



Bringing Home the Word



Fourth Sunday of Lent March 15, 2015

Have Mercy

By Janel Esker

*“Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Lord have mercy.”*

We proclaim those words at most liturgies, but how often do we really *pray* them? During Lent at our parish, we sing the Greek translation—“*Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.*” We’re literally begging our God to be merciful to us; unfortunately, I’m uncertain how much intention and purpose we place behind those words. Do we really know

Sunday Readings

2 Chronicles 36:14–16, 19–23

Because Israel was unfaithful to the covenant and rejected God’s messengers, Jerusalem was destroyed, and they were exiled to Babylon until King Cyrus of Persia called them back.

Ephesians 2:4–10

Our life and salvation comes from the grace, love, and mercy of Christ alone. It doesn’t come from our worthiness or any of our works.

John 3:14–21

Jesus, the light, came into the world to expose and conquer sin. Though the wicked hate the truth, Christ, in God’s love, does not condemn but saves.

what we’re asking God and what God asks in return?

Today’s readings describe the richness of God’s mercy and compassion. We’re reminded that God’s sending Jesus and his promise of eternal life are merciful gifts to us sinners. Do any of us deserve the gift of Jesus or the gift of resurrection? Certainly not—but God gives to us anyway. Mercy is given to the undeserving—those who deserve justice but instead are given compassion.

Our earthly lives are sustained by God’s mercy, but how merciful are we in return? How many of us vehemently support the death penalty? Do we celebrate when a terrorist is maimed or killed? God’s mercy extends to all—we sinners *and* those we consider to be even worse sinners. Sometimes it’s a simpler matter: When someone cuts us off in traffic, perhaps we feel entitled to speed past and cut him off in return. Sure, the driver “deserves” justice, but mercy is what we’re expected to give. How can we beg God for mercy on us each week at Mass if we’re not willing to extend that same mercy to all God’s children—both close to home and far away?

Be the mercy of God this week—and experience God’s mercy poured out on you. †

REFLECTION
QUESTIONS

ONE? TWO?
REFLECTION

- How do I live a compassionate life?
- How do I convince others of the love of God?

PRAYER

Lord, you are the
source of love, peace,
and justice in the
world. Help me to
live in communion
with you and all
people.

—*Mindful Meditations for Every Day
of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

Mercy: Ask and You Shall Receive

By Fr. Rick Potts, CSsR

Our Lord, Jesus, preaches about a God of love and mercy. Jesus tells us about a God who seeks out the lost and offers forgiveness to even the gravest sinner, a God with such a deep desire to be reconciled with humanity that he sent his only Son to take the place of all sacrifices.

This revolutionary concept draws millions to profess faith in the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. And yet, why do we live as if we don't need mercy? And why are we so reluctant to accept forgiveness where it's offered?

The sacrament of reconciliation offers mercy and forgiveness to each of us, but we have plenty of excuses for neglecting it. Many people say they're too scared or that the experience would be too painful. Others claim they can go directly to God. This is the only sacrament about which people argue that they don't need a priest's participation.

Many of us find it hard to name what a sin is and to identify our own sins. I can't tell you how many people begin by saying that they really don't have anything to confess. (Of course, after a guided examination of conscience, all that changes.) It's not that they say they're sinless; it's that they can't name any specific serious sin. Reconciliation calls us to become more self-aware and to examine the motives for our actions so we can come before God honestly.



We also like our sins. They're comfortable. We're perhaps more afraid of giving them up than of confessing them. What if we *can't* or *won't* give them up? What does that say about our true character and discipleship? We must at least strive to do so.

Mercy seems wonderful and simple, but we must be willing to admit our faults to ourselves, to God, and to a priest. And we must be willing to walk a narrower path, to leave behind what is not of God. Only then will we truly desire to celebrate the mercy of our loving God. †

Why do we live as if we don't need mercy?

The Treasure of the Trinity

By Fr. Rick Potts, CSsR

They say everyone is Irish at least one day a year. Saint Patrick is one of those saints who would be mighty indeed even if only 25 percent of his legend is true. The story goes that he used a shamrock—a simple three-leaf clover—to explain the Trinity. From the Giver of gifts to the One who asks us to take up our cross to the One who gives us the strength to accomplish the task, the Trinity encompasses our entire faith.

So why do we keep looking for a *four*-leaf clover? Isn't the Trinity sufficient to see us through *any* trial? We so often spend our days searching for that little extra leaf: the guarantee, the sign that our future is secure.

We can easily fall into the trap of thinking more about what our faith can do for us rather than what we need to do for our faith. We profess faith in a loving Savior, yet we keep an eye out for a good-luck charm. The Spirit dwells within us, yet we cling to a little green plant that withers and dies.

What does it mean for Catholics to place our complete trust in God? Do we have the faith to let go of everything? Can we allow the Spirit sufficient room to be a wellspring within us? Can we look inward for the Source of our life and strength?

Where does your faith fit into all of this? As we realize that the future always has been and always will be uncertain, I hope you're content to cling to the everyday threesome: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. †

WEEKDAY READINGS March 16–21

Mon. *Isaiah 65:17–21 / John 4:43–54*
Tue. *St. Patrick:
Ezekiel 47:1–9, 12 / John 5:1–16*
Wed. *St. Cyril of Jerusalem:
Isaiah 49:8–15 / John 5:17–30*

Thu. *St. Joseph: 2 Samuel 7:4–5, 12–14, 16 /
Romans 4:13, 16–18, 22 / Matthew 1:16,
18–21, 24 or Luke 2:41–51*
Fri. *Wisdom 2:1, 12–22 / John 7:1–2, 10,
25–30*
Sat. *Jeremiah 11:18–20 / John 7:40–53*