

Divine Mercy Eucharistic Society – History/Who We Are Divine Mercy Shrine of the West Coast – Goals/Purpose

History of the Divine Mercy Eucharistic Society

Here in Northern California, the **Divine Mercy Eucharistic Society** is one such community of devotees with the mission: To establish a center for prayer and ministry dedicated to the Mercy of God, to spread the devotion to the Divine Mercy throughout the world, and to reach out in mercy to those in need. In 1998, under the name Divine Mercy Foundation, we formed a Board of 15 members, who lead our organization and make decisions. Soon thereafter, the Foundation was legally organized as a nonprofit organization under 501(c)(3). In 2005 our name was legally changed to Divine Mercy Eucharistic Society to have a better meaning of the Divine Mercy apostolate.

The Divine Mercy Eucharistic Society was founded by Thelma Orias, who in 1986 was miraculously healed. In 1990 she opened her heart to the Holy Spirit's crystal clear inspiration to spread the Divine Mercy message and devotion to others in the Bay Area. The first task in this inspired mission, toward the end of 1990, was to donate an image of the Divine Mercy to St. Joseph Church in San Francisco. The image was enthroned and the first Feast of the Divine Mercy in the Bay Area was celebrated in April 1991 in San Francisco. In June 1991, the first pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Krakow, Poland was a confirmation that gave us a deeper realization of the importance of the Divine Mercy message to spread to others. In 1992, we received the replica of the Divine Mercy image was from the Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Krakow, Poland. We brought this Divine Mercy Image to various homes, hospitals, and prayer groups to share and promote the Divine Mercy message. Now this Divine Mercy Image is at the Divine Mercy Chapel in El Cerrito, CA.

In 1993, Sister Faustina was beatified by Pope Paul II, and this joyous event confirmed our inspiration to continue to spread the Divine Mercy message through public procession in San Francisco. And since 1994, we organize annual conferences, retreats, pilgrimages and other various activities in order to touch many people to experience the power of God's love and mercy. Fr. Louis Vitali of St. Boniface Church in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco also opened his church's doors to the enthronement of Divine Mercy. In November 1996, a Gospel concert was conducted in San Francisco to help raise funds to rebuild St. Boniface Church.

These early efforts ensured that more and more people would become aware of, and devoted to the Mercy of God. Priests and religious, who were loyal to our Church's teachings and its leadership, began to support our activities. After witnessing the fruits of the Divine Mercy apostolate and seeing how the Holy Spirit was working powerfully, the Divine Mercy message spread throughout the greater Bay Area. Many bishops support and endorse the Divine Mercy message and devotion.

In August of 1999, we began a **Divine Mercy Adoration Chapel and Center** on the grounds of **St. John the Baptist Church in El Cerrito**. That same year, the Chapel became a place of Perpetual Adoration – then the only perpetual adoration chapel in the Oakland Diocese. Later part of the year, as an inspiration, we obtained a hand made monstrance (with red and white rays) to home the Blessed Sacrament that became a sign of God's providence for all our works through the power of His mercy. Through this chapel we made a House of prayer, providing a central haven of spiritual healing, renewed hope, peace and a profound experience with God's Mercy and Love. Our adorers immediately began signing up for at least an hour a day per week of commitment to adore Jesus, who is truly Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. We now have more than 200 regular adorers and many walk-in adorers who visit and give freely of their prayers and hopes. Numerous priests and religious grace our House of prayer and Chapel to celebrate Holy Mass and Novenas every Wednesday (To Our Mother of

Perpetual Help), Thursday, and Friday (To the Sacred Heart of Jesus), as well as the Our Lady of Fatima devotion on First Saturdays. A Monthly Divine Mercy Cenacle is held here to familiarize people of all religious affiliations with the message of the Divine Mercy. Our Youth Ministry meets once a month in celebration of empowerment and leadership. And once a year many of those touched by the power of the Divine Mercy from the Bay Area and Northern California congregate for the Divine Mercy Feast Day (Mercy Sunday) on the second Sunday after Easter—an ultimate fulfillment to the powerful message of God’s merciful love.

