

...“his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation”...

(Lk 1: 49-52)



Reflection:

As we close the year of mercy, a question may arise in many people's mind; has the time of mercy run out?

The mercy of God is endless and timeless. The Jubilee year was a special time of grace and mercy. However, the mercy of God is always available for anyone who approaches God with a contrite heart and asks for mercy. It is not limited by time or by people or by anything.

In the gospel of Luke, we see the song of Mary praising the Almighty God. One of the things Mary sings about is the mercy of God, which is endless and throughout generations. Mary says that the mercy of God is upon those who fear Him, those who revere God as their Master. There is no other person in history who can testify to the mercy of God more powerfully than Mary. The mercy of God descended in her to assume human nature. She experienced the greatest mercy through immaculate conception, where the grace of redemption touched the womb of St Ann to give the grace of baptism at the moment of conception (CCC 491). By divine election and by order of grace she is our mother.

The Church honors Mary as the Mother of Mercy. Naturally, when we say Jesus is the visible face of God's mercy, the mother of Jesus is the mother of mercy. We have a true model of mercy in spirit and in action through the example of Mother Mary. Here are some examples from Mary that we can follow:

1. Complete trust in God and His provision: Mary accepted what God spoke through the archangel about the birth of Jesus, without any doubt, fear or anxiety.
2. Pondering God's word in her heart: Mary constantly pondered God's word in her heart, which focused her attention on God and His promises.
3. Hastening to lend a helping hand: As soon as she knew about Elizabeth's pregnancy, Mary hastened to meet Elizabeth, stayed with her and helped her through the pregnancy.
4. Interceding for others: We see Mary interfering for others needs during the wedding at Cana, asking Jesus to take care of their needs, which Jesus did.
5. Calmness in the face of suffering: Right from the time of Jesus' birth, through travels to Egypt and back to Nazareth and up to the crucifixion of Jesus, Mary endured sufferings with calmness. Mary was deeply aware of the peace and mercy of God despite all sufferings that she was going through.

6. Humility: Knowing she bore the son of God, the savior of the world, she was humble and meek and never came to the forefront to claim any title. But God lifted her up.

Mary is a sign for the pilgrim church who is pressing forward through the persecutions of the world and consolations of God, announcing the cross and death of the Lord until He comes. Mary was fully aware of the great mercy of God. All her life reflects her trust in this mercy as is reflected in the words "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word". And God raised her up to be the mother of Jesus and to be a mother for all.

As the Jubilee year closes, let us invoke the intercession of mother Mary, to follow her example of trust in the mercy of God. May the mother of Mercy be with us along the way, guiding our steps and leading us to Jesus, the face of mercy.



Saint's quote:

"If you ever feel distressed during your day — call upon our Lady — just say this simple prayer: 'Mary, Mother of Jesus, please be a mother to me now.' I must admit — this prayer has never failed me..."

"Mary, give me your Heart: so beautiful, so pure, so immaculate; your Heart so full of love and humility that I may be able to receive Jesus in the Bread of Life and love Him as you love Him and serve Him in the distressing guise of the poor." (St Mother Theresa)



Pope's quote:

Mary is the one who obtained mercy in a particular and exceptional way, as no other person has. At the same time, still in an exceptional way, she made possible with the sacrifice of her heart her own sharing in revealing God's mercy. This sacrifice is intimately linked with the cross of her Son, at the foot of which she was to stand on Calvary. Her sacrifice is a unique sharing in the revelation of mercy, that is, a sharing in the absolute fidelity of God to His own love, to the covenant that He willed from eternity and that He entered into in time with man, with the people, with humanity; it is a sharing in that revelation that was definitively fulfilled through the cross. No one has experienced, to the same degree as the Mother of the crucified One, the mystery of the cross, the overwhelming encounter of divine transcendent justice with love: that "kiss" given by mercy to justice.¹⁰⁴ No one has received into his heart, as much as Mary did, that mystery, that truly divine dimension of the redemption effected on Calvary by means of the death of the Son, together with the sacrifice of her maternal heart, together with her definitive "fiat."

