a good time, my soul was experiencing deep torments. As I began to dance, I suddenly saw Jesus at my side, Jesus racked with pain, stripped of His clothing, all covered with wounds, who spoke these words to me: **How long shall I put up with you and how long will you keep putting Me off?**³ At that moment the charming music stopped, [and] the company I was with vanished from my sight; there remained Jesus and I. (*Diary 9*)

Helena faked a headache, then excused herself from the dance and went directly to the Cathedral of Saint Stanislaus Kostka. There she prostrated herself in prayer and asked Our Lord for guidance: “Then I heard these words: **Go at once to Warsaw; you will enter a convent there.** I rose from prayer, came home, and took care of things that needed to be settled. As best I could, I confided to my sister what took place within my soul. I told her to say good-bye to our parents, and thus, in my one dress, with no other belonging, I arrived in Warsaw” (*Diary 10*).

In July of 1924, acting in great faith, Helena traveled to Warsaw, where Our Lord guided her to a confessor who helped her find basic accommodations while she searched

³ Throughout Faustina’s diary, quoted often in this book, Christ’s words appear in bold, and the Blessed Virgin Mary’s in italics.

for a convent. Visiting numerous convents, she was turned away from them all. “Sorrow gripped my heart, and I said to the Lord Jesus, ‘Help me; don’t leave me alone.’ At last, I knocked on our door [of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy]” (*Diary* 13).

Though Helena received her initial acceptance into the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, there was still the matter of a dowery. As a result of World War I, the economic situation in Poland was dire. Convents could not afford to take in a member without some sort of financial support being paid. To raise the necessary money, Helena took a job as a “domestic” (nanny and house keeper) for the Lipszyc family near Warsaw. She was beloved by the family and noted as a dedicated worker. After nearly a year of service, Helena was able to cover her costs to enter religious life; she officially applied and was accepted into the congregation on August 1, 1925. Nine months later, on April 30, 1926, Helena received the habit of the congregation and was given the name Sister Maria Faustina.

Initially, Sr. Faustina’s religious experience was relatively normal. She was a sister of the second choir, which relegated her to kitchen duties and manual labor, all of which she was very accustomed to and did the work with great joy. She loved the periods of prayer and even longed for greater opportunities for it. This temptation, along with other spiritual oppression, caused Sr. Faustina to consider leaving her convent for another. But Divine Providence willed that she stay: “I saw the very sorrowful Face of Jesus. There were open wounds on His Face, and large tears were falling on my bedspread. Not knowing what all this meant, I asked

Jesus, ‘Jesus, who has hurt You so?’ And Jesus said to me, **It is you who will cause Me this pain if you leave this convent. It is to this place that I called you and nowhere else; and I have prepared many graces for you.** I begged pardon of Jesus and immediately changed my decision” (*Diary* 19).

The darkness grew and lasted approximately one year. On April 16, 1928, two weeks prior to her first vows, she received a gift of divine love that lifted her from her darkness and allowed her to forget her past sufferings.

Once in vows, Faustina worked in the kitchen and carried out various duties in the congregation and with various houses. Though often overcome with illness, she served wherever she was needed with great joy and love. In addition, Sr. Faustina lived an austere lifestyle with extensive fasts. This is reminiscent of the life of Bernadette Soubirous, the visionary from Lourdes. Saint Bernadette received visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who announced to the world that she is “the Immaculate Conception.” The Blessed Mother gave the world a place of pilgrimage to her Son and also a place of healing. Because Bernadette was “chosen” to receive these revelations, the common world thought her to be a living saint, but she knew better. Bernadette entered the convent, where she conformed herself to the rule of the congregation and sanctified her daily duties through prayer. Bernadette was not made a saint because of the visions and revelations; she was made a saint because she loved, prayed, obeyed, and suffered with great zeal for souls. In short, she conformed her life to Christ. Sr. Faustina set out on a similar path. “Neither graces, nor revelations, nor raptures, nor gifts granted to a soul make it perfect, but rather the intimate

union of the soul with God. . . . My sanctity and perfection is based upon the close union of my will with the will of God” (*Diary* 1107).

