

‘By the tender mercy of our God
the dawn from on high will break upon us’(Luke 1:78).





‘I will betroth you
to myself
in tenderness.’
(Hosea 2:19)

On the 11th April 2015 Pope Francis announced a 'Holy Year of Mercy' beginning on the Solemnity of Mary's Immaculate Conception, December 8th 2015.

He announced it in a homily delivered after the reading of the Gospel story of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-50).

He speaks of the compassionate gaze of Jesus as he looked into her eyes. Among other things he said: 'It is good that we should feel that same compassionate gaze of Jesus upon us.'

Pope Francis went on to say:

‘No one can be excluded from the mercy of God; everyone knows the way to access it and the Church is the house that welcomes all and refuses no one.

Its doors remain wide open, so that those who are touched by grace can find the certainty of forgiveness.

The greater the sin, so much the greater must be the love that the Church expresses toward those who convert.’

‘We want to live this Year in the light of the Lord's words: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36).’

Today we are celebrating the First Sunday of Advent

We join the universal church in her liturgy.

We look forward to the Coming of the Risen Christ to this world at Christmas.

This year we do so with a special focus on praying that we and, indeed, the whole world, will welcome God's offer of mercy, and feel it as we look into the merciful eyes of Jesus.

We begin with some words

empathy : being open to another person's feeling

sympathy : sharing another person's feeling
feeling with another - from Greek

compassion : same as 'sympathy' - from Latin

mercy : from French ‘à la merci de’ : ‘at the mercy of’
powerless, needing another for escape, survival

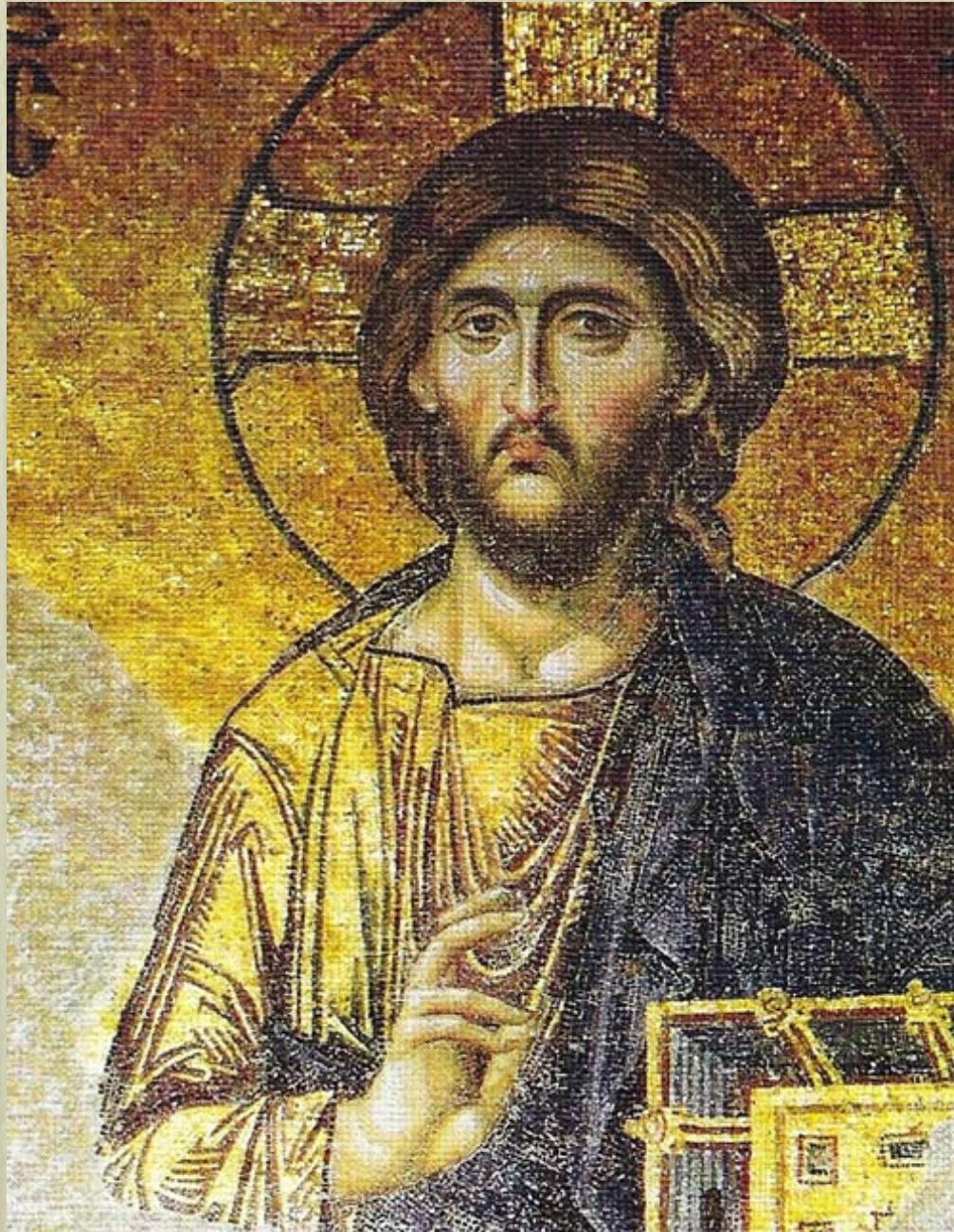
‘merci’ = ‘thank you’

