

March 17, 2025

# Daily Reflections

*Journeying through Lent*



Center for Spiritual Development

## THE MIRACLE OF MERCY

By Fr. David C. Robinson, SJ

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### Excerpts from Today's Readings and a Papal Bull

*Lord, great and awesome God, you who keep your merciful covenant toward those who love you and observe your commandments!... We have not obeyed your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and all the people of the land. Justice, O Lord, is on your side.... O LORD, we are shamefaced, like our kings, our princes, and our fathers, for having sinned against you. But yours, O Lord, our God, are compassion and forgiveness!*

**DANIEL 9:4, 6-9**

*Jesus said to his disciples: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return*

*be measured out to you.”*

#### LUKE 6:36-38

*The mission Jesus received from the Father was that of revealing the mystery of divine love in its fullness.... His person is nothing but love.... The signs [Jesus] works, especially in favor of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy.... [God] does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction....*

#### BULL OF INDICTION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY (POPE FRANCIS)

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### Reflection

The concept of mercy in the early generations of the Hebrew peoples is shaped by the foundational power of the Covenant of the People with God as manifested in the Law. With the passage of time, human foibles and lack of fidelity lead to violations of that law. Nonetheless, God remains faithful, and calls all home to himself. The Book of Daniel acknowledges the relentless failures of the people through the centuries, but acclaims with great joy the **merciful covenant** of a God who never relinquishes the heartfelt attachment, the tender bond, tied to the Chosen Ones. With a humble acknowledgment of their history of failure, Daniel laments: **We are shamefaced, like our kings, our princes, and our fathers for having sinned against you. But yours, O Lord, our God, are compassion and forgiveness!** As the imperial era of Jewish traditions is merging into a new world birthed by the life, ministry, and resurrection of Jesus—the heart of the new dispensation of merciful love that emerged with the Christian communion—Daniel stands as a clarion prophet of the coming future.

With the expanding cultural communities of the first-century Church, the Jewish roots blossom into the wider world of Gentiles in the Empire. The family of the risen Lord is progressively imbued with a center of love that embraces all, and is the core of the traditions of mercy. As Luke so eloquently expounds—if our lives are marked by a love that lives to bear spiritual fruit in the lives of others—we become the incarnate center of mercy, in ourselves and in the lived faith of those who surround us in our walk with God. As a result, what we measure out is measured back to us: **“Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”**

In our contemporary church communities, if we measure our value before God by the love we pour out for others, we discover that life pours love into us by the same measure as well. If we are content to calculate our value by fidelity to a set of religious rules and maxims, assuming that God values us precisely according to our calculus of fidelity, we cannot uncover our own innate giftedness for pouring out love as God does.

Pope Francis, in his **The Divine Mercy**, captures the divine synthesis to which Daniel and Luke point. It is not a matter of the practice of mercy in accordance with a religious rubric or ethical maxim. It is not a matter of an emotional sentiment that draws us to attend to another's need. For Francis, love is the absolutely fundamental reality of the presence of God in our lives and our world. We are transformed into this essential divine grace that is shared and received. God's person is **"nothing but love."** This love that is **"visible and tangible"** within and between us is seen in the practical realities of our humanity and fragile fidelity as the vital presence of mercy, both divine and human. Mercy is not simply a perceived experience of love in action. It is love itself as it finds concrete manifestation in all that we are and give in our humanity. **The mission Jesus received from the Father was that of revealing the mystery of divine love in its fullness.... His person is nothing but love.... The signs Jesus works, especially in favor of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy.... God does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction....**

In these Lenten days, our hearts and souls are exhorted to live more fervently with a love that is incarnate to all who surround us. If we live for love and as love, the promise of God's merciful presence from so long ago becomes the most perfect articulation of who we indeed are as the family of a love eternally received as divine mercy.

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Nativity  
Photo by David Robinson, SJ

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### For Pondering

- Do you perceive mercy as a gesture of love, or as a living manifestation of the love that heals and makes new?
- How do you experience God's 'mercy' in moments of personal weakness

or moral fragility?

- Have you recognized the incarnate reality of love in yourself as you express divine ‘mercy’ personally and in community?

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