

Sister Faustina was born on August 25, 1905 in Glogowiec, Poland of a poor and religious family of peasants, the third of 10 children. She was baptized with the name Helena. She stood out from a very tender age because of her love of prayer, work, obedience, and her sensitivity to the poor. At the age of seven she had already felt the first stirrings of a religious vocation. She made her first Holy Communion at the age of nine, which was a very profound moment in her awareness of the presence of the Divine Guest within her soul.

Helena never lost her desire for a religious vocation. After being called during a vision of the Suffering Christ, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy on August 1, 1925, and took the name Sr. Maria Faustina of the Most Blessed Sacrament. She lived in the Congregation for thirteen years in several religious houses. She spent time at Krakow, Plock and Vilnius, where she worked as a cook, gardener, and porter.

On February 22, 1931, Faustina was visited by Jesus, who presented himself as the "King of Divine Mercy" wearing a white garment with red and pale rays coming from his heart. She was asked to become the apostle and secretary of God's mercy, a model of how to be merciful to others, and an instrument for reemphasizing God's plan of mercy for the world. In silence I gazed intently at the Lord; my soul was overwhelmed with fear, but also with great joy. After a while Jesus said to me, 'paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the inscription: Jesus, I trust in You.'" Faustina, not knowing how to paint, asked around her Plock convent for help but was denied. It wasn't until three years later, in 1934, that the first painting of the image was created by Eugene Kazimierowski.

Although her life was apparently insignificant, monotonous and dull, she hid within herself an extraordinary union with God. It is the mystery of the Mercy of God which she contemplated in the word of God as well as in the everyday activities of her life that forms the basis of her spirituality. Through her, the Lord Jesus communicates to the world the great message of God's mercy and reveals the pattern of Christian perfection based on trust in God and on the attitude of mercy toward one's neighbors.

In 1936, Faustina fell ill again. She moved to the sanatorium in Pradnik, Krakow and continued to spend most of her time in prayer. In July 1937, the first holy cards with the Divine Mercy image were created and Faustina provided instructions for the Novena of Divine Mercy, which she reported was a message from Jesus. Throughout the rest of 1937, the Divine Mercy image continued to be promoted and grow in popularity. Faustina's health significantly deteriorated by the end of 1937. Her visions intensified and she was said to be looking forward to the end of her life. On October 5, 1938, Faustina passed away. She was buried on October 7 and currently rests at the Basilica of Divine Mercy in Krakow, Poland. St. Faustina Kowalska was beatified on April 18, 1993 and canonized on April 30, 2000, both by Pope St. John Paul II. Her feast day is celebrated on October 5th and she is the patron saint of Mercy.