

“...Jesus taught us to be merciful like our heavenly Father (cf. *Lk* 6:36). In the parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. *Lk* 10:29-37), he condemned those who fail to help others in need, those who “pass by on the other side” (cf. *Lk* 10:31-32). By this example, he taught his listeners, and his disciples in particular, to stop and to help alleviate the sufferings of this world and the pain of our brothers and sisters, using whatever means are at hand, beginning with our own time, however busy we may be. Indifference often seeks excuses: observing ritual prescriptions, looking to all the things needing to be done, hiding behind hostilities and prejudices which keep us apart.

Mercy is the heart of God. It must also be the heart of the members of the one great family of his children: a heart which beats all the more strongly wherever human dignity – as a reflection of the face of God in his creatures – is in play. Jesus tells us that love for others – foreigners, the sick, prisoners, the homeless, even our enemies – is the yardstick by which God will judge our actions. Our eternal destiny depends on this. It is not surprising that the Apostle Paul tells the Christians of Rome to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep (cf. *Rom* 12:15), or that he encourages the Corinthians to take up collections as a sign of solidarity with the suffering members of the Church (cf. *1 Cor* 16:2-3). And Saint John writes: “If any one has the world’s goods and sees his brother or sister in need, yet refuses help, how does God’s love abide in him? (*1 Jn* 3:17; cf. *Jas* 2:15-16).

This then is why “it is absolutely essential for the Church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy. Her language and her gestures must transmit mercy, so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father. The Church’s first truth is the love of Christ. The Church makes herself a servant of this love and mediates it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of oneself. Consequently, wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident. In our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy.””

Pope Francis, Message for World Day of Peace 2015, 12/8/2015