Is the plea for mercy accompanied by gratitude
flowing from the sense of assurance
that the person to whom we address our plea
will do what is possible to meet our need?

To show mercy
is to respond positively to another’s plea

Latin 'misericordia' = to press to one's heart
a person who is experiencing misery.

Jesus is the Word of God revealed in human flesh
(John 1:14)



‘Phillip, if you see me you see the Father’(John 14:9).

‘Father, I have made you known ... so that they may believe that it was you who sent me’(John 17:6, 21).

‘In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself.’
(2Corinthians 5:19).

‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation’(Colossians 1:3).

Acts 2:22

‘Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know.’

Luke 5:17

‘The power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal.’

Since God is LOVE, the ‘deeds of power’ are expressions of the powerful love that binds Jesus to the Father.

Luke 10:25-28

‘A lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’

Jesus said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’

He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’

And Jesus said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; go on doing this and you will live.’

Luke 10:29 **Wanting to justify himself. the lawyer asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”**

Sirach 12:1-7

‘If you do good, know to whom you do it,
and you will be thanked for your good deeds.
Do good to the devout, and you will be repaid—
if not by them, certainly by the Most High.
No good comes to one who persists in evil
or to one who does not give alms.
Give to the devout, but do not help the sinner.
Do good to the humble, but do not give to the ungodly;
hold back their bread, and do not give it to them,
for by means of it they might subdue you;
then you will receive twice as much evil
for all the good you have done to them.
For the Most High also hates sinners
and will inflict punishment on the ungodly.
Give to the one who is good, but do not help the sinner.’

- I- A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.
- 2- Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.
- 3- So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.
- 3+ But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion (ἐσπλαγχνίσθη). He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them.
- 2+ Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.
- I+ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’

Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise”.

Luke 15:1-2

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him.

And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

The lost sheep Luke 15:3-7

The lost coin Luke 15:8-10

The lost child is welcomed home Luke 15:11-32

The two sons Luke 15:11-32

‘All the tax collectors and sinners
were coming near to listen to him.

And the Pharisees and the scribes were
grumbling and saying, “This fellow
welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

So he told them this parable.

The younger son

1. leaves his father and home
2. loses everything
3. sin takes him to the bottom

change of mind

3. Father comes out to his son

2. receives everything
1. ‘They began to celebrate’

