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“Becoming Ambassadors of Mercy Incarnate and Ministers of Mercy Above All”
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A Mystagogical Appreciation of Mercy in the Prayers of the Mass

- Introduction
 - As we talk about communicating the message of God’s mercy during this Jubilee Year, one of the greatest assets we have, at least for those with enough hunger that they come to Mass regularly or even sporadically, are the prayers of the Mass, which are replete with invocations and celebration of God’s mercy. The Mass, in fact, is the *great prayer of Divine Mercy*, in which we insert ourselves into Christ’s prayer from the Upper Room, Calvary and the Tomb that definitively rained down God’s mercy. It is the means by which we, the Body and Bride of Christ, offer to the eternal Father his dearly beloved Son’s body, blood, soul and divinity — along with our own *logike latreia*, along with our sacrifice — in expiation for our sins and the sins of the world, for the glory of God’s name, and for our good and the good of the whole Church. And so during this Year of Mercy, both for our own meditation and growth in faith and love and appreciation for the Mass we have the awesome privilege to celebrate each day, as well as for the way the fruits of our contemplation of the Mass can be given for the nourishment of our people, it’s worthwhile to ponder it together. As the ancient aphorism states, *lex orandi lex credendi lex vivendi*, how we pray influences how we believe and how we live.
- Mercy in the Mass
 - The Mass, we know, is the source and summit of the Christian life, meaning that any life that’s truly Christian is meant to find in the Mass the starting point from which everything flows and the goal toward which everything ought to be directed. And so we ought to integrate the Year of Mercy within our Eucharistically-centered spirituality. And, thankfully, that’s very easy because the Mass is drenched in thoughts of mercy. The more we ponder mercy in the Mass and help our people to see these references, the easier it will be for them and us both to grow in amazement of the Lord’s mercy. Specifically we can look to the following parts of the Mass:
 - Vesting Prayers
 - Ablution — “Give strength to my hands, Lord, to wipe away all stain, so that I may be able to serve thee in purity of mind and body”
 - Amice — “Lord, set the helmet of salvation on my head to fend off all the assaults of the devil.”
 - Alb — “Make me white, O Lord, and cleanse my heart that being made white in the Blood of the Lamb I may merit an eternal reward.”
 - Cincture — “Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purity and quench in my heart the fire of concupiscence that the power of continence and chastity may abide in me.”
 - Stole — “Lord, restore the stole of immortality that I lost through the collusion of our first parents, and, unworthy as I am to approach thy sacred mysteries, may I yet gain eternal joy.”
 - Chasuble — Yoking ourselves to Christ in his mercy: “O Lord, you who have said: ‘My yoke is sweet and my burden light,’ grant that I may so carry it as to merit thy grace.”
 - The Penitential Rite
 - Using Form A and Form B, which better focus on our need for mercy
 - With form A, we admit we’re great sinners who have sinned by our own grievous fault, we acknowledge our need for help, and we pray for ourselves and others.
 - With form B, we focus on certain phrases that hopefully can become short aspirations throughout this year:
 - *Have mercy on us, O Lord*

- *For we have sinned against you.*
 - *Show us, O Lord, your mercy*
 - *And grant us your salvation.*
- If we use forms A and B, we then still have the Kyrie. It might be an opportunity throughout this Year of Mercy that we sing the Kyrie every Mass. It can be quite simple, but people will notice that it's a year of Mercy. The great mystical tradition is that in the Kyrie we invoke God the Father as Kyrie, Jesus as Christe, and the Holy Spirit as Kyrie, making it a plea to the God who is rich in mercy.
- Glory to God — We pray to the Lord we praise, bless, adore, glorify and thank, “receive our prayer” and that's said precisely in response to our petition to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world to have mercy on us.
- Creed — We pray, “I believe in ... the forgiveness of sins,” which is a prayer not only for what happens in the Sacrament of Baptism but what happens in the “second baptism” of Confession. All of Jesus' life and mission was to forgive us and reconcile the world to the Father.
- Prayers of the Faithful — We could add petition at every Mass relevant to the Year of Mercy. Perhaps we could take them from the Novena of Divine Mercy and the various groups that are prayed for. Perhaps we could finish the prayers of the faithful by adapting the prayer Jesus taught to St. Faustina, e.g., “Eternal Father, as we prepare to offer you your dearly Beloved Son's Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in expiation for our sins and the sins of the whole world, we ask you to hear these prayers which we make to you with faith in your merciful love, through Christ our Lord.”
- Eucharistic Prayers — Perhaps we can give greater emphasis and prayerful concentration to the various mentions of mercy in each of the Eucharistic prayers and incorporate them briefly into homilies, as we make an application from the liturgy of the Word to the liturgy of the Eucharist, from the *verbum Domini* to the *Verbum caro factum est*.
 - Eucharistic Prayer I
 - “To you, therefore, most merciful Father...”
 - “To us, also, your servants, who, though sinners, hope in your abundant mercies, graciously grant some share and fellowship with your holy Apostles and Martyrs”
 - Eucharistic Prayer II
 - “Have mercy on us all we pray, that ... we may merit to be coheirs to eternal life and my praise and glorify you through your Son, Jesus Christ”
 - Eucharistic Prayer III
 - “Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim by whose death you will to reconcile us to yourself...”
 - “May this Sacrifice of our reconciliation, we pray, O Lord, advance the peace and salvation of all the world.”
 - Eucharistic Prayer IV
 - “Even when through disobedience he had lost your friendship, you did not abandon him to the domain of death. For you came in mercy to the aid of all so that those who seek might find you.”
 - “To all of us, your children, grant, O merciful Father, that we may enter into a heavenly inheritance. ... There with the whole of creation, freed from the corruption of sin and death, may we glorify you...”
 - Reconciliation Eucharistic Prayer I (*particularly fitting to use this year*)
 - Preface: “Being rich in mercy, you constantly offer pardon and call on sinners to trust in your forgiveness alone. Now did you turn away from us and, though time and again we have broken your covenant, you have bound the human family to yourself through Jesus, your Son, our Redeemer, with a new bond of love so tight that it can never be undone. Even now you set before your people a time of grace and reconciliation and, as they turn back to you in spirit, you grant them hope...”
 - “Indeed though we once were lost and could not approach you, you loved us with

the greatest love: for your Son... handed himself over to death and did not disdain to be nailed for our sake to the wood of the Cross..."