On the evening of February 22, 1931, Jesus appeared to Sr. Faustina and asked her to paint an image according to the pattern she saw, with the signature, “Jesus, I trust in You” (*Diary* 47). It was at this point that the Divine Mercy Image was first introduced to Sr. Faustina. After her perpetual vows, she was sent to Vilnius, Poland, where Our Lord placed her under the spiritual direction of Fr. Michael Sopocko. Though mostly illiterate, Sr. Faustina was directed to write down all of the messages she received from Jesus. Father Sopocko, convinced of the importance of what was happening, assisted Sr. Faustina in this labor of Mercy. It took until January 1934 for the two to find an artist who was able to paint the image according to Faustina’s directives. This unlikely team began gathering fuel for a fire that soon would ignite the world ablaze with the Mercy of God.

At this point in Sr. Faustina’s religious vocation, the extraordinary and supernatural had manifested in the fullest sense, giving her a “call-within-a-call.” This vocation to be the “Secretary of my Mercy” (*Diary* 965, 1160, 1605) and to “prepare the world for [Jesus’] final coming” (*Diary* 429) was lived in and through the ordinary life of a sister in the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. Faustina did not spend her days in visions and ecstasies but rather in fidelity to the rule and her daily duties. It is amongst the ordinary that the extraordinary begins to come alive. There are countless twists and turns in this journey, but God is working through them all. On more than one occasion the

entire project was in total jeopardy of failing. Whether it was the angel (of Satan) who enticed Sr. Faustina to burn her diary, or the near arrest of Father Sopocko by the Gestapo, or the condemnation of the visions by the Church, God used these two as His instruments to prepare the world for His second coming by granting the world this last hour of Mercy.

Saint Faustina would die of tuberculosis on October 5, 1938, just thirteen years after entering the convent. At the time of her death, she had no idea of the legacy she had left behind and all that would be written about the Divine Mercy and about her life. However, the devotion she tried so hard to spread was not immediately met with open arms.

Two decades after her death, in 1959, the Vatican placed a ban on the Divine Mercy Image and messages from Faustina's writings. This ban, or condemnation, was directly related to the unavailability of the original documentation, inaccuracies in translations from Polish to Italian, and an inadequate theological commentary on it all. The condemnations of the revelations left Father Sopocko shunned and in isolation. Unable to preach on the revelations given to Sr. Faustina, Father Sopocko threw himself into the historical study of God's Divine Mercy; from the Sacred Scriptures, from patristic sources, and from Divine Liturgy. This study would prove to further refine and authenticate the revelations. Father Sopocko was always obedient, yet he did not stop trying to fulfill his mission.

One day, in the summer of 1965, he had an opportunity to meet with Karol Wojtyła, the archbishop of Kraków. Wojtyła was fascinated by Sr. Faustina's writings. Three months after that meeting, Wojtyła took up the case with

the cardinal of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, who set in motion the informative process to vet and authenticate the writings of Sr. Faustina and the message of Divine Mercy. Sadly, ten years after the informative process of verifying the revelations began, on February 15, 1975, Father Sopocko died.

After careful investigation, on April 15, 1978, the Vatican lifted the ban on the Divine Mercy Image and the writings of Sr. Maria Faustina Kowalska. Six months later, Karol Wojtyła was elected to the papacy. Now John Paul II, he would bring into full light the message of Divine Mercy. John Paul II had the privilege of canonizing Sr. Maria Faustina Kowalska on April 30, 2000, the first saint of the new millennium. (Fr. Michael Sopocko would be declared Blessed by Benedict XVI on September 28, 2009.) The Holy Father also established an official feast dedicated to Divine Mercy in the liturgical calendar, which falls on the second Sunday after Easter. Pope John Paul II would even find himself as the fulfillment of a prophecy found in the diary: **“I bear a special love for Poland, and if she will be obedient to My will, I will exalt her in might and holiness. From her will come forth the spark that will prepare the world for My final coming”** (*Diary* 1732).

