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Love and Mercy in the Poems of Sr. Faustina Kowalska in the Light of the Holy Scripture

This doctorate is entitled: "Love and Mercy in the Poems of Sr. Faustina Kowalska - in the Light of the Holy Scripture". Many publications have already been written on the Diary of St. Faustina Kowalska. However, so far, the subject of her poetry has not been properly studied separately. This doctoral thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature devoted to the Polish Mystic. The doctorate focuses on presenting how the theme of love and mercy of God and man presented in the pages of the Old and New Testaments corresponds to the presentation of this issue in the poems of St. Faustina. A following research question was formulated: "How does the presentation of God's and human mercy and love, shown in the Old and New Testaments, correlate with the presentation of God's and human mercy and love in the poetry of St. Faustina Kowalska?". This question is worth answering, because the message of God's merciful love - which every follower of the Savior should try to reflect in their lives - is focused, as in a lens, in Sister Faustina's poems.

This doctoral work uses the positive theological method - based on the analysis of sources and drawing conclusions. The main researched sources are the Holy Bible and 56 poems contained in St. Faustina's Diary. The analysis is also supported by relevant literature on the subject - Church documents, books and articles.

The scheme of the thesis is as follows:

- a) In the first chapter, the Hebrew, Greek and Latin biblical vocabulary of love and mercy will be introduced. It should be noted that both the inspired authors and the translators of the Holy Scripture used different terms with which they tried to describe the love of God and man. Knowledge of these various concepts makes it easier to understand the intention of the biblical writers, who, creating in various historical and literary contexts, tried to convey the truth about God, whose love is both paternal (firm and faithful) and maternal (caring, ardent and deeply moving His whole being). An overview of various biblical concepts of love and mercy is a good starting point for analysing the issue of merciful love in the Old and New Testaments, as well as in the poetry of St. Faustina.
- b) The second chapter of the work contains an analysis of the approach to God's and human love and mercy in the Old Testament. The author of this thesis, while writing about God's

merciful love, distinguished its various presentations - closely related to various, complementary images of God in the Old Covenant. Therefore, God is presented as a merciful Creator and Father, Friend and Spouse, Helper, as well as a merciful and just Judge. After presenting these shades of God's love, the topic of human love and mercy, described in the pages of the Old Testament, is also discussed. In terms of the Old Covenant, a believing Israelite should show love and mercy to his family and other members of the chosen nation (or to newcomers who permanently settled in the land of Israel). It is worth to note that Jesus Christ, in His teaching, extended the concept of neighbour to all people - including enemies.

c) The third chapter is devoted to the New Testament - it focuses primarily on the Person and earthly mission of Jesus Christ, who is God's Mercy incarnate. First, the Incarnation of the Son of God is discussed as a manifestation of God's unfathomable mercy. Then, the merciful earthly activity of Christ and His relationship of merciful friendship with Joseph and Mary, the Apostles, John the Baptist, Saul-Paul and various biblical women is described. Next, the teaching of Jesus about mercy is discussed - also in His parables. Finally, the topic of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus is also discussed - as the greatest manifestations of God's mercy. At the end of this chapter, it is shown how, according to the New Testament, the first generations of the Lord's followers tried to put into practice the teachings of the Divine Master. For Jesus is the most perfect Teacher of both mercy and justice.

d) The fourth chapter contains an analysis of the poems of St. Faustina. The author of the thesis showed that a bond of deep friendship and pure love was established between the Mystic and God. Sister Faustina's poems feature biblical themes - above all, she also shows God as a merciful Creator and Father, Friend and Spouse, Helper in difficulties, and Redeemer. Thus, the Mystic's poetry combines the representations of God already present in the Old and New Testaments. Faustina learned merciful love during her daily relationship with Jesus - and, as much as she could, she proclaimed God's mercy to all people by her own example - by word, deed and prayer. She addressed her poems to both sinners and people who had already embarked on the path of conversion - she called everyone to trust in God's unfathomable mercy.

To answer the research question, it must be stated that there is a close relationship between the presentation of the theme of God's and human love and mercy in the Holy Bible and Sister Faustina's poems. With her own daily, often mystical, experience of God, she paints

a picture of Him, very similar to the biblical representations of the merciful Lord. In the poems of St. Faustina is the quintessence of the doctrine of God's mercy. The poetry of the Mystic is also a testimony to how Sr. Faustina herself tried to show mercy to others - and to put into practice the teachings of her Divine Spouse.