

## Living the Spirit Mercy PART 2

*The reader may find many good sources for reflection on the theme of mercy. In a special way I hope you may find through your access to a website the many beautiful instructions, homilies etc. of Pope Francis. He has a remarkable way of speaking to the practical and down-to-earth ways for us to know and live mercy. [It is far from the often complex writings of the Popes in their formal allocutions.] There are many other sources which you will no doubt be able to find if your search for them. I do not think I will be able to record what so many others are writing on this theme. I do intend another insert based on the New Testament.*

### **The God of Mercies**

The study of Biblical theology continues from my previous references to the revelation of God's mercy in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the word "mercy" may not always be used, but its meaning is very clear. God sees the miseries of his people, and responds with loving tenderness. He has a love which is eternal. It extends to the sons of Adam, the navigators in perilous seas, the poor in need of a protector. In the exodus from Egypt he brings his people to know Him in a way that reveals both his justice and his forgiveness for their sins.

In saving the sinner, mercy brings man to enter more deeply into the mystery of divine tenderness. [Pope Francis has called for a revolution of tenderness among us.] As God gives Moses the commandments with the fundamental revelation of His essence, He grants mercy where divine tenderness triumphs over sin. "Yahweh is a God of tenderness and grace, slow to anger and abounding in mercy and fidelity, showing kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin..."

God does not let sin go unpunished, but he gives grace to the sinner to cry out to him and plead for mercy and forgiveness. He looks on his people as precious sons and darling children. So He says: "My heart yearns for him and I must have pity on him." This is His will for the sinner.

Many passages of the Old Testament show how merciful God is and wants to be. "He has not treated us according to our sins.... As a father is kind to his children, so the Lord is kind to those who revere him." We can find proof of this bountiful mercy in the acts that are recorded as the chosen people make their way to a new understanding of God's plan for them. We see in his care for them as they journey an image of how for us He is present as the merciful Father, the redeeming Son and the Holy Spirit.

Here I end the brief reflection of the Old Testament which I began in the writing of December 15<sup>th</sup> last. For myself I have read a summary of the history of the Old Testament. I wish that I could help you do the same. Perhaps it may be best if you take your Bible and read the story of God's loving goodness and his saving power in one or other of the books of the Old Testament.

## **The Year of Mercy**

I know I must reflect in this Year of Mercy on this theme as written above. I must ask myself how I live the spirit of mercy with true tenderness. [Will you do the same?] I want to be a forgiving person. [Do you?] How often do I thank God for his loving forgiveness to me? This is a question to ask ourselves to make the pursuit of mercy a real quest in this Year.

Only you, dear reader, can make this a special time in your life journey. As members of the Church we are called by our Holy Father to live this year with many good works, with an announcement of our faith in the good news by the actions of our life. In order to find some enthusiasm, it may be well to recall just what is meant by a Holy Year.

### **Holy Year**

The Catholic Almanac tells us that a holy year is a year during which the pope grants a plenary indulgence. In the past this indulgence could be gained by travel to Rome or at a later time to other places designated. The first Holy Year was proclaimed in 1300. Thereafter there were such years as a new century began; still later, more often. The holy year is a reflection of the Old Testament Jubilee, which occurred every 50<sup>th</sup> year. At that time all debts were cancelled. It is this spirit that marks the Christian holy year.

### **Indulgence**

This is defined by Pope Paul VI as the remission before God of the temporal punishment due for sins already forgiven as far as their guilt is concerned, which a follower of Christ – with the proper dispositions and under certain conditions determined by the Church acquires through the intervention of the Church. Only one plenary indulgence can be gained in a single day. Indulgences can be applied to the dead.

The specific conditions for this Year's indulgence are rather inclusive. One can perform corporal and spiritual works of mercy. One can also go through the holy door designated by the Bishop of every diocese. "To experience and obtain the Indulgence, the faithful are called to make a brief pilgrimage to the Holy Door, open in every Catholic Cathedral or in churches designated by the Diocesan Bishop...." Of course, one can also make the pilgrimage to Rome. [I recall with happiness that I did so in the Holy Year of 2000.] The Holy Door is called by Pope Francis the Door of Mercy. It is connected to the sacrament of Reconciliation. In our Diocese every confessional is marked with a symbol of the Holy Year. One must also see the connection to the Holy Eucharist. And as in all indulgences prayers for the Pope and his intentions are required. The sick, the homebound, the aged and the alone are to "live their sickness and suffering as an experience of closeness to the Lord in the mystery of His Passion, death and resurrection, the royal road which gives meaning to pain and loneliness."

*May Mary, Mother of Mercy, give us the grace needed to live the spirit of Mercy.*

*God love and bless you always!*

*Monsignor Morrison*