

Dear Friends in Christ, “mercy” is an attribute that is commonly associated with God. The inspired writers in Sacred Scriptures used many different words to capture this reality. The Old Testament writers used two principal words to translate mercy: (1) hesed (Hebrew, masc), which means “steadfast love, covenant love”; (2) rachamim (Hebrew, fem), which means “tender, compassionate love; a love that springs from pity.” The New Testament writers used two other words to capture the idea of mercy: (1) eleos (Gk), which means “loving kindness” or “tender compassion” from the root word meaning “oil that is poured out”; (2) misericordia, derived from the Latin word, merces (“reward, gratuity”).

In English, we often think of mercy as “God’s grace that comes to us as an unmerited gift.” St. Thomas Aquinas defined mercy as “the compassion in our hearts for another person’s misery, a compassion that drives us to do what we can to help him.” To be merciful, then, is to freely offer clemency to someone worthy of punishment, or to release someone from a debt he/she owes. The idea of Divine Mercy is even more profound because “Divine Mercy is the form that God’s eternal love takes when he reaches out to us in the midst of our need and our brokenness. Whatever the name of our need or our misery might be - sin, guilt, suffering, or death -He is always ready to pour out his merciful, compassionate love for us, to help in time of need” (R. Stackpole, Jesus, Mercy Incarnate).

This weekend the universal Church celebrates Divine Mercy Sunday. It is a feast devoted to His Divine Mercy, a day in which He desires to pour out special graces out on the whole world; a desire which Jesus reiterated many times to his humble servant, St. Faustina: “I am love and mercy itself...Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be scarlet...My mercy is greater than your sins, and those of the entire world...I let My Sacred Heart be pierced with a lance, thus opening wide the source of mercy for you. Come then with trust to draw graces from this fountain...The graces of My mercy are drawn by the means of one vessel only, and that is trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive (Diary 1074, 699, 1484, 1578). Jesus also told her: “My daughter, tell the whole world about My Inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day all the divine floodgates through which grace flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity. Everything that exists has come forth from the very depths of My most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will I contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy” (Diary 699). I invite you to come and participate in our Divine Mercy Sunday celebrations beginning at 2:30pm (Sunday, April 8th) and receive the special graces that Jesus wishes to pour out upon you and the whole world. Jesus grants an indulgence (either full or partial remission for the temporal punishment of sin) for all who will participate in this feast and implore his Divine Mercy.

PaxChristi, Fr. Thomas