

Living the Spirit Jesus, Savior of Mercy

In my last insert I wrote about God as the Father of Mercy. I would like now to share some reflections on Jesus as our Savior. His mission was to bring salvation to our human race. For this reason He set aside his divinity and became man. While theologians have studied all that this means over many centuries since His coming among us, I would like to write of His mercy as revealed in the Gospels.

Let me first remind you of a quote from Biblical Theology. “English translations of Hebrew and Greek words [for mercy] oscillate between mercy and love, passing through a spectrum of meanings: clemency, goodness, and even grace.” Because of this variety of meanings we can say that the Gospels describe the mercy which Jesus showed in His life on earth. It covers many different aspects of this special gift to us.

Jesus became for us the face of divine mercy. He is called “the merciful high priest” (Heb. 2, 7). He experienced the very misery from which He came to save us. His actions are all a way of showing divine mercy, even though they are not represented as such throughout the Gospels.

I have thought of His mercy that can be found in His Word. His teachings are filled with examples of the meaning of goodness and love. His parables teach us again and again of what mercy, love, compassion, and forgiveness really mean. Perhaps in this Year of Mercy we can do nothing better than to study the Parable which we call “The Prodigal Son.”

Jesus teaches us about the father who shows mercy for his wayward son. He lets his son have his inheritance in bountiful acceptance of his son’s desire. He sees his son goes into a far country where he loses that inheritance. The father continues to love his son, waits for him, and rushes to him when at last he returns. He once again endows him with all that sonship means.

In this parable we have learned to see ourselves and all humanity in the figure of the son. God has given us so many gifts, including the gift of grace. When we sin we throw them away. We begin to lose virtue after virtue. No matter how and in what manner, we find ourselves deprived of grace. Grace is that sharing in the divine nature as Scripture reveals. We are sinners, making our Father irrelevant to our life. Yet He is merciful. This is the teaching of Jesus in this parable. God is ever ready to forgive. He waits for our return to Him.

From the parable we can learn our need to be like the son and form inner intentions of our sorrow for sin, of our unworthiness. We must go to God and tell Him of this inner reality. We confess our sins; we resolve to be united again to God through grace. Perhaps it is better called love. The act of perfect contrition is indeed an act of love.

If we find in our reading and study of the Gospels the teaching of Jesus, we come to know that He wants us to be merciful “as your Father is merciful.” This mercy will make of us the neighbors of the miserable Samaritan met along our way. It fills us with pity for others who have offended God and inflames our desire to engage in the work of bringing mercy and salvation to others. After all, as disciples of the Lord we have learned to be also apostles. We must tell the good news. Doing this, we find the love of God. It is a gift to those who show mercy, as St. John has written (1John 3, 17).

The Christian finds real meaning to his life when he begins to live for others. This is our common vocation. It is to share in the riches we have received from a loving and merciful, compassionate and generous God. We are called to live the Spirit and not just to speak about what we have learned from the teachings of Jesus.

The Gospels reveal to us how Jesus came to live among us. In a special way we see His mercy in the many miracles recorded in the Gospels. They are often nothing less than a giving of life – which is symbolic of the inner life which will have no end. One may think of His raising of the daughter of Jairus, of the centurion’s servant, and of His friend Lazarus. You can understand this gift as something more than a physical gift that Jesus gave when you read the miracle of the paralytic let down through the roof. There Jesus says words of powerful absolution: Your sins are forgiven!

Finally it would be impossible for me to overlook in writing of the mercies received from Jesus as Savior, the very fact of His great sacrifice. Jesus died for us. His death had infinite value and brings into being a new Covenant of man with God. We adore Jesus as God, because by His holy Cross He has redeemed the world. From His sacrifice we have received grace upon grace.

We have often heard about someone dying for another. We salute our military with gratitude for the sacrifice of life so often made to bring us safety from our enemies. To die for others is indeed a gift of love. But it is never found as loving as the sacrifice of Jesus. His love is infinite. He is, indeed, the face of God’s mercy, so clearly revealed to us.

In this Year of Mercy we should have given thought to how the sacrifice of Jesus is made effective for us. Its power reaches us in the manner He Himself chose it to do. His Sacrifice becomes ours when we participate in the Mass. I still recall the catechism lesson that the Mass is the re-presentation of the sacrifice of the Cross. Through the Mass we receive from Christ’s cross the grace to become intimate friends of a living Savior.

The Year of Mercy is ending. We may look back on it with thanks that Jesus gave the Church the power to continue His work of love, of mercy and forgiveness. The Church reaches out to us with offers of forgiveness, as only the Church can do. To the Church Jesus gave the power to forgive all the sin that makes us so miserable and unhappy. In the Mass Jesus offers us the courage and strength to live with the happiness about which He told us: *Happy the poor in spirit, the merciful, the meek, the mourning and the persecuted*. The Father’s mercy is real. It will last even after our Year has ended.

If we want it so!

God love you always!

Monsignor Morrison

11/6/16

O my God, I am heartily sorry for my sins, which have offended You, because I love You Who are all good and worthy of my love. I firmly resolve to confess my sins, do penance and amend my life. Amen.

Lord, have mercy! Christ, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!