

Marta Noga

**The impact of spiritual guidance on the mystical life of St. Faustina Kowalska.**

Summary of the doctoral dissertation

This dissertation is in line with previous examinations on St. Faustina Kowalska, her mystical experiences, Divine Mercy identifiable through her writings, and biographies of blessed Fr. Michał Sopoćko and Fr. Józef Andrzej SJ. The topic of this dissertation is the influence of spiritual guidance on the mystical life of St. Faustina Kowalska. The research problem has been formulated in the form of a question: How the spiritual guidance affected the mystical life of St. Faustina?

This dissertation serves as the first attempt to comprehensively showcase pieces of advice provided to Faustina by her spiritual supervisors and their importance with regard to her spiritual life. The research problem has been solved by the analysis of source texts and the available literature on the subject of Divine Mercy. To gain a deeper understanding of the topic of this dissertation, references have been made to examinations carried out in the fields of theology of spirituality, as well as spiritual guidance. An in-depth analysis of books and articles dealing with the subject of mercy in biblical texts has also turned out to be of importance. Thanks to that it has been possible to better understand the nature of experiencing the truth of God's mercy by Faustina.

This dissertation consists of five chapters that elaborate on the development of the mystical life of St. Faustina Kowalska from the moment of entering the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in 1925, up to her death in 1938. The first chapter of the paper presents the period of leading to final vows in 1933. Within the scope of said chapter, spiritual guidance is described more broadly as Jesus' own guidance, which serves as the basis for defining spiritual guidance. The chapter in question also chronologically presents individuals in the life of the protagonist of the

dissertation who offered her guidance at the beginning of her religious formation.

The second chapter presents the first spiritual tutor of Faustina - blessed Fr. Michał Sopoćko. Said chapter discusses the beginnings of the guidance process, initial recommendations and the emergence of God's grace, as well as issues with specifying where the extraordinary experiences come from.

The third chapter elaborates on the further development of Faustina's mystical life in the context of the recommendations provided by Father Józef Andrasz, S.J., who accompanied Faustina in the last two years of her life. The aretological dimension of Faustina's life with regard to the heroic display of theological and moral virtues is touched upon. The progress in carrying out God's will is also discussed in the context of Jesus' recommendation to create a new congregation.

The fourth chapter is oriented towards the spiritual results of guidance, spiritual engagement, and mystical union as the effect of God's grace on Faustina. The extraordinary phenomena connected with achieving sainthood are also presented.

Chapter five discussed the apostolic dimension of spiritual guidance, which was expressed through prayer, writing the *Diary*, and proclaiming the message of mercy - not only through words, but also through life. Various forms of devotion to Divine Mercy ordered chronologically are also discussed herein, namely: the Image of Merciful Jesus, the Feast of Divine Mercy, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and the concept of the new congregation. Each form is also accompanied by a historical outline, as well as the discussion of its apostolic dimension.

To sum up, it has to be stated that spiritual guidance is of great importance when it comes to spiritual life and achieving sainthood. Faustina's writings show that the need for spiritual guidance manifests itself at the very beginning of one's spiritual life, especially when it comes to discerning God's will, God's impact on one's soul, and God's grace. It reveals itself especially when God invites the soul to take part in a deeper

relationship with Him and to receive the gift of contemplation and transformative union.