



In a quiet church on a Saturday afternoon, I pray and prepare myself for confession. In my soul, Christ lifts my gaze to meet his. I look into the eyes of Mercy. I know myself best in these moments because His love shows me who I am.

I offer my whole self to him, including my misery and my weakness, as a sacrifice to his merciful love. A holocaust he can burn up completely in His heart which contains the flames of mercy that the world rejects and that he longs to give. In this offering I thank him for all he has given me and give it back to him, and I look at the all ways I have not lived as who I truly am in him. I do my examination of conscience, one-by-one counting out the betrayals of his love I have made, the large and small pieces of silver I have sold my heart for... this heart that belongs to him, that has always belonged to him but that I stole back to sell for what seemed more attractive in the moment.

I raise my eyes to meet his again, this time tentatively, with regret and remorse instead of eager greeting. But his eyes remain the same. Those eyes of mercy. There's nothing I have uncovered in my examen that he hasn't known, even if I had hidden it from myself until this moment. His eyes still hold only love, and perhaps more love. The eyes of a savior who sees my poverty and doesn't run from it, deny my flaws or pretend not to see them. He shows me that in my weakness he is not scandalized, even in the face of the years filled brimming with every good gift that he has given me that I still manage to turn my back on when I sin. I am still his. He shows me the truth and trust in St. Therese of Liseux's words,

"I am no longer surprised by anything. I am not sorry to see that I am weakness itself. On the contrary I glory in it, and I expect to discover new imperfections in myself every day. What pleases him is to see that I love my littleness and my poverty. It is the blind hope I have in his mercy. That is my only treasure."

I have a choice. To trust completely in the mercy of Christ who loves me, or to trust in myself and try to be my own savior through sheer will power, trying to prove to Christ that I can 'be like God' (Gen 3:5) and never fail him again through my own controlled perfection - a lie that tells me I must purchase my own salvation, and is

too easily bought into.

Those eyes clearly show me the way I should take, and they show me the truth about my own weakness and His strength. St John of the Cross writes,

When You regarded me,
Your eyes imprinted in me Your grace:
For this You loved me again,
And thereby my eyes merited
To adore what in You they saw

(Sp Can XXXII)

It's he who gazes into my soul and regards what is there in truth. It is he who saves me, who imprints his grace in me, makes me into his own image, his own self, who looks at me and loves me and lets me see and adore him in his incredible mercy.

My weakness gives me a window into the soul of God himself, Mercy himself, that I could never have without my failures and my intense need for a savior. To see myself loved like this reveals to me my value and my identity, and gives me a distaste for the lies of the world that would buy my love with vain and superficial promises. The price of seeing these eyes of mercy is knowing my own weakness and sin, and giving it to him, trusting him to love me still.

I go into the confessional and throw myself into his arms. And somehow, in the justice of God that is only satisfied by his Mercy, I share a joy with the infinitely humble Creator of the Universe that only I can give him, the joy of letting him be my savior. I go in, a sinful woman like so many who have wept at the feet of Christ, and come out like Mary Magdelene, ransomed and transformed, with the Easter Exsultet in my heart.

O wonder of your humble care for us!
O love, O charity beyond all telling,
to ransom a slave you gave away your Son!
O truly necessary sin of Adam,
destroyed completely by the Death of Christ!
O happy fault
that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!