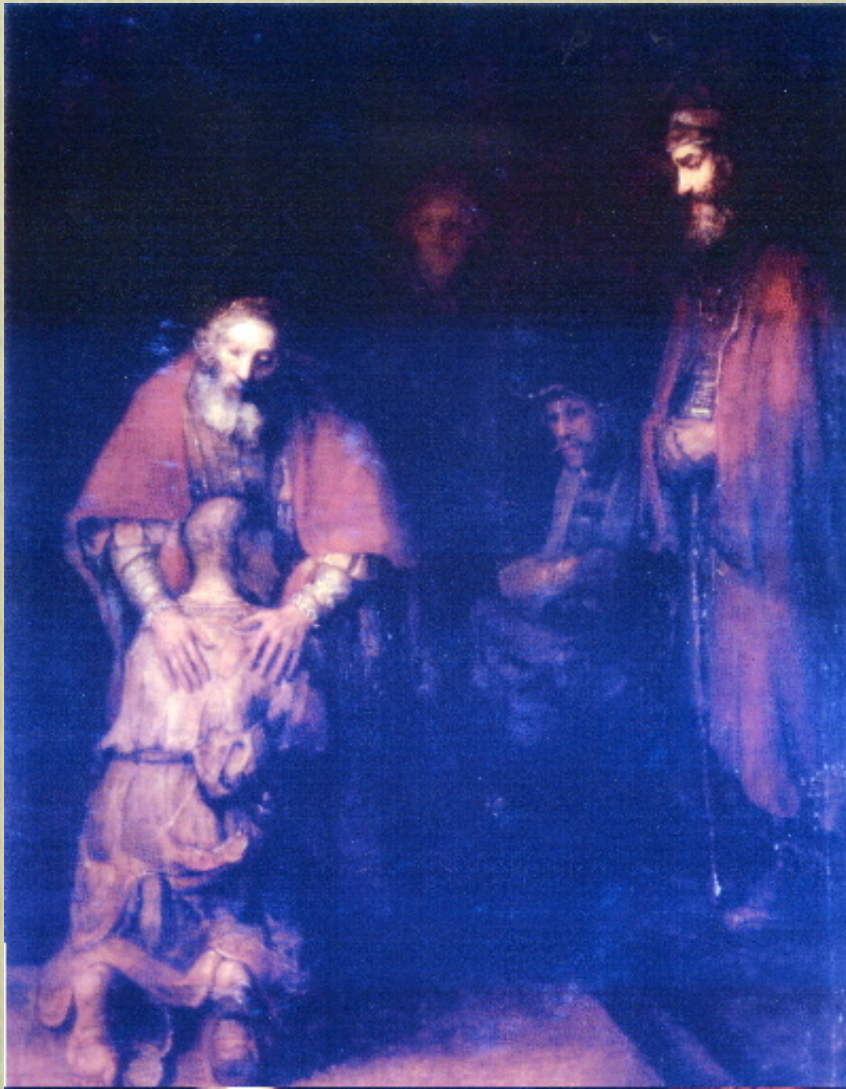
The elder son

1. Comes in from the fields
2. hears of celebration and is angry

3. Father comes out to his son

stubborn refusal

3. Father tells him of his love
2. father explains the celebration
1. ? ? ? ? ?



Rembrandt

‘He set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion (ἐσπλαγχνίσθη); he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate’(Luke 15:20-24).

A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, “If you want to, you can make me clean.”

Leviticus 13:45-46

‘The person who has the scaly skin disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be disheveled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, “Unclean, unclean.” He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.’

Mark 1:41-45

Liberating the Outsider and
welcoming him into the community

Deeply moved with compassion(σπλαγχνισθεὶς); [anger? ὀργισθεὶς], Jesus stretched out his hand and held him, and said to him, “Of course I want to. Be made clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” (see Leviticus 14)

But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in places where nobody dwelt. People, however, came to him from every quarter.

‘Jesus saw the crowd; and he had **compassion** (ἐσπλαγχνίσθη) for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.’ (Mark 6:34)

‘When there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, “I have **compassion** (σπλαγχνίζομαι) for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way – and some of them have come from a great distance.”

(Mark 8:1-3)

‘When the Lord saw the widow, he had **compassion** (ἐσπλαγχνίσθη) for her and said to her, “Do not weep.” Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, rise!” (Luke 7:13-14).

‘We declare to you what we have heard,
what we have seen with our eyes,
what we have looked at and touched with our hands,
concerning the word of life —

this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify
to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was
with the Father and was revealed to us.

We declare to you what we have seen and heard so
that you may have communion with us; and truly our
communion is with the Father
and with his Son Jesus the Messiah.’



‘Come to me,
all you that are weary
and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you,
and learn from me;
for I am gentle
and humble in heart,
and you will find rest
for your souls.’

Matthew 11:28-29.

‘When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy’(Titus 3:4-5).

God’s mercy is the source and goal of God’s activity.

We choose to believe and so to hope,
trusting because of the dying and rising of Jesus.

Our merciful actions encourage others to believe
and to hope.

‘Be merciful (οἰκτίρμονες ; Matthew ‘perfect’),
just as your Father is merciful’(οἰκτίρων, Luke 6:36).

‘Blessed are they who show mercy’(ἐλεήμονες, Matthew 5:7)

‘Be imitators of God, as beloved children,
and live in love, as Christ loved us
and gave himself up for us’(Ephesians 5:1-2).

‘I give you a new commandment,
that you love one another.

Just as I have loved you,
you also should love one another.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another’(John 13:34-35).

‘Be kind to one another, tenderhearted,
forgiving one another,
as God in Christ has forgiven you’(Ephesians 4:32).

‘Bear with one another
and, if anyone has a complaint against another,
forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you,
so you also must forgive’(Colossians 3:13).

1Corinthians 13:1-3

‘I may have all the eloquence of human beings
and of angels, but if I speak without love,
I am simply a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

I may have prophetic powers,
and understand all mysteries and know everything.

I may have such faith as to remove mountains,
but if I do not have love, I am nothing.

I may give away all my possessions,
and even hand over my body to be burnt,
but if I do not have love, it will do me no good whatever.

Love never stops caring.

1Corinthians 13:4-8

Love acts always in a kind way.

Love does not act out of jealousy or envy.

Love does not boast; or behave arrogantly.

Love does not behave indecently or insist on its own way.

Love does not give way to irritation;
or brood over wrongs.

Love takes no pleasure in wrongdoing,
but rejoices in the truth.

Love has space enough to hold and to bear
everything and everyone

love believes all things, hopes all things, and endures
whatever comes. Love does not come to an end.'

