



Blessed Are The Merciful.
A Painting by Tommy Canning. 2006.

This painting is the fruit of a very special friendship and association with Rose Balayan, Her husband Tony, and all the members of the Eucharistic Apostles of Divine Mercy Cenacle in Hawaii. Rose, the founding member of the cenacle in planning the theme for the conference for 2006 had the inspiration to focus the conference and speaker list on the theme of being Apostles of Divine Mercy. During a period of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, Rose received a very strong sense of what should be included in the painting for the conference, so what you see in the completed painting is based on this inspiration of Rose.

At the time she first spoke of it to me I was in the middle of another project so had a period of time in which to decide on how best I would execute this and have done in time for the September conference.

One idea that I had from earliest thoughts was that, since this was going to be for a Divine Mercy conference in Hawaii, I decided to use as bright and as colourful a palette as possible, so as to evoke a sense of Hawaii and the people and colour of their beautiful culture. Central and prominent to the painting would be Our Lord as the King of Mercy himself. In diary entry (47) of Saint Faustina, we read that when Jesus appeared to her as in the image of Divine Mercy, it was evening. So in this painting, Jesus is silhouetted against a dramatic Hawaiian sunset. I was privileged to see some of these on previous visits to this part of the world, so this was an obvious choice for me to use in depicting the backdrop for Our Lord as Divine Mercy. As we travel down the picture to the area of His Divine Heart it forms a sort of sunburst of red and pale rays just as Faustina described in her diary. These rays extend, passing through the lives of the exemplars of Divine Mercy, touching the lives and souls of those whom they would touch. ***“These Rays of mercy will pass through you, just as they have passed through this Host, and they will go out through all the world”.*** Diary (441).

Right at the Heart of Jesus we see the face of Our Blessed Mother, she is placed most appropriately close to the Heart of Her Divine Son. Her expression is one of motherly tenderness, love and compassion. She is after all, the Mother of Mercy, offering to us her own Immaculate Heart, pierced with thorns as she aches for all her children who suffer and for those who have wandered far from the home of their Father. She beckons to those far off to return to the merciful Heart of Her Son and their Redeemer. She holds each one of us in her maternal heart burning with love for her poor children. The Stars on her cloak remind us of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Queen of the Americas, Hawaii being part of the U.S.A. this seemed an appropriate way to depict her in this particular way.

The Apostles of Divine Mercy.

Jesus would often refer to Sr. Faustina as His Apostle and Secretary of His Mercy. So Saint Maria Faustina of the Most Blessed Sacrament is shown here writing, what is now the famous “**Divine Mercy in My Soul**”, her spiritual diary containing the revelations of Jesus unfathomable and infinite mercy, her gaze lost in contemplation of His greatest Attribute.

To the right hand side of the picture, what better and more appropriate examples of Divine mercy in action for a conference in Hawaii than Blessed Damien De Veuster and Blessed Mother Marianne Cope of Molokai. These two souls, moved with pity and compassion for the plight of the leper colony on the Island of Molokai are shown here with all the vigour and freshness of youth, perhaps as they first had on their arrival on the island. They would pour out their entire lives for these people, Damien himself even contracting leprosy and dying as one of those whom he served for so long.

On the left hand side of the picture stands the Pope of Divine Mercy, Pope John Paul II, The Great. His life and Papacy will be forever linked to his fellow Pole, Saint Faustina whom he canonised in 2000, and the message of Divine mercy entrusted to her. One of his great acts of mercy as Pope was that touching gesture in the Rebibbia prison cell in Rome, when he extended his forgiveness to a frightened Mehmet Ali Agca , the man who had tried to assassinate him in St Peter’s square on May 13th 1981.

Our gaze then falls to the bottom left hand side to another great Apostle of Mercy and charity, who also would be Beatified by Pope John Paul II, Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Like Blessed Damien and Blessed Mother Marianne before her, Mother Teresa would hear the cry of Jesus from the Cross and serve him in “*The distressing disguise of the poor*”. Embracing a child of the poor in Calcutta, we follow her gaze that leads us to the Cross. She would place this cross with the words “**I Thirst**” close to each tabernacle in all the Missionary of Charity houses everywhere in the world.

Everything in the pilgrimage of life ends before the cross. All our woes, sufferings and miseries as well as all our joys and hopes are to be understood in the light of the cross. This is the price that was paid to save us, and from His pierced side we may shelter under the rays of His infinite Mercy.

The painting is titled, “**Blessed are the Merciful**” from Matthew 5.7. This felt the most fitting

title to give as it resonates with the theme for the conference for which it was commissioned. It is a call to be merciful according to our state in life and includes the promise of Mercy from Christ as a reward, “Blessed are the merciful, they shall receive mercy”.

This painting also is a way of honouring the lives and legacy of these exemplars of Divine Mercy, these particular individuals who by the witness of their lives showed the entire world what it means to be an Apostle of Divine Mercy.

I hope that this painting will bring much hope and consolation to those who see it and be a reminder of the demands of Christ’s mercy in our lives. It is dedicated to the people of all the Hawaiian Islands with much love and gratitude. I thank most especially Tony and Rose Balayan for their generous support of my work and for this commission.

Tommy Canning,

Tommy Canning, Feast of The Queenship of Mary.

August 22 2006.

Art of Divine Mercy, Art Inspired by the Treasure of the Faith

