



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Reverend Gustavo Garcia-Siller



Homily – Pastoral Center Mass
December 5, 2015

With the beginning of Advent, our journey of hope and expectation has started anew. During this holy time the Church invites us to anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ, and the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation. The coming of Christ is a sign of the Father's mercy and love for His children. Our redemption comes from God's eternal healing, as Isaiah prophecies in our first reading, that the Lord will bind up our wounds and heal our bruises.

In just a few days, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, The Jubilee Year of Mercy begins. This moment of Grace will help us to focus on the coming of the greatest act of the Father's mercy, the coming of his Son. In this morning's Gospel, St. Matthew tells us that Jesus' heart was "moved with pity" for the people "because they were troubled and abandoned." Surely he taught them about the loving Father, the Good News of His Kingdom, and His presence in the

heart of every person. However, Jesus also testified to the mercy of God as He cured "every disease and illness, healing the bruises of their bodies and souls."

Speaking about qualities of Mercy, Pope Francis teaches us that it is, "the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us...It is the bridge that connects man and God, opening our hearts to a hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness." Our redemption, the binding up of our wounds came when Jesus' wounds were opened-up so he could shed his precious blood in God's supreme redemptive act of Mercy.

Jesus felt so deeply and urgently for the Father's hurting people that he sent the disciples out to be instruments of God's Mercy as shepherds to the lost and suffering and to, "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, (and) drive out demons."

Jesus recognizes that the healing of salvation should not be delayed. He says, "The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few, so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for the harvest." The Father is the "Master", and he calls us to labor in the fields of life, carrying His message of love into a world that is suffering from disease and division, a world that yearns for Jesus Christ, the bridge to God's mercy.

Often the call to "harvest" is directed at those who are invited to a priestly vocation or consecrated life. In his homily during his recent pilgrimage to Africa, the Holy Father expands our understanding of that Divine invitation, telling us that everyone who is called to minister to our suffering world, clergy, religious, and laypersons, share in the calling to be instruments of God's mercy. However, he also reminds us that we are called to be "...first and foremost practitioners of forgiveness, specialists in reconciliation, experts in mercy."

In the Diary of St. Faustina, we read that we are all called "...to be an apostle of Your most holy mercy." We can carry out our vocation as bearers of the Good News of God's great love through our words and in our lives. Mercy lives in God's forgiveness, but also in our charity for those who need God's healing touch. We are Jesus' hands, his heart, his Divine Mercy in the world.

The Psalmist tells us that we are to "Praise the Lord, for he is good...that he heals the brokenhearted...he calls each by name." God's Mercy is profoundly personal, so we are to make our testimony personal as well. As we journey toward Christmas, we find ourselves inspired to reach out to the brokenhearted. In our parishes we hold food collections for the hungry and the homeless; toy collections for the innocent children who look to us for the light of a loving God in

the shadows of their lives. However, in the spirit of God's mercy, we are called to feed the hungry year round, bring the children to the love of Christ every day, and witness to the love of God by giving our voice to the voiceless and marginalized.

This Advent, it is not hard to find a world whose heart is broken by the sin of terrorism. Their victims do not live only in Paris or Mali or in some distant land. The tragedy of violence wounds and bruises us all. Refugees are left to wander through the "dark valley" of uncertainty. We witness to God's mercy when we give voice to their suffering, and seek a solution of compassion and justice.

Let us bring God's mercy to every person we meet, after all we all have sinned. We all need his forgiveness. We all are searching in some way for His truth in our lives. Let us help one another trust in God, believing that he will satisfy our every need, our hunger and thirst for his mercy. In our own personal pilgrimage through Advent, let us be consoled that in the coming of Christ, through our encounter with him, the prophecy of Isaiah becomes a reality and our eyes of faith are opened wide, "...With your own eyes you shall see your Teacher, While from behind, a voice shall sound in your ears: 'This is the way; walk in it.'"