Mary, then, is the one who has the deepest knowledge of the mystery of God's mercy. She knows its price, she knows how great it is. In this sense, we call her the Mother of mercy: our Lady of mercy, or Mother of divine mercy; in each one of these titles there is a deep theological meaning, for they express the special preparation of her soul, of her whole personality, so that she was able to perceive, through the complex events, first of Israel, then of every individual and of the whole of humanity, that mercy of which "from generation to generation"¹⁰⁵ people become sharers according to the eternal design of the most Holy Trinity.

(St. John Paul II, DIVES IN MISERICORDIA, 30 November 1980)



Act of mercy: Advice the doubtful, Teach the ignorant, Bury the dead

The Magnificat sings the beautiful mystery of God's Mercy. As we contemplate the mystery of Mercy, we are called to gaze more attentively on Mother Mary, the mother of the Divine Mercy. We need her in our life to advice us, to teach us and to lead us to the everlasting life - the fruit of her womb, Jesus. As we pray the Magnificat, let us ask her intercession to help us to guide the ignorant to this great source of Mercy and to be generous and compassionate with them. Let us ask her for the grace, that our language, actions and gestures transmit Mercy and touch the hearts of the doubtful and inspire the people dead in faith and hope to be on the road that leads to life - to the Merciful Father.

Mother Mary, Mother of Divine Grace, Pray for us. Hail Mary...

Christmas In Our Hurry-Up Culture!

Advent and Christmas message from **Rev Fr Bitaju Mathew O.SS.T** (Chaplain, Jesus Youth Int'l Team)

With the children in the hostel we sowed several flower-seeds in our hostel garden. Children were eager to water the seeds for a few days. After about three days, they wondered about what was happening to the seeds sown, as there was no sign of them sprouting. Some even wanted to dig out and see. After a week, some could wait no longer and they dug out the seeds.

Waiting is not the habit of most of us in a hurry-up culture. Everything is urgent; everything has to be instant. Hope is foreign to people who expect quick relief, cures, and solutions. We struggle to guard Advent jealously because popular culture short-circuits this season of hope. We are tempted to go directly to celebrating Christmas without getting in touch with the part of ourselves that is longing, hoping, and trusting.

Waiting is also difficult because we are forced to admit that we are not in control—God is. A friend, who became pregnant, eight year after marriage, experienced an awed helplessness as the natural process advanced within her body. Her husband also could only wait with her, loving and supporting her and their unborn child, but unable to accelerate the process.

Recently when the National and International Offices of Jesus Youth in India were reduced to ashes after an outbreak of fire, I was moved by the awesome messages and conversations, all filled with hope and trust in God's providence and plan. It is unusual to hear such responses in the midst of helplessness and wanton destruction. In the words of St. Paul, "Hoping for what we cannot see means awaiting it with patient endurance" (Romans 8:25).

For all their drama, the words "Honey, we're pregnant," uttered by a tear-streaked, wrinkle-faced 90-year-old Sarah to wobbly, unbelieving Abraham, or by an amazed, teenaged Mary to an equally confused Joseph, indicate not the joy of birth but the amazing surprise of love, and the beginning of a season of waiting, when God-is-with-us.

Waiting in hope is the tenor of the season of Advent that culminates in the amazing surprise and joy of Christmas. In the midst of pain, sickness, crisis, failure, uncertainty, impossibilities, brokenness, etc. that I encounter regularly, can I wait in hope, trusting that He is in control. Abraham and Sarah are Advent heroes not only because grace broke into their lives, but also because they trusted the God who made the promise. We find God in surprising moments of grace, and we also find God in the experiences that call for patient waiting and trust.

As Jesus Youth family, our grooming and formation through the years have helped us to wait patiently in every situation that challenges us. In a hurry-up culture of ours we are invited to bear witness to the value of waiting in hope and trusting that the Lord is faithful in His promises. I wish and pray that this season of Advent give us ample opportunities to testify to the faith we hold in our hearts, so that the joy of Christmas can envelop us in the awesome experience of God-is-with-us.

Wish you all hope-filled days of Advent and a joyful season of Christmas!

