

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, May 16th 2016

“...I trust in your merciful love.”

“...wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle...full of mercy...”

I think of mercy as coming from a position of authority in a judgmental sense. To throw oneself on the mercy of the court. Or “have mercy on me, Oh God, for I am a sinner. Mercy is a recognition of the other’s authority and power. I feel helpless. There is no earning, only begging for mercy. Mercy can become a commodity of sorts. Not too difficult to see how belittling this could be in certain situations.

It never occurred to me that I could be, am in fact, called to be a woman of mercy. Possibly mercy is not something given or bestowed but rather something acquired, grown into, more of a disposition, a way of being. A disposition coming from wisdom, faith, grace and maybe even age, but not necessarily. To live mercifully, rather than to bestow mercy. Mercy indeed is akin to love, kindness, gentleness. I think, just to use a ‘new’ word, ‘mercy’ invites me to take a closer look at myself and my world – in its entirety.

Our Pope Francis is a genuine and sincere mentor in living mercy. His gentle ways and strong, wise and challenging words bring new life and meaning to what it is to live mercy. Mercy is not a one-way street. Mercy does not come just from on-high – it must come from me and you. It is meant to flow between, around and among us. It has to if it is going to work. I receive and I give, you receive and you give. Mercy like a river flows, quenching thirst along the way.

More than this mercy is grounded in an intimate relationship with Jesus, with Abba, his father. In today’s gospel Jesus says to his disciples, who are perplexed because they couldn’t cure the epileptic boy, “This kind (of healing) can only come out through prayer”. Jesus was referring to his intimate relationship with Abba. Over and over again we witness Jesus curing and healing in the name of and with the authority of Abba. Gently and with sincere compassion Jesus walks among the poor, the sick, the lame, the forgotten and the outcast. Jesus is kind, gentle, merciful, gracious, inclusive, inviting, encouraging, even at times admonishing. Jesus is LOVE. Jesus is the incarnation of LOVE - and all its sparkling facets: gentleness, kindness, joy, caring and mercy.

Mercy is not merely a doing for, or a giving of. It is fuller, richer, it is the more, the magis. It is a pure compassionate presence, a sincere acceptance of the other, a genuine entering into the plight and joys of someone else. Just the thought of what this means and what it would look like makes me feel very vulnerable...and sad. This is challenging and difficult. When I serve the homeless in a soup kitchen, where do I stand? Usually, behind the counter. In a group having lunch with an alleged child molester, did I make any physical contact – rub shoulders, shake hands, look him in the eye when we spoke? Finally, but it was painfully difficult. The overwhelmed mother who is driven to yelling at her child in public. Often I’ve changed directions...maybe offered a smile to the quaking child or attempted to exchange gentle understanding words with the mother. All the while remembering when I was on the verge of such behavior. When I take items to the thrift shop ...I don’t know that I have considered the condition of the item in relation to a person. Is the item worthy of being offered to

another.

Pope Francis has challenged me.

The Goodnews: I don't have to beg for mercy, only to accept it and keep it alive. It's free for me, you – only needs to be shared. I'll keep a close eye on Francis until I get the hang of it! He makes it look not only easy, but also inviting to live mercy.

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