Saint Faustina was the secretary and prophetess of God’s Mercy, while Blessed Sopocko was the laborer, and John Paul II was that *spark* that set the world on fire with God’s Love. But in our modern day, love has grown cold. Much of humanity has turned away from God’s commandments and teachings. The Church is in crisis—basic doctrine is questioned, churches are filled with compromise, and bishop is

set against bishop and cardinal against cardinal. The smoke of Satan, as Pope Paul VI said, has very much permeated the Church and the world. There is no place to hide, and the declaration of war from the book of Revelation is more obvious today than ever before: “Then the dragon was angry with the woman, *and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring*, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus” (Rv 12:17, emphasis added). War has been declared; the only question is: Will you fight?

PART I

THE BASICS OF BATTLE

CHAPTER 1

AN OVERVIEW OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

“Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus.”

—Revelation 12:17

Recognizing the Battle

One of the main principles of spiritual warfare—that war has been declared on us by forces that seek our eternal damnation—is reinforced by the Scriptures:

Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
(1 Pt 5:8)

For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
(Eph 6:12)

We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one. (1 Jn 5:19)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.
(Jn 10:10)

Recognizing that war has been declared on us is imperative for a Christian to internalize. Failure to do so will increase the likelihood that you live a misunderstood Christian life and/or become a casualty of the war. A *misunderstood Christian life* is where an individual believes that if he says his prayers and does all the things asked of by Jesus, all will be well. This is a dangerous mindset to adopt. We cannot take such an important war so casually. Just as in a natural war, the enemy is constantly looking for opportunities to attack and will sabotage your best and most perfect efforts. The Gospel of Matthew tells us: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was asleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and slipped away. When the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared” (Mt 13:24–26).

There are many times in life when people will become angry with God, especially when something tragic happens or does not go the way we feel it should go. It always baffles me when someone is angry with God rather than channeling his anger toward sin or the diabolic. This goes to show how great our lack of awareness is and how effective the devil is at remaining in the shadows to conduct his clandestine war on mankind.

It is vitally important that we avoid extremes when it comes to spiritual warfare. Just as it is dangerous to see the devil around every corner and blame Satan as the cause of all

our problems, it's also extremely dangerous to be so naive as to go through life failing to acknowledge the reality of the diabolic. Proper balance and discernment are necessary to keep ourselves in check.⁴

The Path to Victory: Communion with Christ and His Church

When considering our own individual strength and power in this war, we must acknowledge that *apart from [Jesus we] can do nothing* (Jn 15:5). With this said, the first principle of spiritual warfare is to stay with Jesus by staying in His Church. By being intentional in exercising our faith, Christ Himself will defend us and fight for us, as will the saints and angels. When we are in a state of grace, we are in communion with Christ and His Church. Just like in any good family or group of friends, there is strength and protection in numbers. Conversely, if we stray from “the pack,” we set ourselves up to be picked off by a predator.

So the first question we need to ask ourselves is: Am I living my Catholic faith? Am I in the state of grace? Do I make use of sacramentals? Am I with the Church or the world? Am I an American-Catholic or am I a Catholic-American?

An American-Catholic is one who sets his Catholic faith as one thing among many in his worldview, on the same

⁴ There is a meme floating around the internet that says, “All things happen for a reason. Sometimes that *reason* is our bad decisions.” To determine whether or not something is of the self, God, the evil one, natural causes, or a mix, one can turn to Saint Ignatius of Loyola’s rules for discernment of spirits. Though this topic is outside the scope of this book, it is worth mentioning and considering for future study.

plane as his politics, profession, and hobbies. His faith simply influences his American citizenship and ideology. For a Catholic-American, however, his natural citizenship is animated and directed by his supernatural citizenship in heaven. Central to his life is the belief that he is a child of almighty God who is called to follow His divine revelation, His morality, and His natural law. His Catholic faith is *the* determining factor in his life and he lives in the world, but not of it.

