



Mercy and Prayer

Our Congregation of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, which opens on 6th March 2016 the year of preparation for the Jubilee of 200 years of our being, cannot but hear the “dearest desire” of our Founder:

“ ... May all (the sisters), without exception, become instruments of mercy in the hand of divine providence. That, briefly, is the most ardent wish of my heart.” (Letter 4-8)

In Mexico, the members of a particular tribe greet each other thus: “How’s your gaze?”

Let us greet each other, during this year, by posing the same question: What gaze, what view do we have on these 200 years of our existence? ... Gaze on our past, our present and the world.

On 8th December last, Pope Francis opened the “door of mercy”: the jubilee year of mercy. Nor is it a “coincidence”, that this year, 2016, the 6th March, is the 4th Sunday of Lent in the liturgical calendar, when the Gospel reveals to us “the Father’s mercy for his two sons” (Luke 15). We are familiar with Rembrandt’s beautiful painting in which he depicts the two hands of the father, resting on his returning son, in such a way that one is maternal and the other paternal. We see here an expression of the divine mercy!

“Jesus Christ, his Church, all our brothers and sisters” also summarises our Congregational symbol.

How’s your gaze?

The gaze of Constant Van Crombrugghe was laid and fixed on Jesus, the merciful, and his world. His gaze was fixed on the world with the gaze of Jesus: “As long as there is misery to be relieved, suffering to be alleviated, sins to be forgiven, I shall remain on earth, I shall remain as on a throne of love and mercy.” (Exhortations p. 40)



Thus, in offering us this charism, he wanted to consecrate our Congregation to the merciful heart of Jesus: “... with a just desire to testify to the adorable Heart of my Divine Master my gratitude and the love with which he inspires me, I have vowed and consecrated to Him your Institute and myself with all I possess” (see the text of his consecration: Exhortations p. 53)

He also gave us a long sharing and an insistent call (Exhortations PP. 8-21) on the love of others created in the image of God. (Based on the Pauline hymn to charity 1 Cor. 13)

Our Pope, Francis, expresses by his life, his gestures and his calls, the “secret” of the mercy of God: “May your gaze be full of mercy for all people ‘in the image of God’”.

How's your gaze?

Inhabited by this light, this interior gaze and this conviction that “every person is created in the image of God” (cf. Gen 1:27), this grace led our Founder to reveal to us how this merciful love of God must be incarnated and shine in our DMJ life. “Every person, without exception, is *the image of God*; every person must be loved with a love that is compassionate- universal – humble- poor: love always received and offered, and “preferential towards the poor and needy”

So I took my Bible and the writings of Constant Guillaume and “with the eyes of the heart” I tried to see and hear anew the message addressed to us, in the context of our world, in the circumstances in which we each live, in listening (with the heart) to all the world events which touch us, near or far.

How's your gaze?

In the Bible I discover that **listening** and **seeing** always go together and lead to **action**.

God – Adonai speaks to Moses: “I have seen the misery of my people ... I have heard their cry ...I know their sufferings and I have come down to deliver them” (Ex 3:6-10; Ex33:19). God reveals his name: “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex 34: 6) The Jewish people pray to their merciful God (especially on the day of great forgiveness, Yom Kippur).

Jesus became incarnate in our midst: “the tender mercy of our God” (Luke 1:78). He proclaims “I desire mercy not sacrifice” (Matt 12:7, 9, 13). The Hebrew word for mercy, *hesed*, means the deep heart, the guts that quiver in pain, the profound attachment of one being to another. God suffers with us, upset by our sufferings and our sinful state. Jesus IS merciful: “ I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners “ (Matt 9:13) “Jesus *saw* the blind man and touched his eyes ... Jesus saw the paralytic and took him by the hand... and said to him ‘go and sin no more’. “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy” (Matt 5: 7). Jesus reveals himself “in giving his life for those he loves” (John 3:16) “while we were still sinners” (Rom 5:8). The Gospel of Luke which is called the “Gospel of mercy” seems to summarise in 6: 36-38, the essence of mercy (developed by our Founder in his exhortation on Charity). Why not reread this Gospel in the light of this theme. **Jesus IS mercy and he calls us to become mercy.** Read with the heart: “see – listen –incarnate”, that the word might take flesh in all Christians by the action of the Holy Spirit.

If someone asked “who is your God” the answer of a Muslim would be, “The Most Gracious, Most Merciful” (Quran 59: 22). These two names of God are among the most frequently used in the Koran, attributes suitable to the holiness of God by virtue of which he gives help and divine graces... Muslims explain the immensity of the mercy of Allah by saying “Allah the Most High has a hundred mercies ... he sent down one of them which living beings share. By this mercy, they show each other tenderness and compassion. He has kept 99 mercies by which he will show mercy to his worshippers on the day of resurrection.” (cf. The beliefs of Islam)

How's your gaze?

In this world where war and violence are declared “in the name of God”, is it not urgent that we listen, see, change our gaze so that the divine mercy may unite us? See and hear the voices of the 3 great religions of the world, Abraham is our common father. We are linked by the same merciful

love of God. We are brothers and sister in Abraham: Jews, Christians and Muslims. Together, let us change our gaze – open our hearts to mercy.

See and hear the voices of the different religions: Roman Catholic – Orthodox-Protestant. Do we not sing in our liturgies with the one heart, “Kyrie Eleison, Lord, have mercy”? Have mercy on us sinners: on our divisions, on our certainties, on our judgements, on our indifference and incomprehension, our prejudice. Have mercy on all who suffer and who cause suffering. Have mercy on our brothers and sisters and have mercy on our enemies.

“Where there is love, God is present” So... it would be possible, from one same heart to **see and hear** the voices of those who cry out in their suffering, to hear the voices of those who have no voice, the voices of the persecuted, the despised of society. So we can see and hear Jesus who proclaims: “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:18-21)

See ... listen and ... descend: Make the journey with them – share their condition – Fight for justice and peace. Let us open ourselves to the sufferings and concrete calls of our regions/province – of our everyday lives - those which hurt us and those which leave us indifferent.

Why not remember, in prayer, an event in our life, which speaks to us most of the mercy of Jesus and which has perhaps upset our life.

“Our lifestyle should be devout, filled with empathy, compassion and mercy, drawing each day from the wells of prayer”. Pope Francis.

May our prayer, our actions and our apostolic choices be truly universal and enlarge our heart to the dimensions of the world: inclusion excludes no one, it will become an incarnation of the merciful Jesus!

On this coming 6th March, wherever we are (alone or together), let us light a candle and pray to receive a "compassionate heart, gentle and lowly" allowing ourselves to be led by Jesus, towards those who are His most dear ... no matter what they look like, all created in the image of God.

"Patiently polish this instrument so that it works in harmony with the Hand that guides it."(Letter 7-19)

Some days ago I met a homeless man lying in Victoria Station: I looked at him, smiling (I had nothing in my pocket) and he asked nothing; he said, "thank you for your smile." We took the time to look at each other!

How's your gaze? ...

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