

TRAVELLING MERCIES FOR PILGRIMS

Among the thousands of secondary students who came to my music classes were three brothers. They all played an instrument – trombone, clarinet and flute. I was invited to their home on occasions and I recall their mother repeating a ‘mercy’ story to me. Before they left for a long trip in the car their Dad would say a little prayer for safety on the roads. If ever it was overlooked, the youngest, Simon, would utter with some agitation, ‘We haven’t had travelling mercies!’

I guess today’s time is about taking God’s Divine mercy into the ‘everydayness’ of our lives. Fr Steve has suggested that we look together at ‘Mercy in Scripture’. What a privilege.

Thomas Moore, 18th century Irish poet wrote these words.

‘Come ye disconsolate, where’er ye languish,
Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish;
Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.’

The mercy seat was a covering over the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle and Temple – it literally implied the ‘seat of grace’. Today we are invited to relax and sit on this seat.

Jesus said, **‘BE MERCIFUL JUST AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS MERCIFUL.’**
Luke 6:36

This is another beatitude to add to our treasury; for our good God is **merciful** and forgiving and is not engaged in judging us, because he sees us through the eyes of Jesus. God shows us all undeserved **mercy** and it follows that we must be the same toward those whom we think give us cause for anger. God is full of tenderness and is one who accepts all - good and bad; he makes the sun shine and the rain fall on both the just and the unjust, the good and the bad. God is **merciful** not only towards those who are good, but to all – even the ungrateful and evil ones. God invites us into **mercy** by extending **mercy**. We are to be tenderhearted and kind to all – friends and foes.

Kindness is perhaps an underrated quality today. In our Scriptures it means 'common grace'. God is kind to all he has made and we are to reflect this in our experience. It is more important than any church ritual we undertake - for the 'fruit of the Spirit' is kindness.

Mercy imbues the whole of Scripture. I love the story of Moses (Ex.33.17-23) who asked to see God's glory. God put him in the cleft of a rock and covered his servant with his hand and said, 'There is a place by me.' Do we realize that we don't have to make a reservation to be alongside God? Moses heard God say, 'I will show **mercy** on you and others and be kind to you and others as well.' God's **mercy** is not limited to Israel in the OT but it extends to all creation. 'The Lord is good to all, and his **mercy** is over all he has made.' (Psalm 145:9) God's **mercy** to the poor is legendary. Our Sisters of Mercy base their lives on it. The God of **mercy** and compassion also calls his people, us, to do likewise. **Mercy** is rooted in the very character of God. His law commands it. Wisdom teaches it. The prophets encourage it and the Psalms applaud it. The fullest expression of **mercy** is found in Jesus Christ – the compassion of God incarnate.

Remember the Gadarene maniac who was healed of his pain? He naturally wanted to be with Jesus all the time. 'No, go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what **mercy** he has shown you.' said Jesus. (Mark 5:19) Remember the father who came to Jesus on his sick son's behalf? 'Lord, have **mercy** on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly...' (Matt. 17:15). Remember the blind man crying out? 'Jesus, Son of David, have **mercy** on me!' (Mark 10:47) Let's recall a beatitude, 'Blessed or happy are the **merciful** for they shall obtain **mercy**.' (Matt.5:7) I wonder whether this is the same principle at work as in the Our Father prayer, '...forgive us our sins as we forgive...'? Do we receive even more **mercy** as we show **mercy**? St Paul attests that he received '**mercy** because he had acted ignorantly in unbelief' (1 Tim.1:13) And Jude blesses us with the words, '...keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the **mercy** of our Lord Jesus Christ.. and have **mercy** on those who are wavering...' (Jude 21-23)

We use the word **mercy** in our speech, 'Mercy!' or 'we beg for mercy'.

A Muslim wrote recently, 'The murderer of my family stood before me, eyes towards heaven, bound hands outstretched, palms up. He prepared to receive his execution. I prepared to deliver it. I halted, held my breath. He prayed. 'Recall the words for **mercy**,' I demanded.

I dragged the Kalashnikov rifle, shouting, 'Recall, beg **mercy!**'

As I squeezed the trigger I looked into his face.

My finger hesitated and I forced myself to put down the weapon.

'Mercy!' I recalled the beginning of chapters of the Koran, 'In the name of God, **the all-Merciful, the ever-Merciful.**'

I wept.'

Mercy is a word in law. In criminal law when the whole punishment is remitted it is called a pardon. When the punishment is remitted before the sentence it is called clemency or mercy. In everyday life mercy is a disposition to be kind and forgiving and when we are thankful we might say, 'It was a mercy that no one was hurt.' And taking in refugees is an act of mercy.

We can all pray,

'God the refuge of wanderers and exiles,
the mother and father of the homeless,
you weep with those who are uprooted from their homeland,
and you suffer with those who exist without shelter and security.
Grant that your faithful love may reach out,
and that your healing mercy may rise like the dawn'
on all who are oppressed.
We ask this through Jesus your Son,
who himself was a refugee. AMEN

As Pope Francis spoke regarding the year of **mercy** on March 15th this year he saw it as an Extraordinary Jubilee. 'I am convinced that the whole Church will be able to find in this jubilee the joy of rediscovering and making fruitful the **mercy** of God, with which we are all called to give consolation to every man and every woman of our time.' Mercy is a theme that is dear to Francis and he seeks to always live 'with the eyes of **mercy**.'

Our gospel this year is that of Luke who is referred to as 'the evangelist of mercy'. We recall his stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the **merciful** father. Francis said, 'Feel **mercy**...this word changes everything. It is the best thing we can feel: it changes the world. A little **mercy** makes the world less cold and more just. We need to understand properly this mercy of God, this merciful Father who is so patient.'
Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy.

**GRACE, MERCY AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER AND FROM JESUS
CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN | Timothy 1:2**



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