Fr. John Malloy, one of our deceased priests of the Fathers of Mercy, would preach on what he called “but Catholics.” He mourned how the Church was full of those who accept compromise, those who say “I’m Catholic, *but* . . .” Fill in the blank from there: “. . . but I think I should be able to take birth control”; “. . . but I support a woman’s right to choose”; “. . . but I want to live with my girlfriend.” Father Malloy would say we are going to hell on our proverbial buts!

We need the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Holy Mother Church is our key to victory. And, sometimes, in the event of paranormal activity, our Protestant neighbors prove this point. I have had more than one phone call from a non-Catholic asking for assistance in relation to paranormal activity in a home; where shadows move, children see deceased people, or sacred images or objects move on their own in their home. Yes, when things get diabolic and strange, people abandon *sola scriptura* and go searching for a Catholic priest with a crucifix, exorcism prayers, and a bucket of holy water!

The primary way of engaging in spiritual warfare is to stay in a state of grace, by aligning yourself with the fullness

of the Faith found in the Catholic Church. This is minimally accomplished by keeping the precepts of the Church (CCC 2041):

- On Sundays and holy days of obligation, attend Mass and rest from servile labor.
- Confess your mortal sins at least once a year.
- Receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least once during the Easter season.
- Observe the days of fasting and abstinence from meat established by the Church.
- Help provide for the needs of the Church.

Furthermore, every baptized person has as a universal call to holiness⁵ that is lived out through the sanctification of their daily activities and prayer. One *must* exercise a personal relationship with God through prayer and by taking time each day to nourish his faith life and to ensure he is staying closer to God than to the world. A person must also take his vocation seriously and live it according to the mind of Jesus Christ, as expressed through His Church. Lastly, we must live out our vocations in the world through the proclamation of the Gospel (with or without words), including through the discipling of others when the situation calls for it, and by serving the needs of those in our community. Living these basic principles of Christianity will ensure that you are staying close to Jesus, and He and His Church are remaining close to you.

⁵ See *Lumen Gentium*, chapter V.

These are the *ordinary* means of salvation found through Jesus Christ and His one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. By aligning ourselves as faithfully and closely to the fullness of truth found in the Catholic Church as we can, we help ensure our eternal salvation. This does not mean the mystical power and mystery of the sacraments is “ordinary”—quite the opposite! What we mean is that the Church offers us everyday actions that we are capable of carrying out (going to Mass, praying, reading Scripture, etc.). This is different from what we would call *extraordinary* means of salvation, which comes to us through God’s mercy. We can receive God’s mercy despite doing nothing to merit it. It is supernatural grace that draws us to Him. And even those outside the Church can experience His mercy. This is because while mankind is bound by our covenant relationship with God and the divine mandates attached to it, God is not. He is free to work out our salvation by whatever means He chooses. As Catholics, we believe that every human person ever created has the opportunity for eternal salvation, even if they have never heard the Holy Name of Jesus. God is as close to them as He is to us, and He desires their salvation just as strongly. Every day, God pours out *actual grace* upon those who do not know Him to help these individuals seek the good and avoid the bad. But for those of us who do know Him and have been received into His Church, there is a greater responsibility to respond to that opportunity. We have no excuse not to know what God expects of us. “To whom much is given, much be required” (Lk 12:48).

The Church: Cruise Ship or War Ship?

When speaking of the Church, she is often referred to as a ship or boat that sails upon the sea of time, journeying towards her heavenly homeland. I like this analogy because it gives us an opportunity to define what kind of vessel we are traveling on: Is it a *cruise ship* or a *war ship*? This is an important question to consider. The answer will help us identify our role upon this ship as we travel. If the vessel of the Church is a cruise liner that sets sail upon the ascension of Jesus Christ, then those aboard the ship are passengers and customers of a cruise. A passenger like this can have expectations of “receiving” and being “waited on” while aboard the cruise liner. However, if the vessel is a war ship, then those aboard are not passengers but crew members who will each have responsibilities and duties to perform. There will also be a culture of readiness on deck in the event we come under attack.

