

Verbum Dei

Guidelines for Prayer

What return can I make to God for all his goodness to me?

(Ps 116:12-19)

Week IV

Nov 25- Dec 1, 2019

General Theme: God's Merciful Love

General Objective: To experience the joy of God's unfailing love and forgiveness that impels the person to desire to live and start anew, with the heart filled also with mercy for others.

Objective of the week:

That we be merciful as the Father is merciful. May this awaken in us the need to reciprocate that love as a gratitude in leading others to that same experience.

INTRODUCTION

"Mercy" is usually associated with pardoning someone. Yet, the word in the bible, holds a deeper meaning. It refers to a tender, compassionate love, a love that has special concerns for the suffering of others. Mercy is an extension of love. It is love stooping down to the needs and miseries of others. We can love with mercy because we ourselves have experienced His unfailing forgiving mercy in our own lives. Mercy is the heart of God. It must also be the heart of the members of the one great family of his children: a heart which beats all the more strongly wherever human dignity – as a reflection of the face of God in his creatures – is in play. (Pope Francis) As He is merciful, we are called to be merciful to each other.

He who created you without you, does not save you without you. What requires from us is a movement of the contrite heart attracted and moved to respond to the merciful love of God and also an opposing movement of breaking with sin, and a resolution to not sin again. With this merciful love of God, it brought us to experience His forgiveness. Pope Francis explains it more; "When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one

can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive" (MV 3). The mercy of God is indeed powerful. How many have changed their lives in having experienced His kind of love. Mercy is a keyword that indicates God's actions towards us. How it speaks of his loving concern for us! Our God has no memory of our sins, but only of our being His beloved children. For this, He continues to put His hope on us that we may start anew in this journey, especially as we enter into the advent season.

MONDAY

(St. Catherine of Alexandria)

Gratitude for God's Mercy

1 Tim 1:12-16 ¹² I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength for my work. I thank him for considering me worthy and appointing me to serve him, ¹³ even though in the past I spoke evil of him and persecuted and insulted him. But God was merciful to me because I did not yet have faith and so did not know what I was doing. ¹⁴ And our Lord poured out his abundant grace on me and gave me the faith and love which are ours in union with Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ This is a true saying, to be completely accepted and believed: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I am the worst of

them, ¹⁶ but God was merciful to me in order that Christ Jesus might show his full patience in dealing with me, the worst of sinners, as an example for all those who would later believe in him and receive eternal life.

In our life, even before our discipleship, God has abundantly poured out to us his merciful love. Without faith, we live without sight of the graces He has given us. But even in our worst. God stoops down to lift us up from our shame, guilt, doubts, fears just to continue to show us his love and redeem us. We give thanks to this, and as we recall how we have received mercy, it's to remind us in order that we, too, may become instruments of God's mercy to others.

What concrete moment or experience has made me recognize God's merciful love for my life?

TUESDAY

Build Bridges of Reconciliation

Mt 18:21-22 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?"²² "No, not seven times," answered Jesus, "but seventy times seven.

What Jesus is inviting us is only possible as we let him infuse us

fully to his unconditional love and mercy. Forgiveness sets us free as we allow the past to be in the past and not simply being carried along by it. Only then can we build bridges of reconciliation as we take a small step towards it.

How am I reflecting God's merciful love to others through forgiveness and reconciliation?

WEDNESDAY

Offer Mercy

Ps 116:12-19

What can I offer the Lord for all his goodness to me? I will bring a wine offering to the Lord, to thank him for saving me. In the assembly of all his people I will give him what I have promised. How painful it is to the Lord when one of his people dies! I am your servant, Lord; I serve you just as my mother did. You have saved me from death. I will give you a sacrifice of thanksgiving and offer my prayer to you. In the assembly of all your people, in the sanctuary of your Temple in Jerusalem, I will give you what I have promised. Praise the Lord!

We may be a great sinner yet of great value in the eyes of God. Receiving mercy is to joyfully give it. In this way, participating in the fulfillment of his promise of mercy.

Is there someone whom you think you can offer His mercy?

THURSDAY

A question of love

Jn 21:15-18 *After they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?" "Yes, Lord," he answered, "you know that I love you."*

Jesus said to him, "Take care of my lambs." ¹⁶ A second time Jesus said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord," he answered, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Take care of my sheep." ¹⁷ A third time Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter became sad because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" and so he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you!"

Jesus said to him, "Take care of my sheep. ¹⁸ I am telling you the truth: when you were young, you used to get ready and go anywhere you wanted to; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you up and take you where you don't want to go."

Having experienced to be forgiven, what follows is the desire to make up for the wrong that was lived, in wanting to pay it back, to

reciprocate it. Jesus knew this and is pointing us to do it with the people He loves in spite and despite of. Let us pay attention to His words to us: "Do you love me?" Feed my lambs with my merciful love..Take care of my sheep full of compassion like what I have shown you. May we be moved as we listen to Jesus and learn to open our hands to offer mercy and compassion to our brothers and sisters.

Who are the concrete persons Jesus is asking you to take care and feed? How is Jesus inviting you to express your love to Him?

FRIDAY

Lead others to turn back to God

Ps 51:13

Then I will teach sinners your commands, and they will turn back to you.

What ought to be our response to the mercy God shows us through his son? first, is the way of contrition expressed in this psalm where we humbly acknowledge our guilt in the light of the greatness of God's compassion. Real contrition leads us back to God, in experiencing His merciful love towards us, poor sinners. Having experienced God's mercy, our life becomes the human arms that can hug and embrace all those who are lost in order to

bring them back home. It's for us to reveal to others God's merciful face.

To lead others to turn back to Him is a big challenge. How do I willingly take this challenge out of gratitude to what He has done to us?

SATURDAY

Loving as He loves us

1 John 3:16 *This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We, too, then, ought to give our lives for our brothers!*

This is the path that each of us has to take - in making it visible and tangible His merciful love. Love can never be abstract but has to be seen and experienced by others. What we have received freely is meant to be given freely as well.

In what am I invited today by Jesus? What is my response to His invitation?

1st Sunday of ADVENT

