

Mercy and True Christian Stewardship

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. (Mt 5:7)

As true Christian Stewards we are called upon to be merciful by extending love and forgiveness to others and taking action to assist those in need. We are also called upon to ask for mercy as demonstrated at mass during the Penitential Rite when the Priest leads us through prayer where we acknowledge our failures and ask the Lord for pardon and strength. Lord, have mercy.

The true spirit of mercy can be illustrated by the very different lives of two very spiritual women who lived through the early and late 20th century; Saint Mary Faustina Kowalska who was born in what is now central Poland and Dorothy Day from the United States.

Saint Faustina was a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. In addition to generously serving the needs of the sisters and the local people, she also had a “deep interior life”. In the 1930's Sister Faustina received revelations from the Lord who asked her to become the voice of His mercy and a model of how to be merciful to others. Through these revelations Jesus emphasized his mercy and forgiveness for sins acknowledged and confessed. “I do not want to punish aching mankind,” he once told St. Faustina, “but I desire to heal it, pressing it to my merciful heart” (Diary 1588). Sister Faustina demonstrated her devotion to mercy through her writings and by devoting her entire life to the materially and spiritually poor. She reminds us of what the Church has always taught that God is merciful and forgiving and that we too, must show mercy and forgiveness.

Jesus calls upon us to trust Him, receive His mercy and let that mercy touch others. Symbolic of the Lord's mercy and forgiveness is the life of Dorothy Day. Contrary to Sister Faustina's life, Dorothy's beginnings were anything but humble. In her early years she had an abortion and two common-law marriages. It wasn't until the birth of her daughter that she began a period of spiritual awakening which led her to embrace Catholicism. She joined the church in December of 1927 and in 1933 she co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement which is grounded in a firm belief in the God-given dignity of every human person. Today over 185 Catholic Worker communities remain committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer, providing food and shelter for the homeless, hungry, and forsaken.

Although their life experiences were dramatically different, their acts of mercy symbolize what we as Christians are called upon to do “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36). Showing mercy always and everywhere may seem impossible to fulfill, especially in light of the remarkable works of Sister Faustina and Dorothy Day. However, God does not call upon us to be Saints or world renowned for greatness; He simply calls us to be merciful.

As you contemplate your acts of mercy and sacrifice, begin with prayer. Ask God what he would like you to do and for the strength to respond “yes Lord”. God told St. Faustina that we have all been called to practice mercy, but we are not all called in the same way. We need to ask the Lord, who understands our individual personalities and situations, to help us recognize the various ways we can live His mercy in our daily lives.

Take Comfort. God's love endures forever.

Libby Perkins,
OLW Stewardship Committee

Remembering what God has called us to do can best be described through “ABC”.

A — Ask for His Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world.

B — Be merciful. God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. He wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us.

C — Completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive. *Diary, Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, Divine Mercy in My Soul*
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Prayer and True Christian Stewardship

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. (1Thes 5:16-18)

Prayer is the first and most important duty and joy of every faithful follower of Jesus Christ. Prayer is true treasure and there is where your heart should be. Whoever loves God prays.

(Ronald L Conte Jr. Catholic Planet)

How to pray? This is a simple matter. I would say: Pray anyway you like, so long as you do pray. (Pope John Paul II)

Many religious traditions and philosophies embrace prayer as an important component of daily life. Muslims stop for prayer five times each day. Observant Jews pray three times a day, every day. The earliest Christians followed this practice. "Lord, teach us to pray just as John (the Baptist) taught his disciples." (Lk 11:1) Jesus taught them the Our Father, the perfect prayer, because it was divinely authored.

Scripture often describes Jesus in prayer at important points in his ministry: at his baptism, as he is choosing the Twelve, after the feeding of 5,000, at his transfiguration, before he teaches his disciples to pray the Our Father, at the Last Supper, on the Mount of Olives and on the cross. Jesus prayed for the same reasons we do: to rejuvenate his spirit; to ask His Father for help, strength and guidance; to honor and praise God; and to center himself so as to carry out his mission.

Even in today's secular world, the book stores and TV talk shows are full of expert advice on the need for balance in our life, a balance which includes spirituality. Whether you call it meditation or prayer, it is the heartbeat of a stable and joyful life.

Prayer has been called the native language of the soul - the universal expression of an innate human desire to make contact with the divine. St Teresa of Avila described prayer as *"an intimate friendship, a frequent conversation held alone with the Beloved"*.

Prayer has many methods. Pray where you are, God is everywhere. We are children of God; therefore we have immediate access to the Father. Whatever we do in Jesus name: working, playing, struggling, suffering, or rejoicing – is meant to be an unceasing prayer.

True prayer can be spontaneous or formalized, but comes always from the heart. It can be personal, solitary and wordless or communal, expressive and emotional. True prayer is a gift that we need to surrender to. True prayer is accepting the truth that we are loved unconditionally, that the more sinful and broken we might be, the more irresistible we are to a compassionate God.

Several things to consider: try to spend some time daily in personal prayer in your own way. Or read scripture and give yourself time to reflect on it. And remember: *If, for any reason, you cannot pray, relax. The desire to pray is already a prayer.*

God Bless Our Parish,

*Teresa Stewart
OLW Stewardship Committee*