

Seek Reconciliation

"I desire mercy, not sacrifice." (Matthew 9:13)

From Pope Francis: *"In the past few days I have been reading a book by a Cardinal ... Cardinal Kasper said that feeling mercy, that this word changes everything. This is the best thing we can feel: it changes the world. A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just. We need to understand properly this mercy of God, this merciful Father who is so patient. ... Let us remember the Prophet Isaiah who says that even if our sins were scarlet, God's love would make them white as snow. This mercy is beautiful."* - Angelus on March 17, 2013

Mercy—and transformation—involves the heart. An intellectual understanding can be helpful in moving one's heart toward a better understanding of the concept. Consider the dictionary definition:

Mercy

- 1 a: compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power;
also: lenient or compassionate treatment (begged for *mercy*)
- b: imprisonment rather than death imposed as penalty for first-degree murder
- 2 a: a blessing that is an act of divine favor or compassion
(may God have *mercy* on us)
- b: a fortunate circumstance (it was a *mercy* they found her before she froze)
- 3 a: compassionate treatment of those in distress (works of *mercy* among the poor)

Lent can be a retreat inward, a period of deep reflection on your relationship with God and the church and how you are called to serve. Rather than focusing on what you give up, immerse yourself in reflection inward and on mercy; how you experience mercy, how you show it, and how you encounter a merciful God throughout life on this earth.

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A meaningful Lent is one in which there is positive change. In a world of increasing self-centeredness, there is value in acknowledging the many acts of mercy permeating your daily life. This increased awareness can change your perspective and motivate you to be more merciful toward yourself and others. Outward acts of mercy change you internally. You can be drawn toward reconciliation through focusing on merciful acts.

Whether it is to show mercy to yourself or another, or to bear witness to God's mercy in your own life, the challenge is to make a change that is memorable and becomes part of your story. Be gentle. Be open. Be merciful. Do less, with emphasis on making it matter more.

How can you enrich your Lenten experience through acts of mercy?

In what ways do you need to seek peace in your relationships and in your home?



Use the journal page at the end of this booklet (pg12) to record and reflect on experiences of mercy you witness throughout the season.