They come to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me (ἐλέησόν με)!”

Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me (ἐλέησόν με)!”

Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they call the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.”

So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

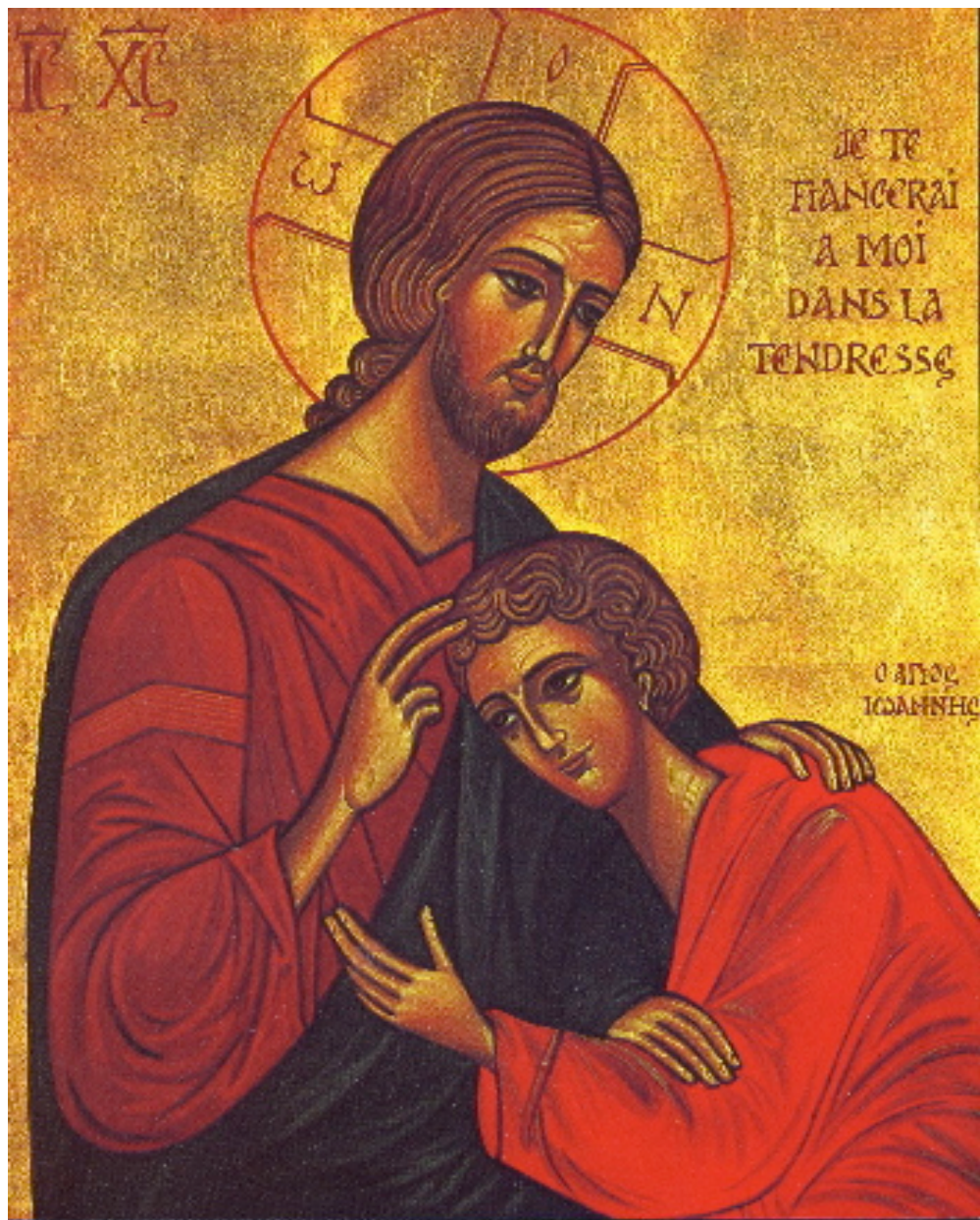
Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.”

Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well (‘saved you’).”

Matthew 12:7

‘If you had known what this means,
‘I desire mercy (ἔλεος) and not sacrifice’ (Hosea 6:6),
you would not have condemned the guiltless.’



I'll be always loving you

Words and Music: Trisha Watts

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I am here with you
by your side
sheltering your heart
in the night.
Wherever you go,
whatever you do,
I'll be always loving you.
I will be your God,
your comforter,
I will hold you close
in my heart.



Let me love the world
through your heart.
Let me heal your wounds
by my touch.

Wherever you go,
whatever you do,
I'll be always loving you.

I will be your God,
your comforter,
I will hold you close
in my arms.



Mmm

Wherever you go,
whatever you do,
I'll be always loving you.