

**Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent
March 6, 2018**

“We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.”

These are the words of Pope Francis in his papal bull that announced the year of Mercy that started back in 2015. They serve as a plain restatement of God’s challenge so clearly expressed in today’s readings.

Mercy is not an option for Christians. It is the point of departure for us. We are sinners loved and redeemed by God. Jesus revealed the Father to us in this way, he showed us the love of God through his supreme act of mercy, and he sent us the Holy Spirit to help us in carrying on his own mission of mercy. Forgiveness is the basic mode of life for us followers of Jesus. The Gospel shows this clearly, as the man who should have learned the saving power of mercy from the Master, refuses to share it with his fellow servant. We all owe God a debt we cannot repay. We all owe each other – because we are human and fail in our relationships with each other. The world is full of debts. There are many philosophies and systems out there that try to deal with this fact, but none of those are the Christian way.

Our way is the one that remembers who we are. We rely on God's mercy and love. Think about the merciful love of God for a second. Looking at it from the eyes of the world, it seems absurd. Why would God simply forgive us, time and time again, knowing that we are very possibly going to sin again? After we sin again, we get on our knees and plead for his mercy again like the Prophet Daniel: "Do not take away your mercy from us." And once again God shares it freely. This is the way God is, and we depend on his mercy.

But then, we go and forget it immediately when we deal with other people. We get offended, we get indignant, we get angry, and we annoyed by things people say and do. If we are the recipients of so much mercy, where does it go when we step out into the world? There is no need to hold back on giving mercy and forgiveness. God is an infinite wellspring of mercy, so there will always be enough. Share it freely. Do not be afraid of sharing forgiveness like Jesus commands, with his symbolic "seventy-seven times."

The world around us, and maybe even our own frightened hearts, will tell us that it is absurd to forgive again and again without measure. After all, how do you "get ahead" with a silly attitude like that? But Christians know better. We know the truth of who we are. We are not afraid of seeming absurd and following the ways of the Lord with our whole self. Forgive and have mercy, my sisters and brothers. Drink deeply of that "wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace." Trust in the Lord who will never run out of mercy and share it without counting the cost. Show the world a better way. Accept the challenge of God's never-ending mercy. Never hold back in forgiving your brother or your sister from your heart.