



UP TO THE SOURCE

MONTHLY WORDS

February: Mercy

1. Karol Wojtyla discovered it in Krakow. There he read the diary of Sister Faustina Kowalska, who had received a special revelation of divine mercy. In the light of her writings, the drama in her nation became clearer to him: it was not simply that of the invasion, first by the German army and later by the Russian army, with the corresponding massacres. The drama was that there were people capable of carrying out such massacres, of collaborating with them. What is left of a person's dignity when he lends himself to these acts? Sister Faustina taught him that God's mercy extended not only to those who suffered the offense, but even to those who caused it. For it is proper to mercy to regenerate the dignity of those who have lost it.

Even as Pope he experienced pain and misery, especially on May 13, 1981, in St. Peter's Square. Ali Agca

could not believe it when he was told that the Pope survived the assassination attempt. John Paul II explained: "One hand fired. Another deflected the bullet," indicating the maternal protection of Our Lady. Why did the Pope go to see him years later in his prison cell? He wanted to reach the man's heart, to regenerate his dignity, because he had lost it trying to assassinate him.

2. There are many miseries that can move our hearts to compassion. Some have their cause in nature, such as illnesses or disasters. Others in misfortunes, such as personal failures or accidents. Others in human freedom itself, through the misuse of personal freedoms causing the loss of well being or self worth. In all these situations we find people whose vital impulse and their capacity to lead their lives to fulfillment has been diminished or even completely lost.



Return of the Prodigal Son, Bartolomé Esteban, 1667–70

3. How do we react to them?

Compassion moves us to make their misfortune our own and thus to do what we can to help them. What is astonishing is that God's compassion has moved him to identify with us in such a way that now it is he who, taking upon himself our misfortunes on the cross, asks mercy of each one of us. In doing so, he shows us the depth of his love "which does not shrink from the extraordinary sacrifice of his Son to fulfill the Father's faithfulness to men created in his image" (DM 7).

4. The Father's mercy does not stop at compassion, not even at alleviating evils, but goes so far as to regenerate the dignity of the one who lost it. Is

this not the most impressive point of the parable of the prodigal son? He lost his patrimony, but above all he lost his dignity as a son. On returning home he knows that he can ask for nothing more than to be received as a laborer. And yet the Father, with those eloquent signs, regenerates in him the dignity of a son: he knows himself to be valued and not humiliated, able now to accept the truth of himself.

Thus we understand that mercy is distinguished from clemency, since this virtue is simply limited to not punishing those who have deserved it. Mercy is also distinguished from tolerance, because, thanks to mercy, the person changes. Herein lies the

greatness of merciful love: it is not an impotent love, which only gives comfort. It changes people, restoring in them the Creator's plan.

5. Those who accept mercy know God better. God's merciful love, something totally new in the history of religions and thought, reveals to us something unheard of about God: his love has both the characteristic of maternal love, because it has the depth of mercy, and at the same time, it has the characteristics of fatherly love, because it is faithful to his paternity, all of it centered on the humanity of the child. In this way he is able to regenerate us.

At the same time, mercy reveals to us how much our life is worth: we are worth the life of the Son of God, because loving us with mercy has cost him dearly. The Father holds each one of us in such high dignity.

And so he asks us, once we have experienced mercy, that we too may be merciful like our Father.

Practices of Mercy

- Sister Faustina recommended the recitation of the Divine Mercy Chaplet: on each bead of the decade, repeat: For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.
- The works of mercy are intended not simply to alleviate suffering, but to regenerate the person, his dignity and his will. We invite you to take up as a family, some corporal works of mercy, focused not only on alleviating pain, but in sharing the greatness of

being human, of being part of a family of God. There is a way of feeding the hungry in our family, of quenching the thirst, of clothing the body, of accompanying the ill, of praying for the dead, that helps our family members to enter into the greatness of life.

- When you offer forgiveness, work to not only forget the offense, but also begin to rebuild trust in the one who has offended you.
- Place an image that reflects the Mercy of the Father in your home or keep a card of it in your books.

To Learn More

- St. John Paul II Encyclical of John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*
- H. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*



Divine Mercy, Adolph Hyla, 1943.



Prayer to Mary, Mother of Mercy

Mary, you have experienced like no one else the mercy of the Father and, by the sacrifice of your heart, you have been called to bring people closer to merciful love, we ask that through your motherly love we not shrink back from our miseries, but let us allow the Lord to heal us and regenerate in us the dignity of children.

Marian Mass

Join us every Saturday at 8:15 am for **Marian Mass**. We are journeying with the encyclical of St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris mater*.



Disciples
of the Hearts
of Jesus and Mary

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