This question of the type of vessel we are on is relevant to the topic of spiritual warfare because it helps us set expectations for what is to come. Earlier in this chapter, I spoke of a *misunderstood Christian life*. Those who have this misunderstanding will often fall into the “cruise liner mentality” where they expect to be served rather than serve and sacrifice. When faced with storms and turbulent waters, a cruise liner (or one with a *misunderstood Christian life*) seeks to navigate away from and around the difficulties. Conversely, the war ship goes *into battle* with weapons and warriors ready for whatever may transpire. Whether we know it or not, we are those warriors that Jesus Christ has called to battle for souls.

Keeping with this analogy, I would like to give four simple rules for us to follow while aboard:

1. Follow the captain's orders.
2. Know your job and do it with excellence.
3. While doing your job, look to see if you can assist others.
4. Do not sink your own ship or shoot at your crew-mates!

Let's take each of these one at a time.

Following the captain's orders: This is a call to live your faith. However, one cannot live his faith if he does not know or study it. In this analogy, the Captain is Jesus Christ and our "orders" are the divine mandates given to us through the Church. We cannot love what we do not know, which is why Saint Jerome would say, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." Thus, living our faith is a constant cycle of learning, internalizing, living, loving, and sharing. We are not all called to be theologians, but we *are* all called to know the basics of the Faith. This is easily accomplished by spending time reading and praying the Sacred Scriptures, studying the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, or reading/viewing different credible Catholic content online. By studying the official teachings of the Catholic Church, it will help keep us from error and sin. This is desperately needed right now, as we are living in a time of great malformation and compromise, even among the clergy and religious. If we do not know the captain or the orders, it is not possible to follow them. There is so much more to Catholicism than just saying a few prayers and going to Mass on Sundays. The greater our exposure to

the teachings of Jesus Christ, the greater the opportunity is for us to experience Jesus Christ.

Know your job and do it with excellence: Live your vocation heroically. As referenced earlier, there are various vocations we are called to. The first vocation is the universal call to holiness, while the second is a particular vocation towards holy matrimony, priesthood, or religious life. Then, there are vocations within a vocation; the best example of this is the vocation of being a mother or father, which is a vocation within the vocation of Matrimony. For the laity who are married with children, their vocation(s) look like this:

1. Universal call to holiness – Living your sonship or daughterhood in Christ
2. Holy Matrimony – Living your covenant relationship with your spouse according to the mind of Jesus Christ and His Church
3. Parents to your children – Raising and forming your children in the Holy Spirit and teachings of Jesus Christ and not of the world.

These three vocations are then lived out in the “mission field” (the geographic community) in which we find ourselves. Knowing our vocation and living it with excellence is *not* intuitive; we must commit to studying and living God’s plan for marriage and God’s plan for parenting. Life should be lived in that order: God, marriage, children. It is a common reality that the children take over and dominate our time and attention. When this happens for prolonged periods, neglect can set in and your marriage can start to fall apart.

While doing your job, look to see if you can assist others:

This is the call to a life of service within the mission field of your life. Christianity is not exclusively about your personal relationship with Jesus Christ alone. Rather, we are called to live lives of service within our covenant family, caring for the needs of the entire Body of Christ as best as we are able. This concept of service is best expressed by living out the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy.

**The Spiritual Works
of Mercy**

- Admonish the sinner.
- Instruct the ignorant.
- Counsel the doubtful.
- Comfort the sorrowful.
- Bear wrongs patiently.
- Forgive all injuries.
- Pray for the living and the dead.

**The Corporal Works
of Mercy**

- Feed the hungry.
- Give drink to the thirsty.
- Clothe the naked.
- Visit the imprisoned.
- Shelter the homeless.
- Visit the sick.
- Bury the dead.

Just as we have been disciplined in our faith, so we are called to disciple others. Remember the words of Our Lord: “What you did for the least of my brethren you did for me” (Mt 25:40).

Do not sink your own ship or shoot at your crewmates!

