

Evangelical Statement

Divine Mercy Shrine and Retreat of the West Coast

February 2007

The Holy Father Pope John Paul II's message of June 1997 gave words and a visible motivation to God's continuing covenant with his followers—a message of particular relevance today as His people learn to live, love and share with the diversity of the world's followers who seek truth and meaning:

“The Church must consider it one of her principal duties at every state 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.”

The spirit of these words came from propagating the Message of the Divine Mercy as entrusted by our Lord to St. Faustina, in the 1930s—the first Saint canonized in the 21st Century. To the followers and faithfulness of the Divine Mercy Eucharist Society (El Cerrito, CA), these words inspired both spiritual and corporal works beginning in 1990. In fact, our local apostolate was born of deeds and actions celebrating and recognizing the miraculous healing of Thelma Orias, the current president and a founder of our ideals. A group of good and faithful people joined this apostolate and offered their time and efforts, reaching out to the poor in small but meaningful ways in 1994. We did this by beginning organized processions on the streets of San Francisco, pilgrimages to other callings, retreats of contemplation, and yearly conferences to share the merciful power of God to hundreds and now thousands of the thoughtful. Numerous prayer groups, good priests and the everyday faithful, as well as a profound group of Bishops, have since joined in our representation of loyalty and teachings. Together we soon accepted that the Holy Spirit was working through our efforts, pulling even more faithful toward our accomplishments. The tools we were using—and continue to use as we move forward toward the success of the Shrine—are our Faith, Perseverance and Trust in God, who always provides for His People. Trust being the essence of the Divine Mercy message, “Jesus, I trust in You.”

By April 1998 we formed our first Board with 15 members. Soon thereafter the organization was incorporated as a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit (later renamed the Divine Mercy Eucharistic Society). By that time we were occupying our Divine Mercy Chapel and Center next door to St. John the Baptist Church on San Pablo Avenue in El Cerrito, CA. In July 1998, we opened the doors of our Perpetual Adoration Chapel, the only Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration Chapel (which operates 24/7) of its kind within the Diocese of Oakland. Through this space we made a House of prayer, providing a central space of 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 the message of the True Presence of Our Lord Jesus 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 facilitators 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 Weekly Divine Mercy Cenacle is held here to familiarize people

of all religious affiliations with our devotion. Our Youth Ministry meets once a month in celebration of empowerment and leadership. And once a year many of those we touched from through 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 merciful divinity.

As a fruit of our prayers and adoration, Mary's House, a home for homeless pregnant single women was opened in August 2002—another start of our Corporal Works of Mercy. Our Eucharist Society in conjunction with the Diocese of Oakland operates this 13-bedroom facility, formerly a convent for the Franciscan Friars and novices. A volunteer thrift store, located in the front of the facility, is open to the public and is an important source of income to support the Mary's House costs (along with donations and tithing). 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 82 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.

The spiritual message and purpose of our Divine Mercy Shrine of the West Coast will be a visible sign of continuation of the deeds, faith, hope, renewal and learning, which we have already demonstrated can give meaning to the searchers. It will bring together thousands of people of all ages, races and religious affiliations for generations to come, each introduced to the power and reality of Our Lord's Mercy.

The Shrine and Retreat Center will provide services, contemplation and action for these visitors during this time of war, confusion, despair and uncertainty about the future. Its spiritual strength will flourish as we provide:

- ✿ A place of service and contemplation for priests who will serve at the Shrine.
- ✿ A place of acceptance and recognition 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 facilitators as well as guests from other parts of the region and nation.
- ✿ An opportunity to host the Holy Father upon his grace of this Nation.
- ✿ Spaces for learning, workshops and seminars for the modern family, and spirituality center rooms for other congregations from throughout the Bay Area.