

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

I DESIRE MERCY

By Sr. Bernie Inocencio, CSJ

Excerpts from Today's Readings

*When Hezekiah was mortally ill, the prophet Isaiah, son of Amos, came and said to him: "Thus says the LORD: **Put your house in order, for you are about to die; you shall not recover.**"*

Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD. ...

*Hezekiah **wept bitterly**. Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: "Go, tell Hezekiah: Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David: **I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. ... Now I will add fifteen years to your life.**"*

ISAIAH 38:1-5

*"I say to you, **something greater than the temple is here.** If you knew what this meant, **I desire mercy, not sacrifice**, you would not have condemned these innocent men. For the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath."*

Reflection

I was struck by the story in today's first reading. God seemed to have decided that it was time for Hezekiah to die so God gave Hezekiah a warning to put his house in order before he died. Because of Hezekiah's bitter weeping, God was moved to heal Hezekiah and even gave him 15 years more to live!! Wasn't this mercy to the highest degree? A profound blessing? An immense grace?

In the Gospel, Jesus said that something greater than the temple was there. He paraphrases Hosea 6:6 which says: "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." I think Jesus was referring to himself, Mercy. Jesus is the totality of what Mercy means. Mercy itself is Jesus sent by the Father **not** to condemn the world, but to save the world. Jesus is saying to the Pharisees and to us:

Know Me, learn from Me, be like Me.

Some years back, one of my friends, a now-deceased Maronite bishop and canon lawyer, said that mercy in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, was **רהם** "**raham**." Abarim Publications **free online dictionary** explains that the verb "raham" meant to **love deeply, to be compassionate, tender mercies**. Isaiah uses it to reflect the love that a mother feels for her baby (Isaiah 49:15). King David uses it for the love that a father has for his child (Psalm 103:13). It comes from the noun "reham" **רהם** meaning "**womb**."

I would not attempt to compare mercy to being in the womb for I have no recollection of how it was in my mother's womb. What I can say is that mercy is like a mother's tenderness that held me and was shown to me all my life, through the love and encouragement of my parents, family, and friends, and by the people who gave wisdom, patience, help, and comfort to me -- especially during tough times.

As I reflect on that, I think of the times my father worked painstakingly to provide for my education, and for our family's livelihood. I think of the times when countless people visited dad during his many hospitalizations. I think of the times my mother commuted and braved the heavy rains, thunder, lightning, and waist-high floods to pick me up from school. I think of my grandmother's openness to the street sellers as she offered lunch to them at the heat of noontime. I think of the people who helped me and spent time with me when I was caring for my mother on hospice at home. I think of how my nanny's obscure beginnings touched me all these years. I think of how I

listened attentively to a couple who felt pain for losing another child.

Mercy continues to reveal itself to me and, in gratitude, I try to show it to others, too, by being a compassionate presence.

We will never fully fathom or measure God/Jesus's compassion and love for us -- that would only mean putting boundaries in the Divine Love and Mercy.

One thing is clear -- Jesus' message:

Know me, learn from me, be like me, be Mercy for others.



The Heart of Love, courtesy of ministryofthearts.org
Image by Sr. Mary Southard, CSJ

For Pondering

- What does the phrase “I desire mercy” mean to you?
 - How do you live mercy in everyday life?
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For Prayer

*Divine Mercy, gushing forth from the bosom of the Father,
I trust in You.*

*Divine Mercy, fount gushing forth from the mystery of the Most Blessed
Trinity,
I trust in You.*

*Divine Mercy, accompanying us every moment of our life,
I trust in You.*

*Divine Mercy, in the conversion of hardened sinners,
I trust in You.*

*Divine Mercy, in calling us forth from nothingness to existence,
I trust in You.*

*Divine Mercy, inspiring hope against all hope,
I trust in You.
Amen.*

EXCERPTS FROM THE PRAISES OF THE DIVINE MERCY

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