



Pope Francis has given faithful the two verbs of mercy, stressing that for fulfillment in life, we are called to forgive and give.

During this morning's General Audience in St. Peter's Square, while reflecting on Luke's Gospel (6: 36-38) on mercy which inspired the Jubilee Year's motto: 'Be merciful as your father is merciful,' Francis stressed this is "not a slogan for effect, but a life commitment."

Francis recalled that in the Sermon on the Mount, which opens with the Beatitudes, the Lord teaches that perfection consists in love, and reminded those present that St. Luke explicitly explains that perfection is the merciful love: 'to be perfect means to be merciful.'

"A person who is not merciful is perfect?" the Pope asked. "No!"

"A person who is not merciful is good? No!" he continued, clarifying that goodness and perfection are always rooted in mercy.

Realistic for Us?

"Of course, God is perfect." the Pope said, noting that even if we humans are not capable of reaching absolute perfection, our being merciful is all that God expects from us. "He urges us to be as He is, full of love, compassion, mercy."

"But I wonder: Are the words of Jesus realistic? Is it really possible to love as God loves and be merciful like Him?"

The Jesuit Pope noted that if we look at the history of salvation, we see that the whole revelation of God is a ceaseless and untiring love for mankind, and that Jesus' death on the Cross is the culmination of the love story between God and man.

Francis admitted that only God can accomplish a love so great, and that, "It is clear that, compared to this love that has no measure, our love will always be at fault."

“But when Jesus calls us to be merciful as the Father,” Francis continued, “He does not think the amount! He asks his disciples to become sign, channels, witnesses of his mercy.”

Jesus, the Pope explained, wishes that His Church is a sacrament of God’s mercy in the world, at any time and for all mankind.

“Every Christian, therefore, is called to be a witness of mercy, and this happens in the path of holiness,” Francis said, urging: “Think of how many saints have become merciful, for they are left to fill the heart of the divine mercy.”

2 Verbs of Mercy

The Pope then said that we do ought to ask ourselves: ‘What it means for the disciples to be merciful?’ He responded that Jesus has already given us the answer, that lies in living out two verbs: forgiving and giving.

Mercy is expressed, first of all, in the forgiveness: “Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven.”(v. 37)

“Jesus does not intend to pervert the course of human justice, however, He reminded His disciples that to have fraternal relations, one must suspend judgments and sentences. Forgiveness,” he noted, “is the pillar that holds up the life of the Christian community, because it shows the gratuitousness with which God has loved us first.”

“The Christian must forgive! But why? Why he was forgiven. All of us who are here today, in the square, we have been forgiven. None of us, in life, had no need of God’s forgiveness. And because we have been forgiven, we must forgive.”

Judging and condemning the brother who sins, the Pope said, is wrong. “Not because I do not want to recognize sin, but because in condemning the sinner, the bond of fraternity with him breaks.’

“We have the power to condemn our erring brother, [but] we are not above him: we have rather a duty to recover the dignity of a child of the Father and accompany him on his journey of conversion.”

‘The Measure’

The Pope then discussed how Jesus has given us a second pillar: ‘giving.’ Francis reminded them of Jesus’ advice: “For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you. (v. 38)”

Noting how God gives far beyond our merits, Francis noted that He will be even

more generous to those on earth who were generous to others.

“Jesus does not say what will happen to those who do not donate, but the image of the “measure” is a warning: with the measure that we take, we can determine how we will be judged...’

Merciful love, Pope Francis underscored, is the only way forward.

“We must forgive, be merciful, live our life in love. This love enables Jesus’ disciples not to lose the identity received from Him, and to recognize themselves as sons of the same Father. But do not forget this: mercy and blessing; forgiveness and gift. In this way, the heart enlarges, it widens in love. Instead selfishness, anger, make the little heart, which hardens like a stone.”

“What do you prefer?” Pope Francis concluded asking. “A heart of stone and a heart full of love? If you prefer a heart full of love, be merciful!”

‘Remember’ Those With Alzheimers

Following his catechesis and his greetings in various languages, the Holy Father recalled the XXII World Alzheimer Day, which takes place today, on the theme “Remember me,” and urged all faithful gathered in St. Peter’s Square to remember those who are affected by the disease and their families.

Pope Francis prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary and Jesus, for their care and tenderness, in making those with Alzheimers feel the closeness of all those praying for them.