

## Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

### Experiencing God's Mercy, Part 2

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Alright, welcome back to talk number 2. We already covered about how merciful God is, and how that's been the story unfolding since the beginning of time even until today. But now it's time to dive into experiencing God's mercy. So let me ask you guys a question first: Who are people you think received the most mercy in all of humanity? Think on that. Who received a lot of mercy? King David? St. Peter? Somebody who was murdered on death row who converted at the last second? It might be tempting to think it would be one of them, but it wasn't. It was actually the Immaculate Conception. Mary.

She received the most mercy in all of humanity, and she knew it. Just listen to the Magnificat. Mary said, after she got the news about, you know, she was going to become the Mother of God, she said ***“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For He has looked with favor on His lowly servant. From this day, all generations will call me blessed. The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. He has mercy on those who fear Him in every generation. He has shown the strength of His arm. He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away hungry. He has come to the help of His servant Israel, for He remembered His promise of mercy, the promise He made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.”***

This Magnificat from Our Lady is a cry of someone who experienced God's mercy deeply and understood it. That experience is what we're going to cover in this session. And I want to convince you guys in our time together, in this talk, that you need to experience God's mercy. Why might you ask. Again, not only is this the story He's been telling from the beginning, okay, but I think, it's a bold claim, but you will be stunted spiritually if you don't experience mercy. You won't experience authentic healing in your life, and without it you'll end up being like this righteous guy from Luke 18:10-14. Remember this guy?

Luke 18:10-14 says: ***“Two people went up to the temple to pray, one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisees took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself: ‘O God, I thank You that I'm not like the rest of humanity - greedy, dishonest, adulterous - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and I pay tithes on my whole income.’ But the tax collector stood off at a distance and wouldn't even raise his eyebrows, but beat his breast and***

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***prayed 'O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' I tell you the latter went home justified, not the former. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and that one who humbles himself will be exalted.***"

We all want to experience God's mercy, and today I'd like to share with you how you can do that by putting into practice these 5 actions that are going to help you experience God's mercy in your life. Okay, let's get practical. Action number 1 that you can take is to embrace your need. I think a lot of times in our culture we don't want to be needy, right. But in Romans 3:23, it says that all have fallen short of the glory of God. And in Romans 6:23, it says that the wages of sin is death. We have all fallen short and deserve death. And our relationship with God doesn't need to stay focused there, but it's got to start there. And we can't experience mercy until we acknowledge that we need it.

The goal in Christian life isn't to just get to a good place, where we don't need mercy anymore because we've gotten so good or so holy. St. Philip Neri, after seeing a murderer being led to the gallows, said in all sincerity "There but for the grace of God, go I." Without the grace and mercy of God in his life, he was saying there's no reason he couldn't be just as easily the guy going to be hanged for murder. None of us are beyond anything, truly, and we need mercy to permeate and transform us daily. So embrace your need for it, admit your need for it, make room for mercy in your life by acknowledging that there's room and space for it.

Action number 2 in experiencing God's mercy is shining the light. So think about, okay, when the lights are off and then somebody just, you know, flips them on all of a sudden and how your eyes, like, ah, they hurt. It's not always pleasant, but that's what's needed in order to start seeing, right. So, practical story: A few months ago I was organizing my attic. So it had been a long time coming, because for several months the strategy was basically just to pull the hatch down, throw junk up there in the dark, until we ended up needing to go up there to get some decorations and I saw what it had become. Once I, you know, climbed the ladder, turned on the light, and was able to see the disorganized junk pile that it had turned into, it was crazy up there guys. Several bags of trash and boxes to be donated later, the attic was cleaned and organized again thanks to shining the light on it.

And, spiritually speaking, I would love to invite you guys, in order to experience more of God's mercy in your life, to shine the spiritual light into the dark places of your life, and specifically doing that through confession. Confession is such a powerful tool to invite mercy in. St. John Vianney, oh my gosh, he was one of the greatest confessors in our church. And he experienced spiritual attacks literally in the forms of demons taunting him, throwing him off his bed and making noise so that he couldn't sleep. And sometimes during the worst attacks he would just

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laugh, because he knew it was just an attempt to scare him off or wear him out from hearing confessions the next day, usually a day when a very lost sinner would come back to the faith after a long time away. Satan knew and knows how powerful confession is, and will literally do anything to stop you from opening yourself to mercy through it. So get to confession. Remember, we talked about Jesus throwing a party over the one sinner who repented. Let heaven throw a party over you. Get into confession and experience God's mercy.