- "In a similar way, when supper was ended, knowing that he was about to reconcile all things in himself through his blood to be shed on the Cross..."
- Advent connection: "Looking forward to his blessed coming, we offer you, who are our faithful and merciful God, this sacrificial victim who reconciles to you the human race."
- "And with our deceased brothers and sisters whom we humbly commend to your mercy."
- Reconciliation Eucharistic Prayer II
 - Preface: "Even though the human race is divided by dissension and discord, yet we know that by testing us, you change our hearts to prepare them for reconciliation."
 - "He is the hand you extend to sinners..."
 - "When we ourselves had turned away from you on account of our sins, you brought us back to be reconciled, O Lord, so that, converted at last to you, we might love one another through your Son, whom for our sake you handed over to death. And now, celebrating the reconciliation Christ has brought us, we entreat you..."
 - "In a similar way on that same evening, he took the chalice of blessing in his hands, confessing your mercy..."
- Eucharistic Prayer for Various Needs IV (Jesus Who Went About Doing Good)
 - Preface: It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Father of mercies and faithful God.
 - Preface: For you have given us Jesus Christ, your Son, as our Lord and Redeemer. He always showed compassion for children and for the poor, for the sick and for sinners, and he became a neighbor to the oppressed and the afflicted. By word and deed he announced to the world that you are our Father and that you care for all your sons and daughters.
 - Epiclesis: "Therefore, Father most merciful, we ask that you send forth your Holy Spirit to sanctify these gifts of bread and wine, that they may become for us the Body and + Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."
 - Open our eyes to the needs of our brothers and sisters; inspire in us words and actions to comfort those who labor and are burdened. Make us serve them truly, after the example of Christ and at his command.
- Consecration
 - "... which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins"
- Memorial Acclamation — This year might be particularly appropriate to use "Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free." It proclaims that we're sinners in need of a Savior!
- Our Father — We ponder our need to forgive in order to be open to receive the Lord's gift of forgiveness. God only forgives us when we forgive others not because he's punishing us but because unless we have hearts opened to mercy toward others, our hearts will be too hardened to receive God's gift.
- *Libera nos* — "That by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ."
- Lamb of God — We pray to Jesus who has come to take away our sins, to have mercy on us and grant us peace.
- *Domine non sum dignus* — We pray, "...only say the word and my soul shall be healed." During this Year, we can give great attention to where and how Jesus says that word ... with our accents.
- The Private Prayers of the Priest — All of these focus on mercy and so we can pray them this year with greater devotion:
 - Cleanse my heart and my lips, almighty God, that I may worthily proclaim your holy Gospel."

- *Per evangelica dicta, deleantur nostra delicta* — “Through the words of the Gospel, may our sins be wiped away”
 - Offertory: “With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by your, O Lord...” (Dan 3:39).
 - *Lavabo*: “Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin”
 - *Lord Jesus Christ...* “Free me by this, your most holy Body and Blood, from all my sins and from every evil”
 - “May the Receiving of your Body and Blood, Lord Jesus Christ, not bring me to judgment and condemnation but through your loving mercy be for me protection in mind and body and a healing remedy.”
- Conclusion
 - We began these clergy days by remarking how an ecclesiastical holy year is meant to have an influence, add a little flavor, to everything the Church does during the Year. It’s a prism through which to see more deeply one aspect of the faith and how it pervades the faith as a whole. This is certainly the case with mercy in the Mass.
- Final Prayer
 - One way we can help our people to live more consciously this Year of Mercy is by helping them prepare to find mercy in the Mass. And one of the straightforward ways to do this would be, in union with the whole Church, to pray Pope Francis’ prayer for the Jubilee of Mercy two minutes before Mass begins.
 - In the Mass, we encounter the same Jesus to whom we make that prayer, the Jesus who revealed the face of the Father’s mercy, whose loving gaze changed the life of Zacchaeus, Matthew, Mary Magdalene, Peter, the Samaritan Woman. In the Mass, we find a realization of the prayer that the Spirit consecrate everyone one of us, which happens in the post-consecratory epiclesis so that we, reconciled to God and to each other, might become “one body, one spirit in Christ.” In the Mass we receive his strength and his blessing “with renewed enthusiasm” to “bring good news to the poor.” For that reason, praying this prayer before Mass is not only a means by which to live out the Year of Mercy better, but to prepare for, ponder and live the Mass better.
 - This prayer is also a good way to finish our study days together, so that, by God’s mercy, we may be transformed so that “everyone who approaches [us may] feel sought after, loved and forgiven.”

Oremus:

Lord Jesus Christ,

*You have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.*

Show us your face and we will be saved.

*Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money;
the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things;
made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.*

*Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman:
“If you knew the gift of God!”*

You are the visible face of the invisible Father,

of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy:

let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.

You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness

in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error:

let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,

so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,

and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor,

proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy,

you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen