

A Theology of Mercy

Our popular image of God?

Wrathful, unforgiving, condemning

Old Testament images of mercy:

God like a mother caring for her children

God continually making covenants with humans despite their sin

The Incarnation concretises God's mercy



Christ is the "Face of the Father's mercy"



He exemplifies compassionate mercy through *action* (Works of Mercy)



He reminds us through scripture and parables that God prioritises mercy



Christ's mercy is the *source* of our transformation



We are called to be merciful (Works of Mercy)



We become an incarnation of God's mercy



What does everyday mercy look like?

By Vinita Hampton Wright – Excerpt from National Catholic Reporter, August 26, 2014

As I move through this day, how will I live mercifully? What words and actions will express to others around me the mercy Francis is talking about? In a given day, I do ordinary things, and I traverse a fairly unexciting landscape. My mercy will not show up in grand gestures, and most of the time mercy reveals itself in fleeting moments.

For example, mercy gives you his seat on the bus, acting as if he was about to get up anyway rather than making you feel that he is doing you a favor. Mercy does not let out that sigh -- you know the one -- the wordless disapproval toward the person in the check-out line ahead of you whose card didn't swipe, or who can't find her coupons, or whose toddler is having a meltdown. Mercy offers quiet sympathy and does not convey with her body language that this holdup is ruining her day. Sometimes mercy chooses not to send back the food that isn't just right, simply because the waitress looks overwhelmed.

When mercy has been wronged, the offended one does not make it difficult for the offender to apologize or ask forgiveness. In fact, mercy does not wait for the other's action but forgives so quickly that the person needing forgiveness is freer to ask for it. Likewise, at work, at home or in the classroom, mercy creates an atmosphere in which a person feels safe enough to admit his mistake or ask a question. And if mercy must correct someone, it pains her to do it, and she does so gently, without vindictive relish.

Mercy makes a habit of giving others the benefit of the doubt. Mercy is not in the habit of sending deadly glares at people who are annoying. Mercy gives charitably, knowing that eventually someone will take advantage of his generosity. Mercy welcomes you, fully aware that this act may disrupt her own plans.

Mercy relinquishes control when doing so allows another person to grow and learn. Mercy makes it his business to help others succeed. Mercy clears the way for others, so that they can walk on an even path, no matter how halting their steps or injured their souls.

In all these situations, mercy treats power as a sacred trust. I can be merciful because I have some sort of power, the means to affect another's life, if only for a moment. I act mercifully when I use my power to do kindness in this world.