



Bringing Home the Word



Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time June 12, 2016

Humble Mercy

By Janel Esker

If today's media circus had been alive and well in first-century Palestine, it would have pounced on the events in today's Gospel reading. You can imagine the headlines: "Mystery Woman Crashes Elegant Dinner; Host Mortified." Blogs would light up with sordid details of the woman's sinful past. Simon the Pharisee would visit talk shows expressing shock and threatening a lawsuit. The woman would be offered her own reality show: "Real Sinners of the Mediterranean." Of course, after two days of nonstop coverage, the whole event would be forgotten.

Sunday Readings

2 Samuel 12:7-10, 13

"The LORD on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die."

Galatians 2:16, 19-21

"I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me."

Luke 7:36-8:3

"I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven because she has shown great love."

For Jesus, none of this drama mattered. His focus was solely on this woman who, though uninvited, made her way to him and publicly demonstrated her great repentance. In spite of Simon's protests and, most likely, the rest of the attendees' shock, Jesus gave her his full attention, and most important, his forgiveness. No gossip, no dramatic expelling of the woman, no show of great power. Just a quiet and humble exchange between Jesus and a repentant sinner.

And so it can be for us, especially in the sacrament of reconciliation. Jesus waits with a calm and compassionate heart for our sincere repentance. We need only to name our sin, as the woman did, and ask forgiveness. No matter what other voices complain against us, no matter how grave our sin, no matter how long it has been—Jesus' attention is on us and us alone. No media circus, no expert analysis, no dredging up everything bad we've ever done. Just an honest, humble encounter between us and the Lord.

Listen. Can you hear Jesus say, "Your sins are forgiven?" †

*"Jesus waits with a calm,
compassionate heart."*

A Word From Pope Francis

God's face is the face of a merciful father who is always patient. Have you thought about God's patience, the patience he has with each one of us? That is his mercy. He always has patience, patience with us, he understands us, he waits for us, he does not tire of forgiving us if we are able to return to him with a contrite heart.... Let us never tire, let us never tire! He is the loving Father who always pardons, who has that heart of mercy for us all. And let us too learn to be merciful to everyone. Let us invoke the intercession of our Lady who held in her arms the Mercy of God made man.



—Angelus, March 17, 2013

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- What do I need to seek forgiveness for?
- To whom or what do I devote most of my attention?

Holy Year of Mercy: A Time of Grace and Conversion

By Fr. Norman Langenbrunner

Pope Francis' emphasis on mercy continues the call for mercy issued by other recent popes. In his encyclical, *The Mercy of God (Dives in Misericordia)*, Pope St. John Paul II described "a heartfelt appeal by the Church to mercy, which humanity and the modern world need so much" (DM 2). Pope Francis' exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)* was animated by his focus on mercy, reiterating his oft-spoken reminder, "God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy" (EG 3).

Awareness of divine mercy, however, isn't new to God's people. Examples are found throughout the biblical story of salvation. God intervenes for a number of women who are childless, such as Abraham's wife, Sarah, and Samuel's mother, Hannah. Yahweh forgives his people's rebellion as they wander the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. The prophets and psalms consistently offer the message of divine mercy. The gospel of mercy is reflected in the miracles Jesus performed and parables he taught. The God of the Scriptures is a God of mercy.

Jesus both demonstrated mercy and demanded it of his followers. Pope Francis points to the miracles Jesus worked, the relationships he formed, the parables he taught. His mercy prompted

him to feed the hungry crowds; restore a son to his grieving mother; and speak of the lost sheep, the lost coins, and the welcome shown the Prodigal Son. In the parable of the servant who refused to imitate the master who forgave him a debt, Jesus made it clear that mercy is the criterion for all his followers: "Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?" (Matthew 18:33).

To be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful (see Luke 6:36) is a solemn goal not just for the Jubilee Year but for our lifelong journey. "In this Holy Year," Pope Francis wrote, "we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society... May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!" (Bull Of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee Of Mercy [*Misericordiae Vultus*], 15). As we enter the second half of this Jubilee Year, may we each take the Holy Father's message to heart and put the Spirit and gospel residing there into action throughout our families, parishes, workplaces, and communities.

Works of Mercy

Pope Francis' ambitious Holy Year agenda stems from the very heart of mercy: "It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and

spiritual works of mercy. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty" (MV 15). What works of mercy can you perform this week, month, and year?

The Corporal Works of Mercy

- + Feed the hungry
- + Give drink to the thirsty
- + Clothe the naked
- + Welcome the stranger
- + Heal the sick
- + Visit the imprisoned
- + Bury the dead.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

- + Counsel the doubtful
- + Instruct the ignorant
- + Admonish sinners
- + Comfort the afflicted
- + Forgive offenses
- + Bear patiently those who do us ill
- + Pray for the living and the dead. †



Lord, your love and forgiveness bring peace to the world. Open my heart to show great love and forgiveness to all people.

— From *Faithful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

June 13–18

Mon. St. Anthony of Padua:
1 Kings 21:1–16 / Matthew 5:38–42


Tue. Weekday:
1 Kings 21:17–29 / Matthew 5:43–48

Wed. Weekday: 2 Kings 2:1, 6–14 /
Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18

Thu. Weekday:
Sirach 48:1–14 / Matthew 6:7–15

Fri. Weekday: 2 Kings 11:1–4, 9–18, 20 /
Matthew 6:19–23

Sat. Weekday: 2 Chronicles 24:17–25 /
Matthew 6:24–34

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