In the spirit of preparing for the new Millennium and the Great Jubilee Year 2000, the Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II “Tertio Millennio Adveniente” became an inspiration for us. It says, “It is necessary to inspire in all the faithful a true longing for holiness, a deep desire for conversion and a personal renewal in a context of ever more intense prayer and solidarity with one’s neighbors, especially the most needy.” The canonization of St. Faustina Kowalska in April 2000 in Rome was a very fulfilling confirmation of our mission. Fifty-five devotees from our Bay Area Divine Mercy group witnessed the canonization.

Prayer is not complete without exercising God’s mercy, as Jesus told Sr. Faustina: “Be merciful to others.” In August 2002, as a fruit of our prayers and adorations, our first **Corporal Work of Mercy, Mary’s House**, was opened to share the message of Mercy. Mary’s House is the only formal pregnancy and maternity facility in Contra Costa County providing residential care to single, homeless, and pregnant women in crisis. Mary’s House is located across from St. Paul Church in San Pablo, CA. The 13-bedroom facility was formerly the Friary of the Conventual Franciscans in San Pablo. A volunteer thrift store, located in the front of the facility, is open to the public and is a source of additional income to support the Mary’s House costs (along with donations and pledges). In the rear of the facility we have prepared a pleasant private garden and next to it is an Adoration Chapel, which is open everyday for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Since it’s founding, Mary’s House has provided a stable and supportive environment of faith for 95 women and their infants. Approximately half of these women maintain contact with us and are doing extremely well as they move forward in their lives, jobs or a stable life with the father of their child.

Both the Divine Mercy Chapel and Center in El Cerrito and the Mary’s House in San Pablo are facilities of the Diocese of Oakland.

All our inspired ministries were born through trust in Jesus and the power of His providence. Trusting completely in Jesus, which is the essence of the Divine Mercy message and devotion, is our only way to fulfill His inspirations.

Divine Mercy Shrine:

Although we can not comprehend the unfolding of the Divine Mercy Shrine (As Isaiah said, Chapter 55: 8 – “For my thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not my ways”), we believe that this is the time to reveal His mystery of Mercy by establishing a Divine Mercy Shrine on the West Coast. With complete trust and hope, we took a gigantic step of our faith to begin planning to build a Divine Mercy Shrine on the West Coast.

The Divine Mercy Eucharistic Society purchased 100 acres of land--on rolling hills overlooking the greater Bay Area for a total of \$ 3.3 million. This property is located on Sheridan Road in Sunol, CA, adjacent to I-680 North. Mr. Salvatore Caruso, a licensed professional architect with his office in Santa Clara County, has volunteered his time to design the plans of the proposed Divine Mercy Shrine. Even the owner of the property was instrumental by allowing us to purchase the land.

We have received many confirmations from God that this mission of promoting His message of Mercy is what He wants us to do. We believe there is no better way to share the power of the message of

God's mercy and to touch the hearts and minds of people throughout the Bay Area, Northern California, and beyond than by building a Shrine to last for generations to come. It is now our responsibility to move forward and build this House of God, without delay, for the sole purpose and motive of the salvation of souls through the perpetuation of the Divine Mercy message.

The purpose of the Shrine and the Retreat House:

- **To proclaim and introduce people to the mystery of God's mercy. The Shrine will become a beacon of mercy for all.**
- **The Shrine will be a place of new beginnings and a visible source of renewed hope, learning, healing, reconciliation, and a New Evangelization for God's people of all ages, races, and religious affiliations for generations to come.**
- **It will bear witness to the Divine Providence of God to His servants.**
- **It will also serve as a visible sign of God's continuing covenant with us in our day.**

The Shrine and Retreat Center will provide services, place of prayer and action for these visitors during this time of war, confusion, despair and uncertainty about the future.

