



## **Merciful Holiness**

### ***Ways of Exercising Merciful Love***

The testimony of mercy is the testimony of a Saint who, like Saint Faustina, changed and transformed by God's merciful love, goes to people to convey to them the touch of God's mercy.

Saint John Paul II showed Divine Mercy as salvation for humanity and happiness for man. That is why he called us to be apostles of God's mercy. He believed that God's mercy is a fire that must be passed on to the present world (cf. DM 3:14). Understood in this way, mercy is the core of the Christian's spiritual life (cf. Mt 5:7) and, as an attribute of God (cf. Col 1:15), it is a gift for us and at the same time a duty towards others. Saint Faustina reminds us of these truths: " Mercy is the flower of love. God is love, and mercy is His deed. In love it is conceived; in mercy it is revealed. " (Diary 651). That is why Jesus commanded her: " Proclaim that mercy is the greatest attribute of God. All the works of My hands are crowned with mercy." (Diary 301). And if You have allowed them to participate in Your happiness and to exist and to love You, that is only due to the abyss of Your mercy. " (Diary 1741). Mercy understood in this way determines the achievement of personal holiness and the holiness of one's neighbor.

### **Ways of Exercising Merciful Love**

Jesus reveals to Faustina three ways of exercising mercy toward neighbors: "the first by deed, the second – by word, the third – by prayer. In these three degrees is contained the fullness of mercy, and it is an unquestionable proof of love for Me. By this means a soul glorifies and pays reverence to My mercy" (Diary 742). From these words of Jesus, it is clear that we cannot limit ourselves to the preaching of mercy. Saint John Paul II strongly emphasizes this principle, saying that a person who experiences and receives God's mercy is even called to do mercy to others (cf. DM 14). The performance of acts of mercy is not always about great deeds of charity and material help of all kinds. That is why Jesus instructs souls " who are often worried because they do not have the material means with which to carry out an act of mercy. Yet spiritual mercy, which requires neither permission nor storehouses, is much more meritorious and is within the grasp of every soul." (Diary 1317).

Therefore, it is about an internal attitude that makes each action an act of mercy. Therefore, a merciful act requires a person to be rich in spiritual goods which are true and everlasting. To be able to bestow goods on one's neighbor, one must first possess them. The more a Christian provides these spiritual goods to others, the more he gives them away, and the more God enriches him, and lets him share with others.

The second way to exercise mercy, according to Jesus, is through the word. It contains in its content all human activities that he can show to his neighbor through words. St. Faustina knew that every word spoken can do a lot of good to people, but it can also be a cause of pain and suffering. Forgiveness is the essence of the mercy of the word, because it builds the right relationships between people, builds fraternity, and stops evil.

Moreover, the Apostol of mercy of the word should include in his attitude the proclamation of mercy to the whole world.

The third way is prayer. Thanks to this merciful love, prayer takes on the character of man's filial cooperation with God and participates in his mission to give mercy. Prayer, therefore, is

at the service of love for one's neighbor and thus becomes an act of mercy towards him (cf. Jn 2:3). For this reason, Jesus pointed out that prayer is a sure and infallible means by which it is always possible to help others, immersing them in the most abundant source of mercy, which is God Himself. For this reason, Faustina devotes a great time to praying for others, seeing it as the most effective way to help them (cf. Diary 146).

Understood in this way, the realization of mercy revealed by Jesus is very difficult for contemporary man, because it requires personal holiness and systematic formation in the spirit of mercy, to strive in this way for a fuller mystical union with God in Christ and a more generous service to others. Whoever wishes to maintain this right relationship with God becomes a saint. The holiness of God is thus hypostatically united to the holiness of man. Therefore, in God's holiness, understood as the realization of the love of neighbor, our mercy is most fully expressed through these three ways. These three ways of mercy need to be fulfilled by every Christian as a salvation for the world.

These three ways of exercising mercy, according to Jesus, should be a means of the Christian's personal sanctification to the point of achieving mystical union with God in love, and on the other hand, a means of sanctifying his neighbor. A Christian who exercises mercy by deed, word, and prayer must sanctify himself and sanctify his neighbor in these three ways. The sanctification of one's neighbor flows from the personal holiness of the one who performs mercy. Such deeds, and words, without prayer, can be done by a non-believer, who does not live in union with Jesus.

Therefore, the more the motivation for acts of mercy performed towards other people comes from personal holiness, the more and more a person's behavior becomes of a supernatural character, i.e., higher and higher degrees of holiness. Therefore, for those who progress in the development of holiness, personal holiness must be developed through the means of mercy and must also contribute to the sanctification of one's neighbor. For this reason, the means of mercy must not be of a one-time nature but must have the character of constancy in the spiritual life of the Christian, because " whatever you do for your neighbor, you do for Me. " (Diary 1029).

Merciful holiness, therefore, has two dimensions: towards God and others, constituting the synthesis of the spiritual life of the Christian, if it finds its source and culmination in God's mercy. God's mercy, then, is the way that conforms people to the merciful Christ, frees them from attachment to the temporal world, and makes them holy in his image.

## **Conclusion**

In Faustina's Diary of a Soul, we see that along with the development of her holiness, Jesus demands that she be a living reflection of Him through love and mercy (cf. Diary 1446). "Love everyone out of love for Me, even your greatest enemies, so that My mercy may be fully reflected in your heart. " (Diary 1695). Mystical holiness, then, discovers the truth that the attainment of full holiness in man consists in drawing near to God and being conformed to Christ through deed, word, and prayer.

Therefore, in our Divine Mercy Shrine of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, we should learn how to be merciful and how to achieve our holiness and make the world better.

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