



Jubilee of Mercy

FEBRUARY: GOD'S MERCY NEVER ENDS

You Can't Give What You Don't Have

"Day after day, touched by his compassion, we also can become compassionate to others." – Pope Francis

As a father of three young children, I feel like I spend an inordinate amount of time disciplining. I always try to be just when dealing out appropriate punishments for misbehavior. At the same time I always try to over emphasize my love and forgiveness for my children despite their shortcomings.

I learned this practice from my own parents who always made sure to tell me how much they loved me, even as they were dealing out punishment. I remember some distinct experiences in which I really deserved a severe punishment but my parents decided to show mercy once they saw my sincere regret. As a father, I am always looking for times in which it would be appropriate for me to model that same kind of mercy to my own children.

Know Mercy Show Mercy

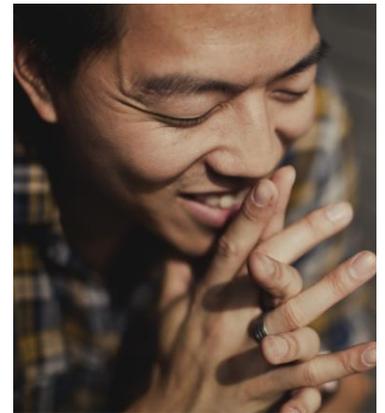
The local theme the Archdiocese of Cincinnati chose to use during the Jubilee Year of Mercy is "know mercy show mercy." Lately I have been struck with the reality that I cannot give what I do not have. The main reason I seek to be a father who shows mercy to his own children is because I experienced mercy from my own Father.

Follow the Light

This Lent we will again host the "Light is ON for You" event in which every parish or region will be open for the Sacrament of Reconciliation on Tuesday, February 23rd. Let's be honest, most Catholics rarely if ever celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Only about 12% of Catholics attend Confession once a year. Only 2% attend once a month or more. A full 75% rarely attend - if at all.

There are a million reasons we find not to go to Confession. It is inconvenient, it is uncomfortable, and it is misunderstood. During this Jubilee Year of Mercy, I am reminded of one very compelling reason *to* frequent the Sacrament of Reconciliation: this Sacrament (possibly more than any of the other) gives us a very real experience of the mercy of God our Father. You may have a difficult time being open to God's mercy in your own life. Maybe you find it hard to believe you need God's mercy at all. Maybe you feel so far from Jesus that you cannot imagine receiving His mercy in the first place.

Regardless of where you are coming from, I imagine that all of us want to be a person who can give mercy to the ones we love. I would propose that there is no better way to be able to give away mercy than to receive mercy yourself. This month consider going back to the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that you may know in a deeper way God's mercy and in that way be able to show the same kind of mercy to those you love.



**KNOW
MERCY
SHOW
MERCY**

KNOW THE MERCY OF
GOD THROUGH THE
SACRAMENT OF
RECONCILIATION AND
INVITE A FRIEND TO
RECEIVE THE GRACE OF
THE SACRAMENT TOO.

Justice and Mercy Meet in Tribunal Ministry

I am a Sister of Mercy whose primary ministry is working to do Justice for those who come to the Tribunal seeking decisions about their marriage situations. Sometimes friends ask me if that feels like a contradiction. For me it is not.

Twenty years ago Bishop Moeddel and I offered evenings with the Bishop for those separated from the Church over marriage issues. One man told me about his situation which turned out to be a simple case (Catholic married without required canonical form) handled in a few weeks. That man later called sounding very anxious and asking if I thought God were angry with him for the 17 years he went to Mass every Sunday but did not receive Communion because he thought he could not straighten out his remarriage with the Church. I told him that the God I knew was very pleased with his fidelity and with him for doing the best he could with what he knew at the time. He thanked me and said after hearing me he could believe what his Pastor tried to tell him about that. He breathed a huge sigh of relief, and he said, "You really are a Sister of Mercy."

For some, Justice and Mercy seem incompatible. If Justice only involved dispensing deserved punishment for wrongdoing, and if Mercy only meant pardoning earned punishment, those virtues would be in conflict. However Mercy and Justice are different aspects of God's love. It was while I was still a teenager beginning college studies during Vatican II that I came across a statement that God's Justice and Mercy intersect at the cross. I love that integrated image of the virtues of Justice and Mercy.

Christianity teaches that God's Mercy is shown through God's Justice. The follower of Jesus does not make a choice to be compassionate and forgiving or to be fair and righteous. There is no putting aside Justice to make room for Mercy. In God, there is perfect balance. For God, virtue stands in the middle, not over-emphasizing or under-emphasizing one virtue or the other. The prophet Micah is often quoted about the way to live a good life: love Mercy, do Justice and walk humbly with your God.

If we relieve the suffering of the poor with a sandwich from a soup kitchen (Mercy) without also working to correct the social systems which caused the hunger (Justice), we merely pour a bucket of the living water of change into an ocean of deadening problems. Perhaps that is why the Bible puts so much emphasis on both Mercy and Justice. Mercy without Justice can lead to dependency and entitlement, increasing the power of the giver over the one in need. Justice without Mercy can lead to hardened hearts and cold, impersonal treatment of others. May all of us who follow Jesus continue to better harmonize Justice and Mercy in our ministries and in our lives.

Sister Victoria Vondenberger, RSM, JCL
Tribunal Director



JOIN
US



Presentation by Immaculee Ilibagiza **Monday, February 22, 2016, 7:00p.m.**

Co-sponsored by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Catholic Charities, and Center for Interfaith Engagement at Xavier University.
Schiff Conference and Banquet Center, Xavier University, Cintas

The Light is On for You

Tuesday, February 23, 2016, 7:00p.m. – 9:00p.m.

Doors will be open in most Catholic churches in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for prayer and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



Su Casa Extends Mercy

Forty-eight-year old Nicholas Martinez fell ill about three years ago. The doctor told him his kidneys were failing. Then, last year, a car accident left him unable to work.

Nicholas moved in with his sister as he began dialysis treatment. Yet his sister's work schedule made it impossible for her to take Nicholas back and forth for dialysis three times a week.

A social worker from Mercy Health intervened and called the Su Casa Hispanic Center. Was there any way Su Casa could help? Not only did Nicholas need help for the dialysis treatments, he couldn't afford the treatments.

Enriqueta Oropeza, who promotes health for Su Casa clients, said, "When he came to our office in December, we knew we had to find a solution. You can see the pain he is in, and you want to the best you can to make a difference."

Su Casa reached out to a local health care provider who has graciously agreed to provide Nicholas dialysis treatments for the rest of his life. Su Casa is partnering with a local church to provide volunteers to transport Nicholas to his dialysis appointments. He follows a strict diet and his health is improving. "Every night I pray. I am very grateful. I thank God and all of the people who are helping me," Nicholas said. "For the help I have found, I am truly grateful. My kidneys stopped working. I would be dead without the mercy shown to me."

