

Nazaria Dłubak ZMBM, Elżbieta Siepak ZMBM

The Canonisation of Sister Faustina

1. Rome

The canonisation of Sister Faustina is one of the great events of the Jubilee Year – the year of grace and mercy. Four buses full of people going to this celebration left Łagiewniki. Among them were the members and volunteers of *Faustinum*, the builders of the basilica of God's Mercy – the employees of the companies Mostostal and Chemobudowa, the sponsors and benefactors of the Łagiewniki convent and the wards of the Youth Educational Centre together with their patrons, the sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. Deliberately and with awareness they undertook the effort connected with the pilgrimage, which is one of the icons of the Jubilee Year. In St. Peter's Square they were to experience the joy connected with the fact that the Apostle of God's Mercy was made a saint.

On April 30, as early as 5 a.m., the crowds of the coming pilgrims began to surround St. Peter's Square. In contemplation, praying and singing, they awaited the opening of the sectors. Gradually, the Square was filled with crowds that made a uniform community of about 150 thousand believers who gathered there.

Before the Holy Mass, the prayer to God's Mercy was sung in Italian, English, French and German. The call *For his painful passion...* sounded also in Poland and the building of the Łagiewniki convent and the countless crowds of the faithful gathered around the field-altar appeared on the tele-beam screens. The pilgrims in St. Peter's Square and in Łagiewniki became one community begging for mercy for the world.

During the Mass, which began at 10 o'clock, the long awaited event took place. The Pope uttered the solemn canonisation formula, thus including Sister Faustina in the community of saints of the universal Church. Joyful cheering and thanks could be heard in the Square. The Pope says in his homily: *"The canonisation of Sister Faustina has a particular significance. Today, through that act I wish to pass over the message of mercy to the new millennium. I address it to*

all people so that they could learn, in a more and more complete way, how to perceive the real face of God and the real face of man." The words of the Pope's message have not only become pabulum and guidance for the pilgrims participating in the canonisation, but they have also shown the direction to the whole Church and the whole world, which in the third millennium should gaze at the merciful face of the Father and to turn to Him for rescue salvation. During the homily, when the Pope announce the second Easter Sunday the Sunday of God's Mercy for the whole universal Church, loud "thank you" could be heard again. People waved colourful kerchiefs and ribbons, which expressed their common joy.

The general enthusiasm was silenced for awhile, when the figure of Bishop Kazimierz Nycz from Cracow appeared on the tele-beams. He briefly thanked the Pope for the gift of Sister Faustina's canonisation and for establishing a holiday of God's Mercy and he assured Him of the memory and love of the pilgrims gathered in Łagiewniki. All the pilgrims in St. Peter's Square joined the joyful *Alleluia* singing that sounded from Łagiewniki. We were united again and our voices became a symphony of joy, gratitude and adoration of God's Mercy.

The canonisation ceremony came to its end, but the time of grace did not. Of this grace Jesus told Sister Faustina that it would abundantly pour into souls on that day. Neither did the moment of bestowing gifts come to its end. In her vision, Sister Faustina saw that many a man made requests on that day and they were granted what they wished for. The testimonies we heard later were the evidence: "I came to Rome as a tourist, but on the canonisation day I experienced something that would remain in my heart till the end of my life'. 'I can describe myself as a great sinner, but I had a wish to confess my sins and I became reconciled with God."

Sister M. Nazaria Dłubak ZMBM

2. Cracow-Łagiewniki

The prophecy of Sister Faustina concerning her canonisation has come true. She wrote that that celebration would simultaneously be held in Rome, in the presence of the Pope, and in the convent in Cracow-Łagiewniki. It was to be a celebration significant for the whole Church. She was to take part in it. The ceremony was to attract such immense crowds that she would be unable to take them in. The prophecy came true not only in terms of the spiritual unity between the pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square in Rome and in the sanctuary in Cracow-Łagiewniki, but also in its literary meaning, owing to the tele-bridge connection. The pictures and sound were broadcast in both directions through large tele-beams. That is why Łagiewniki were present in St. Peter's Square and St. Peter's Square was present in Łagiewniki. The publication of a special booklet with the prayer texts, songs and the relevant commentaries enabled the pilgrims to participate actively in the canonisation celebration.

