**Title:** Roses of Love, Violets of Humility and Lilies of Suffering: A Phenomenological Hermeneutic Study of Floral Experiences in the Diary of St. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938)

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**Date:** 2013

**Abstract:** The presence of flowers is felt in Catholic architecture, literature, artwork, personal histories and devotional practices. This, however, has not always been the case. The Catholic Church has had a long and tumultuous relationship with flowers, the focus of which has been the subject of considerable scholarship (e.g. Fisher (2011, 2007), Ward (1999), Winston-Allen (1997), Goody (1993), Coats (1970)). What has not been much considered is a phenomenological treatment of Catholic floral experience, and how such experiences have shaped individual and shared understandings of the Catholic faith. This thesis seeks to redress this omission through an exploration of the life of the Polish Catholic mystic, St. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938), whose mystical experiences with the divine were explicitly mediated and narrated through flowers. Through Faustina’s diary, Divine Mercy in my Soul, we gain access to powerful, and unequivocally Catholic, experiences with flowers which
comprise the very centre of her religious convictions. This thesis queries the ways in which flowers have dynamically shaped, and have been shaped by, St. Faustina's relationship with God and Catholic holy figures. To address this question I use the semiotic, phenomenological and hermeneutic approach of Max van Manen. Van Manen uses four elements of lived experience he calls lifeworld existentials, these are: lived space, lived time, lived body and lived relationality. These four categories are applied to St. Faustina's life as she engages with God spatially, temporally, corporeally and relationally; each reveals the centrality of flowers in her religious experiences. While this thesis focuses on the religio-floral experiences of a particular mystic-saint, its significance lies also in the broader Catholic narrative of which it is a part. Writing about flowers was a transformative medium in Faustina's life and has been historically significant in the lives of many other Catholic saints and mystics who recorded similar experiences. This thesis, in describing the details of St. Faustina's floral-saturated experiences from her diary, reveals a particularized instance of a paradigmatic Catholic phenomenon whereby flowers provide access to the sacred.

URL:  http://hdl.handle.net/10393/26128
http://dx.doi.org/10.20381/ruor-3226

Collection  Thèses, 2011 - // Theses, 2011 -

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Kandler_Renate_2013_thesis.pdf  2.1 MB  Adobe PDF

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the interior of my soul a resting place for the Heart of Jesus.'  "Suffering is the greatest treasure on earth; it purifies the soul. In suffering, we learn who our true
friend is."

― Faustina Kowalska, Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul. tags: suffering. 19 likes. Like. "Love endures everything, love is stronger than death, love fears nothing."

― Saint Faustina. tags: love. The phenomenological discipline using Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method instead of Modified Van Kaam method, both described by Moustakas (1994),
for data analysis. However, this is the research method. On the other hand, a theoretical framework appears in the literature review section under the problem.