Action number 3 that you can take to experience His mercy is to let go of the past. Trust that God's mercy is stronger than your sin, and just let go of what you're letting define you from your past. I know that people are often very hard on themselves, and they feel like they fail to measure up to their own standards, and to really let go. So whether it's, you know, a project we failed at, or we yelled at our kids, we need to entrust all of our mistakes and failures to Divine Mercy, and to leave it there. We hold on stronger to the memory of our failures than God does. Oh, and nobody knows this better than myself. Oh my gosh, I like to beat a dead horse on the things I've even gone to confession about, and it's something that we need to just stop. We need to choose God, you know, to see ourselves as God sees us, rather than the way that we see ourselves.

Jesus told Faustina He was opening to her the ocean of His mercy. Our sins are like a drop in that ocean. They are such an insignificant amount when compared to the vast ocean. And His mercy is so much bigger than we could fathom, and we have to entrust our past to it. So when you have thoughts about your failures, you need to actively place them at the cross. When you start to ruminate about old conversation, or ways you were weak, or you screwed up on something, I mean, you just have to run to the cross, place them there, and ask for the blood and water to come out and wash over you, so that you can let it go. So a little bit of a journaling activity right now is I want you to take a minute and write something down. What do you need to let go of? Don't advance, push pause on this and write down what are some of the things it's time to let go of? It's time to let God put them in the past for you.

Alright, action number 4: Allow God's mercy to permeate you and to give into it by surrendering. Oh, this is so hard to do, but be washed in God's mercy. Let it blow you away. In St. Faustina's diary, 1356, the passage says "O my God, I am ready to accept Your will in every detail, whatever it may be. However You direct me, I will bless You. Whatever You ask of me, I will do with the help of Your grace. Whatever Your will regarding me might be, I accept it with my whole heart and soul, taking no account of what my corrupt nature tells me." So surrender to God's mercy. Let Him wash you with it, and let it be the thing that defines you.

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And, the last but not least, action number 5: Remember His mercy. Our memories are so fleeting. I don't know about you guys but gosh, with 3 kids and the sleep deprivation, I just have almost no memory anymore. There's a Chinese proverb that says the faintest ink has a better memory than the sharpest brain. Consciously write down the ways you see God's mercy lavished on you, so that you can recall these when you're tempted not to believe it. When you just jot down these stories and you journal them, you're going to be able to help yourself, your future self that's going to want to despair and is doubting or struggling. You're going to know that you've seen God's mercy in the past, and that you can trust it again in this moment of doubt or struggle. Because, let's be real guys, we can be like Israel, right, constantly forgetting His promises to us, falling away, falling on our faces. And unless we actively remember His mercies on us throughout our lifetime, we might wander away. It's important for us to see those examples, and to continue to receive and trust that He has that mercy for us, even in our struggles today when we encounter them.

So practical ways you can do this, whether it's journaling or just jotting down, you know, ways that you've seen His mercy, you know, in a notebook, but hanging a Divine Mercy Image in your home; set an alarm on your phone for 3 PM, which is the hour of mercy; meditate on the Stations of the Cross; and maybe, when possible, recite the Divine Mercy Chaplet when you're able throughout the day. It's such a simple prayer and it doesn't take a lot of time, but it's powerful, and it's a way to really experience that mercy, and to remember and keep it at the forefront of your mind about how much mercy God has for you and wants to pour out.

Okay, so we just went over the 5 actions you can pursue to open yourself to experiencing more of God's mercy in your life: Embrace your need, shine the light through confession, let go of the past, surrender to His mercy, and remember His mercy. So, getting practical, how do you put these 5 actions into practice in your life, opening up yourself to more mercy? And who will you share your plan with to keep you accountable? Let's pray.

*In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Jesus, we ask for a tidal wave of mercy to come over us. Let it pour out over us, uncovering any darkness, breaking any chains in our life, and helping us return to You. Let Your mercy be what defines us. We ask for the intercession of St. John Paul the Second, St. Faustina, and our Blessed Mother to help us enter more deeply into experiencing Your mercy in our lives. We pray these things in Your name. Amen. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*