Throughout the history of the Church, she has sailed on both smooth and turbulent waters. However, the place we find ourselves today is some of the most turbulent times in world history. The Universal Church is being attacked from both external and internal forces. In terms of the internal conflict,

the Church is being rocked from both the Left and the Right. This is not just about one particular issue. Rather, there are those on the Left who wish to liberate the Deposit of Faith from the Church and conform and submit it to the world. The elevation of Marxist ideologies, such as identity politics and certain social justice issues, are deemed equivocal to—if not even more important than—issues surrounding the taking of innocent human life through abortion and euthanasia. These issues have enculturated their way into the Church to such a degree that we see *bishop opposing bishop, cardinal against cardinal, and churches full of those who accept compromise*.⁶ There is a danger that these ideologies have become idols.

On the alt-right, we find those who reject Vatican II and the authority of the Church in various areas. This small group subverts the faithful by sowing seeds of doubt and undermines the legitimate authority of the Church. One of the devil's greatest accomplishments in spiritual warfare is to get the "crew" to fight each other and damage its own vessel, placing our attention on each other rather than our common enemy.

As a traveling confessor and mission preacher, it becomes more and more difficult to lead the faithful into the truths of our Faith when they are constantly being undermined by various clergy, religious, Church leadership, and various laity. To fight against this, we must unleash the Truth, but not the sharpness of our tongues. We must pray, fast, and do penance, but not gossip and murmur. We should look at the examples of the heroic leadership in our Church, such as

⁶ John Ata, "A Message from Our Lady - Akita, Japan: EWTN," *EWTN Global Catholic Television Network*, November 2011, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/message-from-our-lady--akita-japan-5167>.

Cardinal Raymond Burke, Cardinal Janis Pujats, Archbishop Tomasz Peta, Archbishop Jan Paweł Lenga, and Bishop Athanasius Schneider, who came together to help rectify the forty most common errors in the life of the Church today by issuing a declaration addressing each issue.⁷ The way we fight against those who teach and promote error is to address the issue, not the person. Calling people names and participating in other personal attacks does not build up the Body of Christ; rather, it tears it down. Remember the nine ways of participating in the sins of another (*CCC* 1868):

- By counsel
- By command
- By consent
- By provocation
- By praise or flattery
- By concealment
- By partaking
- By silence
- By defense of a sinful action

When popular evangelists or YouTube personalities post vehement attacks against others, especially bishops, cardinals, or the Holy Father, we can participate in those sins by viewing or sharing their content. Rather, we must follow Our Lord's direction to Saint Faustina "to shun murmurers" like the plague.⁸ There is no sin in dealing with the

⁷ Cardinal Raymond Burke, Cardinal Raymond Leo, et al. "Declaration of the Truths Relating to Some of the Most Common Errors in the Life of the Church of Our Time," *RORATE CAELI*, 31 May 2019, <https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2019/06/for-record-declaration-of-truths.html>.

⁸ Kowalska, Maria Faustina. *Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska*:

subject matter itself, only when making it derogatorily personal. Sometimes it is necessary to identify the person that has given scandal through his behavior or teaching, but the contents of the rebuttal must be restricted to the teaching at hand and not focus on fault finding or name calling of the individual.

If we keep focusing on each other's sins and failings, we will be caught up with fighting each other rather than fighting the diabolic. It distracts us and weakens our ability to fight who we should be fighting. We have to bring ourselves back to the reality that we are under siege and that the one attacking is Satan, who is "a murderer and a liar" (Jn 8:44); he will use any and all means to keep the attention off of him. It is said that Satan's greatest accomplishment is to make souls believe he does not exist. This is an opportunity for us to bring the spiritual war into greater focus and engage it more fully. In doing so, we will protect ourselves and our loved ones. As faithful and obedient Catholics, we will participate in driving the diabolic back and regain many souls that have fallen.

In this opening chapter, I have tried to help you realize the battle you are in. We cannot win a war if we do not know we are in one. Once we have opened our eyes to the reality of the danger all around us, we must realize our best means to win is by remaining in communion with Jesus Christ and His Church. With these basic lessons learned, let us move forward and discuss our prayer life more specifically and how it is one of the greatest weapons God has given us to defeat our enemy.