

Living the Spirit

Mercy

As I write this I have not been able to decide just how these inserts should address the events and organization of the Year of Mercy. In the past on several occasions I had written on the theme of Mercy. However, I believe that these writings were lost when my original computer crashed. At the time I saw no reason to back up these writings, since I always thought they would come to an end before using the same theme over again. As you see I am still at it. Every time I think to end this work of ministry – for that is what it is – someone tells me of a special meaning that touched them and energized them to live the Spirit. For this I thank God for His grace and mercy to my readers.

Let me begin at least by writing about mercy. I will rely on a book given me by a dear priest friend who was my sponsor at Ordination. It covers much of Biblical Theology, and is still a great resource after many years. It is a book first written in French and in time translated into at least four languages.

“Modern usage, doubtless determined by Church Latin, identifies mercy with compassion or forgiveness. This usage though valid runs the risk of veiling the concrete richness with which Israel invented the Word in the light of her experience. In effect mercy signified for Israel the two streams of thought, compassion and fidelity.”

This brings to mind that what people may mean by mercy is truly complex. There will be times when we will find mercy meaning compassion and forgiveness or fidelity. This depends on the various actual experiences involved in living these morally good virtues or habits of living.

I am sure we will realize that the Holy Father has called us this Year of Mercy to be a forgiving people as a Church and as individual believers. He has called us to compassionate in our relationships with others. He has called the whole world, as much as he has the power to do so, to bring about peace by acts of mercy. All of these and others are certainly worthy goals.

That is why we must take seriously this call as Catholics. First of all, I know what it may and should mean to me. Perhaps my understanding of my acceptance of this call may help you know yours. I know that I must undergo a full and complete examination of my life. This examination must not be a morbid venture into my past. This is for the simple reason that to the best of my ability I know by faith that past sins have been forgiven. So much so that one need not relive their confession.

Yet, there are always times when we come to realize that there is still more that we must do. I know that at times I felt put upon, have been treated less than well. With such feelings I have to examine whether there has been real forgiveness for those who may have treated me so. I gladly mention that I have received the grace often to be forgiving. And now in this Year I want to do something more. I want to pray in a special way for

those who may ever have been the source of my pain or unhappiness. I hope that it will be easy. I count on grace to make it all possible.

I would also hope that this spirit of forgiveness would come from a deep compassion for others. I suspect that all of us could go a bit further in being compassionate. We must as Catholic believers do our best to be generous in forgiveness. We must do so out of fidelity to our calling as children of a merciful God. We must do so as the recipients of the graces won for us by our savior, Jesus Christ. We must pray to the Holy Spirit to be our guide and our energy to activate many of these often sleeping virtues.

Perhaps this personal glimpse into my own concern for this Year will lead you to a similar plan for living the spirit of mercy during this special time. Perhaps your plan will be quite different. Maybe you will need to focus on fidelity as the basis for your growing in grace, being worthy of receiving forgiveness, and giving witness to your plan of life.

Biblical Theology goes into the use of words. It finds mercy to be made to mean more than forgiveness and compassion, even fidelity. It speaks to the Greek origins as comprising piety, conscious goodness freely willed. It also adds that fidelity is meant to mean fidelity to oneself. Here I would add that means using grace to help us forgive ourselves, and accept that God has forgiven us or will forgive us. So, mercy can mean grace, clemency, and in its deepest meaning love.

This resource goes on to tell us: "From beginning to end the manifestation of God's tenderness is occasioned by human misery; and man, in his turn, ought therefore to show mercy to his neighbor in imitation of the Creator." Made in God's image, as we learn from the Scriptures, the Year of Mercy reminds us to burnish that image, and live in the same spirit as the Spirit of God impels us. His love urges us on. May we find the strength to find mercy and give it in all its meanings. Doing so, how can we believe anything other than that life is worth living? Will we not find that the mystery of life is love? Will we find God?

December 13, 2015

God love and bless you and be merciful to you!
Monsignor David Morrison