The moment of announcing Sister Faustina a saint of the Church was welcomed enthusiastically. The crowds of pilgrims from all over Poland and from many countries of the world gathered in the sanctuary in Cracow expressed their joy and gratitude with applause and singing. The inscription 'A SAINT' was unveiled on Sister Faustina's reliquary. On that day, one had to stand in a long queue in order to come close to the miraculous picture of Merciful Jesus and to Sister Faustina's relics. The wardens did not allow anyone to stop for a longer prayer, so that other people waiting outside the chapel could enter at least for a moment, cast a glance at the picture of Merciful Jesus and pay homage to St. Faustina's relics. The long time spent in wait for that moment was filled with prayer.

The joy connected with the canonisation of Sister Faustina became even greater, because of the fact that the holiday of God's Mercy was established for the whole Church. Pope John Paul II spoke about that in his homily and the pilgrims in Cracow and Rome responded with stormy applause. They have prayed for this for many years and now, in the Jubilee Year, this wish of Jesus is fulfilled. From this year on, the whole Church will celebrate the first Sunday after Easter as the Sunday of God's Mercy.

The pilgrims taking part in the canonisation in the sanctuary of God's Mercy in Cracow had the impression that they participated in the celebration in Rome. It seemed to them that they were present at the ceremony conducted by the Pope. The space, distance, place and time became meaningless. The pilgrims did not feel any fatigue, although for many hours they stood in the scorching heat of the sun. The joy of receiving gifts surpassed human weaknesses.

After having said *Regina coeli* together with the Pope and after his blessing, Bishop Kazimierz Nycz from Cracow thanked the Pope for the gift of Sister Faustina's canonisation, for establishing the holiday of God's Mercy for the whole Church and for the blessing of the development of the sanctuary of God's Mercy in Łagiewniki. The pilgrims joined into that thanksgiving through the words of a song: "*Cracow loves you, Cracow greets you, Cracow thanks you and then Poland loves you, Poland greets you, Poland thanks you.*" The Pope was visibly moved. He said to the pilgrims gathered in Łagiewniki: "*The Divine Providence connected the life of Sister Faustina with Vilnius, Warsaw, Płock and Cracow. I commend to God all the inhabitants of these cities, as well as all the fellow-countrymen and the worshippers of God's Mercy.*" These words of the Pope evoked yet another ovation and the singing of the joyful *Alleluia* was also taken up by the pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square.

Immediately after the end of the canonisation celebrations a thanksgiving Service with the participation of 140 priests began. It was conducted by Bishop Kazimierz Nycz. The Holy Masses after the canonisation were celebrated by the bishops of Cracow till late at night, and the co-celebrants were many diocese priests and monks.

Over 150,000 pilgrims from all over Poland, as well as from many countries of the world, such as Bohemia, Slovakia, the Ukraine, Germany, Liechtenstein,

the USA and the Philippines, came to the sanctuary in Cracow-Łagiewniki. All day long, they were attended to by more than 200 priests, Franciscan seminarists, Jesuits, Capuchins, Michaelites, Saletines, choirs (among others *The Organuum* and *The Marian Choir*), over 100 nuns from the Order of Our Lady of Mercy, as well as the PKP Railways, traffic wardens, the police, the Municipal Transportation Agency MPK, medical services (Maltese youth, municipal health service and the Order of St. John of God), order-keeping services, which among others consisted of secondary school students. As far as the media are concerned, the celebration was attended by several dozen journalists and photographers. The Polish Television broadcast not only the canonisation celebrations, but also the prayer in the hour of Mercy.

In spite of tiredness, the organisers and pilgrims radiated with joy, because some further prophetic words of Sister Faustina were perhaps coming true. She said that many participants of that celebration “*received what they had wished for.*”

Sister M. Elżbieta Siepak ZMBM

M. Nazaria Dłubak ZMBM, M.Sc.

M. Elżbieta Siepak ZMBM, M.Sc.

The Convent of the Sisters of Our Lady the Merciful

3 S. Faustina St., 30-420 Cracow