- A place of service and contemplation for priests who will serve at the Shrine.
- A place of acceptance for the laity of faithful who will help with service tasks and maintain the site.
- Serene pilgrimage opportunities for meditation and solitude for people of all beliefs who seek changes in their life and inner peace.
- A resting place for those searching and wondering about who God is to them and their meaning of life, either as followers of faith or as non-believers.
- A starting point for new congregations of laity interested in the teaching and charisma of God's Mercy.
- Another Perpetual Adoration Chapel that will be accessible anytime to all who seek the wonder of the beautiful spaces of nature that surround the Shrine.
- An annual, large, jubilant celebration of the Feast of the Divine Mercy, on Mercy Sunday, with Feast Day Masses conducted by our own Bishops, priests and religious as well as guests from other parts of the region and nation.
- A place for learning, workshops and seminars for the modern family, and spirituality center rooms for other congregations from throughout the Bay Area.

All this having been said, **the Divine Mercy Shrine will benefit the Bay Area Dioceses as well as the whole church.**

- We have great faith that the Divine Mercy Shrine, in the Oakland Diocese, will be a pilgrimage place for the people throughout the world seeking for the power of the Divine Mercy.
- In faith that with the multitude of prayers which will be said at the Divine Mercy Sanctuary and with various in-depth teachings on God's mercy there, God will grace many people with restored spirits that will give them strength and power to carve out new pathways for their relationships with families, communities, and parishes. This will open the way for spiritual and temporal blessings to all.
- We fully trust in Jesus that many people, with their renewed spirits, will receive the zeal of true Apostles of Divine Mercy, and that they will then go back as witnesses and evangelizers to their own families, parishes, and communities in the Bay Area or beyond. People will come to the Shrine to be spiritually nourished and then permanently part of the evangelization of the whole Church. Ideally, each parish would have its own Divine Mercy group which will support the pastor in the evangelization of the parish.

- In God's providence, the First Apostolic Congress on Mercy will take place in Rome in 2008. The Divine Mercy Eucharistic Society has become part of the process of declaring the Mercy of God throughout our continent. We even hope that the Divine Mercy Eucharistic Society will be able to host a future Divine Mercy World Congress in our Diocese. This would bring people from around the world to the Bay Area.
- We understand that a large percentage of Catholics have fallen away from the practice of the faith, and some of them have even left the Church. We, clergy and the lay people, have to bring all to God through every possible means. We have experienced the power and the reality of Christ's mercy touching our lives. Therefore, we are committed to proclaim Him to others and draw them to Him in the Church.

It is everyone's mission to build the kingdom of God in our time. We believe that building the Divine Mercy Shrine is an effective way to proclaim the power of God's Mercy. It will become a visible sign of God's continuing covenant with us, as a response to the call of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II's message in June 1997:

"The Church must consider it one of her principal duties at every stage of history and especially in our modern age to proclaim and to introduce into life the mystery of God's mercy, supremely revealed in Jesus Christ. This mystery is the source of a life different from life which can be built by man. I ask you: accept this responsibility! The people of today need your proclamation of Mercy: they need your works of mercy and they need your prayers to obtain mercy. Do not neglect any of these dimensions of the apostolate." (JPII- Krakow-Lagiewniki, June 1997)

As the great "Mercy Pope" John Paul II inspired us, it is our duty and our mission to help spread the Divine Mercy devotion in the third millennium. "Do whatever is in your power to spread devotion to My mercy. I will make up for what you lack." (Sr. Faustina, Diary 1074)

We believe that we are all missionaries of Christ and are called to be one in bringing everyone to heaven and live with our Lord in His kingdom. We praise God. We thank Him for his gifts of Faith, Hope, Trust, and Love.

Jesus, I Trust in You

"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." Matthew: Chapter 5:7