

Mercy Day – 24 September 2021

Mercy Day commemorates the opening, on that date in 1827, of the first House of Mercy in Baggot Street, Dublin by Catherine McAuley and her companions. On the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy the house was opened as a school for poor young girls and a residence for homeless girls and women. Catherine later constituted their mission into the Congregation of the Religious Sisters of Mercy who continue to minister today throughout the world. This is how they see themselves at this time (2021) – www.sistersofmercy.ie



'Today we hold in our Vision and in our Mission the legacy of our Founding Charism and following the inspiration of Catherine McAuley, we desire to be instruments of God's Mercy for all people, giving and receiving compassion so that there may be space for everyone in the community of life. The Sisters of Mercy were once known as the *walking nuns*. They continue in this tradition of reaching out, in schools, in hospitals, on the street and in the chapel, keeping an open door where all people are welcome.'

Mercy in action is the charism of the Sisters of Mercy. How can we translate our merciful thoughts into acts of repentance and outreach where we are today?

What about?

making the first move to mend fences with family and neighbours

taking time to listen to the needs of those around us

donating vaccines as a family/community to a country where people need them

Yom Kippur

Our Jewish brothers and sisters celebrate Yom Kippur on 15/16 September 2021. This feast is set aside as a Day of Atonement for the sins of the world and for each person's own sinfulness. This day of reconciliation is accompanied by a strict fast and is preceded by 10 days of prayer called Days of Awe or Repentance starting with Rosh Hashanah – the Jewish New Year. During this time the Shofar (Ram's Horn) is used as a call to repentance. Apple dipped in honey is eaten as a symbol of healing and the hope of a sweet new year.

Could we promote reconciliation awareness in our communities by the sounding of drums or recall our Jewish heritage in the blowing of a trumpet? We might even make the humble tin whistle (feadó g stáin) our instrument. Slices of apple dipped in honey as a dessert on Mercy Day might prompt questions about the Jewish feast and spark some thoughtful reflection on the call to be people of mercy.



**Adult Service of Reconciliation inspired by *Misericordiae Vultus* (Jubilee of Mercy 2016)
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Song **Be Merciful, O Lord (©Michael Joncas)**
All sing: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned

Opening Prayer **Let us pray,**
God of infinite mercy,
Pour out your generous wisdom upon us
as we face up to our shortcomings.
Help us see ourselves through your eyes of compassion
and to make an honest confession.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, companion of sinners. Amen.

Introduction

‘In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy. We know these parables well, three in particular: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the father with two sons. In these parables, God is always presented as full of joy, especially when he pardons. In them we find the core of the Gospel and of our faith, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon.’ *Misericordiae Vultus (M.V. Art. 9)*

Brief Reflection

The parables of mercy were addressed to ordinary people whose understanding of God and God’s mercy was limited by their culture and religious traditions. Jesus opened up another window of understanding through three stories in particular which challenged these often imposed views and inherited beliefs. Jesus also presented his alternative perspective by using examples of people that behaved or appeared out of character.

1. Shepherds were not regarded as very trustworthy in society. Yet this shepherd put himself out to find the one who had strayed (*Luke 15:3-7*).
2. In the parable about a woman and her lost coin, Jesus shows his inclusive attitude to females by acknowledging the role of women in this work of mercy (*Luke 15:8-10*).
3. The story of the man with two sons would have been greeted with surprise as it threatened the established code of family, inheritance and loyalty (*Luke 15:11 -32*).

Yet in all these events we see mercy breaking down barriers and expectations, crossing over seemingly insurmountable canyons and seeping into every corner of the lives of men and women. What do these parables of mercy have to say to us today? What are the taboos in our time that God’s mercy can lift? What do we need to let go of so that this irrepressible force of love and compassion can soften our hearts? Are we up for this mercy challenge.



Luke 15:4

'What man among you with a hundred sheep, losing one, would not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the missing one till he found it?'

I don't place an equal value on all in my care	Déan trócaire is trua
I don't reach out to those who are lost	Déan trócaire is trua
I don't put myself out for others	Déan trócaire is trua

Luke 15:10

'I tell you there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner'

I find it hard to let go of a hurt or a grudge	Déan trócaire is trua
I find it hard to believe in the joy of confession	Déan trócaire is trua
I find it hard to be happy when someone repents	Déan trócaire is trua

Luke 15:21

He ran to the boy and clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly

I don't show forgiveness when I am hurt	Déan trócaire is trua
I don't show my tenderness out of fear	Déan trócaire is trua
I don't show affection by way of punishment	Déan trócaire is trua

Song Lord, Show Us Your Mercy (©Jeanne Cotter)

All sing: Lord, show us your mercy and love

M.V. 9. ctd.

From another parable, we cull an important teaching for our Christian lives. In reply to Peter's question about how many times it is necessary to forgive, Jesus says: "I do not say seven times, but seventy times seven times" (*Mt 18:22*). He then goes on to tell the parable of the "ruthless servant," who, called by his master to return a huge amount, begs him on his knees for mercy. His master cancels his debt. But he then meets a fellow servant who owes him a few cents and who in turn begs on his knees for mercy, but the first servant refuses his request and throws him into jail. When the master hears of the matter, he becomes infuriated and, summoning the first servant back to him, says, "Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (*Mt 18:33*). Jesus concludes, "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother/sisters from your heart" (*Mt 18:35*).

Song Amazing Grace (Traditional)

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved.



How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Reflection from the Mystics (©Father Pius Sammut O.C.D.)

'It happened one day that one of the brethren in the monastery of Abba Elias was tempted. Cast out of the monastery, he went over the mountain to Abba Anthony. The brother lived near him for a while and then Anthony sent him back to the monastery from which he had been expelled. When the brothers saw him they cast him out yet again, and he went back to Abba Anthony saying, "My Father, they will not receive me."

Then the old man sent them a message saying, "A boat was shipwrecked at sea and lost its cargo; with great difficulty it reached the shore; but you want to throw into the sea that which has found a safe harbour on the shore." When the brothers understood that it was Abba Anthony who had sent them this monk, they received him at once. '

Matthew 18:22

Not seven, I tell you, but seventy times seven

I can be less than generous in my forgiving
I can be calculating in showing mercy
I can be cruel in my judgement of others

Déan trócaire is trua
Déan trócaire is trua
Déan trócaire is trua



Matthew 18:33

Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?

Sometimes I am blind to my own faults
Sometimes I am merciless to others
Sometimes I am hard in punishing others

Déan trócaire is trua
Déan trócaire is trua
Déan trócaire is trua

Matthew 18:35

And that is how my father will deal with each one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart

I fail to forgive in my mind
I fail to forgive from my soul
I fail to forgive with my heart

Déan trócaire is trua
Déan trócaire is trua
Déan trócaire is trua

Act of Sorrow

Individual Confession and Absolution (Covid Restrictions may apply)

The Lord's Prayer Our Father (Ronan McDonagh)

M.V. 9. ctd.

'As we can see in Sacred Scripture, mercy is a key word that indicates God's action towards us. He does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviours that are shown in daily living. The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible; that is, he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. This is the path which the merciful love of

Christians must also travel. As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other.'

Final Prayer

Let us pray,

God of tenderness and compassion,
We thank you for the grace of your mercy
We celebrate the joy of your forgiveness
We commit to sharing your generosity with others.
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Song

You Are My All In All (©Dennis Jernigan) – Emmanuel 2016

All sing:

Jesus, Lamb of God, Worthy is your name
Jesus, Lamb of God, Worthy is your name

