

Pope Francis teaches Catholics truth of mercy

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |



Divine Mercy in Arkansas

Divine Mercy devotion will conclude on Sunday, April 12

BARLING

Sacred Heart of Mary

1 p.m. (Vietnamese)

BERRYVILLE

St. Anne

Noon (potluck and video)

2:30 p.m. (Hour of Mercy)

CAMDEN

St. Louis, 8 a.m.

CHEROKEE VILLAGE

St. Michael, 4 p.m.

FAYETTEVILLE

St. Thomas Aquinas, 5 p.m.

Mass on the Grass, Razorback Gardens

FORT SMITH

Christ the King, 8:20 a.m.

HOPE

Our Lady of Good Hope, 3 p.m.

HOT SPRINGS

St. John, 3 p.m.

HOT SPRINGS VILLAGE

Sacred Heart of Jesus, 3 p.m.

LITTLE ROCK

Our Lady of Good Counsel

2 p.m. (confession and litany)

MONTICELLO

St. Mark, 10 a.m.

MOUNTAIN HOME

St. Peter the Fisherman, 3 p.m.

NORTH LITTLE ROCK

Immaculate Heart of Mary (Marche), 11:45 a.m.

ROGERS

St. Vincent de Paul

April 16 Bilingual celebration of the Divine Mercy, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

SAINT VINCENT

St. Mary, 3 p.m.

SCRANTON

St. Ignatius, After 10:20 a.m. Mass

SEARCY

St. James, 2:45 p.m.

TEXARKANA

St. Edward, 3:15 p.m.

TONTITOWN

St. Joseph, 2:30 p.m.

VATICAN CITY — The rector of a Rome sanctuary dedicated to Divine Mercy said he sees a “golden thread” connecting the coming Holy Year of Mercy and the message Jesus conveyed to St. Faustina Kowalska nearly 85 years ago.

Father Jozef Bart, rector of the Church of the Holy Spirit, said the three most recent popes all “insisted on this message of mercy,” starting with St. John Paul II, who canonized St. Faustina in 2000 and declared the Sunday after Easter to be Divine Mercy Sunday.

St. Faustina was a Polish Sister of Our Lady of Mercy. She had visions of Jesus saying he would show mercy to those who prayed for it and shared it with others. The Church of the Holy Spirit, just a block from St. Peter’s Square, has a side chapel dedicated to Divine Mercy.

Father Bart, who was born in Poland but is a priest of the Diocese of Rome, said Pope Francis’ Year of Mercy is the culmination of the church’s official recognition of the message of Divine Mercy.

“It seems that heaven is in a great rush to come help this world that truly has many problems, that is sick and wounded,” he said.

Pope Francis surprised Catholics March 13 by announcing the special Holy Year, which will begin Dec. 8, 2015, and end Nov. 20, 2016. The biblical theme is “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

“Pope Francis does not simply want to dedicate a year to mercy or to call a meeting of the bishops on mercy. Pope Francis will open the Holy Door so that it can be a year for mercy,” he emphasized.

God’s mercy is for all of humanity — believers and nonbelievers alike — and Christians are called to bring this message to the world for all to receive, Father Bart insisted.

Reflecting on the challenge of bringing God’s mercy to nonbelievers in a secular society,

Father Bart described mercy as “a point of encounter with all peoples,” particularly through what are traditionally called the corporal acts of mercy, such as tending to the sick, the hungry and the imprisoned. Through these concrete actions, “I can reach all souls, whether they believe or not,” he said.

In his frequent catecheses on mercy, Pope Francis seems to be “convincing us of the truth of mercy,” Father Bart said. Fundamental to this pontificate is the call to “go out to the peripheries” to bring God’s mercy to all people who suffer, he added.

Many people who have made mistakes in their lives “think there is no place for them in the heart of God,” Father Bart said. He attributed this to the human tendency “to erase from our hearts” those people who have been hurtful or who have made grave mistakes.

“But God will never do that,” he said.