

B30OrdinaryTime06

Two women who had not visited for sometime were catching up over tea.

“So tell me,” asked the first woman, “How is your son?”

“Oh, my son - it’s so sad,” the second woman wailed. “He married a girl who doesn’t life a finger around the house. She can’t cook, she can’t clean, and she can’t keep a job. All she does is sleep late. My poor boy waits on her hand and foot while she does nothing.”

“How terrible,” her friend said.

The second woman inquired, *“So how is your daughter?”* *“Oh, my beautiful daughter couldn’t be better,”* the first woman went on. *“She married a wonderful man, an absolute angel! He won’t let her set foot in the kitchen and insists that she not work. He’s arranged for a full-time housekeeper and cook, and every morning he brings her breakfast in bed!”*

While some people are blind to the goodness around them, others possess the grace to see the good in everyone and everything.

Story of the blind Bartimaeus:

“When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, son of David have mercy on me!” Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”Then Jesus said to him, what do you want me to do for you?” the blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Go you faith has made you well.”

Bartimaeus wasn’t politically correct - ignored the pressure of the crowd.

What is the mercy he seeks? **Mercy is an act of rescue.** Its being an act is important because our entire tradition talks about mercy in terms of actions, as either spiritual or corporal works of mercy. Like clothing the naked or feeding the hungry, mercy entails acts of rescue, whereby one stretches out to those who are struggling to survive. Understanding mercy as rescue helps us to appreciate the powerful utterances of Bartimaeus, who cried out, “Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me!” He was crying out to Jesus to rescue him from his blindness and from his marginalization by the rest of society.

In a similar way, when we cry out in our sinfulness at **the beginning of the liturgy**, “Lord have mercy,” we are not crying out to Jesus “Be not severe in your judgment.” Rather we are asking Jesus to rescue us. We are not saying, “Don’t punish us, even though we are sinners.” We are saying, “Save us because we are sinners.” We cry to Jesus for mercy, we want to be rescued

Mercy is the act of God saving us, and we are called to imitate God in God’s own act of rescue. For that’s what the works of mercy are, after all: imitating God as God rescues. It is for this reason that Jesus tells us that at the Last Judgment those who have performed

the corporal works of mercy will be saved, for by rescuing others we participate in God's life. "As long as you did to the least of my brethren you did it to be me."

St. Thomas Aquinas taught that mercy was the act of letting God live and act within us. He wrote that charity had only one action, the action of mercy. Charity is the virtue by which we are united with God. By charity God lives in us, and we are like God when we practice acts of mercy. To practice mercy is to allow God to act within us, for God alone is mercy and love.

We might be tempted to think of what we should do, so as to be merciful. I think that it is more important for us to **see just how much God is merciful.**

Can we recognize the ways that God rescues us?

Do we bring to the surface the ways that God literally enters our lives to save us?

Not just in one moment but in our whole lives?

Do we see the hand of God in our own lives?

Mercy is at the heart of the sacrament of reconciliation.

Pope Benedict's address to the Bishops of Western Canada:

"While manifestations of sin abound -- greed and corruption, betrayed relationships and exploitation of persons -- the recognition of individual sinfulness has waned. Behind this weakening of the recognition of sin, with its commensurate attenuation of the need to seek forgiveness, is ultimately a weakening of our relationship with God

Man's temptation to exercise his freedom by distancing himself from God is frequent... when freedom is sought outside of God, the result is negative: loss of personal dignity, moral confusion and social disintegration.

... Where God is excluded from the public forum the sense of offence against God -- the true sense of sin -- dissipates, just as when the absolute value of moral norms is relativized the categories of good or evil vanish, along with individual responsibility. Yet, the human need to acknowledge and confront sin in fact never goes away, no matter how much an individual may, rationalize to the contrary.... When the need to seek forgiveness and the readiness to forgive are forgotten, in their place a disturbing culture of blame and litigiousness arises."

Bartimaeus' plaintiff cry to Jesus "**My teacher, let me see again.**" Should become our prayer as well:

Lord I want to see the good in even the most trying and difficult people.

I want to see the way to make things right again.

I want to see reason for hope.

I want to see your hand at work in the events of my life.