

Missionary Commentary

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 23, 2025

Sunday Readings

1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23
Psalm 103:1-4, 8, 10, 12-13
1 Corinthians 15:45-49
Luke 6:27-38

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Celebrating God's Boundless Mercy

Pope Francis, echoing today's first reading and gospel, continually insists that mercy is the very essence of God; he expresses it this way in his 2016 book, *The Name of God is Mercy*: "Jesus said that he came not for those who were good, but for the sinners. He did not come for the healthy, who do not need the doctor, but for the sick. For this reason, we can say that **mercy is God's identity card**, God of Mercy, merciful God. For me, this really is the Lord's identity."

Pope of Mercy. Although a vast amount of "mercy material" from Pope Francis is available, probably the best source is Francis' document, *Misericordiae Vultus* (MV) [*The Face of Mercy*], wherein he proclaimed an entire *year of mercy*, extending from December 8, 2015 [50th anniversary of the close of Vatican II] to November 20, 2016 [Feast of Christ the King].

Echoes of Vatican II. Francis recalls how Saint John XXIII in his opening speech to Vatican II asserted that the Church wishes to use "the medicine of mercy" in proclaiming the Gospel today; she wishes to "show herself a loving mother to all: patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness." Francis says: "We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace.... Mercy [is] the bridge that connects God and man" (MV 2).

Current Challenges. Recently (February 10, 2025) Pope Francis wrote to the USA bishops, encouraging them to mercifully "work closely with migrants and refugees" and "not to give in to narratives that discriminate against and cause unnecessary suffering to our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters."

God, Father of Mercy. Scripture clearly affirms that God is "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation" (2 Cor 1:3). Our God is "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4). One of Jesus' best-known parables is that of the "merciful father" (often known as the "prodigal son" parable): Lk 15:11-32. The magnanimous father shows his overflowing love, mercy and compassion to *both* of his sons.

Jesus, the Father's Face of Mercy. Jesus' entire life and "his person is nothing but love, a love given gratuitously.... The signs he works, especially in the face of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion" (MV 8). His mercy overflows when he invites Matthew the tax collector to follow him; he looked at Matthew with merciful love and chose him: *miserando atque eligendo* [Francis' episcopal motto] (Mt 9:9).

Church, Community of Mercy. "Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life" (MV 10). "The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person....

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In our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy” (MV 12).

Priest, Minister of God’s Mercy. Pope Francis has frequently returned to the theme of mercy—and the duty of priests to be instruments of God’s mercy. On the World Day of Prayer for Vocations in 2014, as he ordained thirteen new priests he told them: “For the love of Jesus Christ, *never tire of being merciful!*”

Mary, Mother of Mercy. Francis notes: “My thoughts now turn to the Mother of Mercy.... No one has penetrated the profound mystery of the incarnation like Mary. Her entire life was patterned after the presence of mercy made flesh.... She treasured divine mercy in her heart” (MV 24). Indeed, our Christian vocation is to always be God’s visible, merciful face in today’s world!

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23 — Today’s reading, set in the desert of Ziph (south of Bethlehem), narrates the moving story of how David shows mercy, compassion, and forgiveness for his enemy Saul; it demonstrates David’s nobility of character.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 103:1-4, 8, 10, 12-13 — This psalm expresses the numerous ways that God manifests his kindness and mercy toward us. We never tire of repeating: “The Lord is kind and merciful.”

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 15:45-49 — Here Paul continues to instruct his Corinthian converts about the centrality of resurrection faith (some were apparently doubting it). The bodily resurrection of Jesus is at the very heart of the apostolic preaching and also at the heart of our Christian faith.

Gospel

Luke 6:27-38 — Saint Luke, our evangelist of the current “Year C,” provides us with a summary of what it means to be a follower of Christ. One sees clear parallels between this gospel and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s gospel. Every Christian is challenged to daily live in accord with these “mercy teachings.”

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who has recently published [Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language](#) (Orbis Books – 2023) and [Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights](#), commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the close of Vatican II [1965-2025] (Faith Alive Books – 2024).

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