

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

On this day of the Epiphany, we celebrate the coming of the Magi to the Christ-Child. They traveled hundreds of miles in order to worship the newborn King of the Jews. What a blessing that this was recorded, so we can know the dedication of so many to the Lord. And they *must* have been dedicated. No first class travel here. Long nights following a star through unknown and dangerous lands. Nowadays, we can get anywhere in the world within a day's time... not so then. Think about the last time you went on a trip. If your experience is anything like mine, you probably had delays, fighting children (whether your own, or those around you), raised tempers, and plenty of other struggles. We can easily feel that we have been wronged unfairly. This is when we need to focus on the Spiritual Work of Mercy: **bearing wrongs patiently**.

This Work of Mercy – bearing wrongs patiently – is intimately connected with the one we looked at a couple of weeks ago: **forgiving wrongs willingly**. If we have allowed a mountain of wrongs to go unforgiven, it will be nearly impossible to bear with the wrongs others do to us. For that reason, I would encourage anyone who struggles with this to begin by working on forgiveness. Forgiveness sets us free. It helps us to see other people as beloved children of God, and to gain a better insight into why they do what they do. If we have a reason, we can much more easily bear with the wrongs of others.

There are times, however, when we won't know why people do what they do. There are times when other people don't just *seem* hurtful, but mean to *be* hurtful. We take our example from Jesus who bore with the wrongs done to Him (remember that He was completely innocent) with great patience. Even from the Cross, He cried out for God to forgive those who were crucifying Him (which includes us). Think of this, His own people purposely humiliated Him, yet He patiently bore it. His close friend denied Him, and He gave Him a look of love (which broke Peter's heart). Look at the fruit. By not retaliating, but patiently bearing the wrongs done to Him, He was able to draw many who had rejected Him back to His Heart – He gave them a chance at redemption.

Jesus emphasizes the need to show **mercy** (remember, mercy is not what is owed to someone by justice, but is a gift). On our own, we *cannot* bear wrongs patiently. I would even say that it is humanly impossible to do this. **God gives us the Grace to be merciful**, however, and so we can go beyond what is possible into the realm of the *impossible*. I know this is an area with which I struggle, but when I recognize the tendency in myself to get defensive or retaliate, I pray. I lift up the hurt – real or perceived – into Jesus' Hands, and I *make the choice* to go beyond the hurt. True, I don't always respond to this Grace, and when I do, I usually have to keep choosing – moment by moment – to go beyond the hurt over and over again (after all, it's not a once and done thing). But when I persevere in this prayer and choice to be merciful, I find GREAT JOY. It is actually very freeing to be merciful!

I encourage you to seek this freedom found in **bearing wrongs patiently**. If you know there is someone who often wrongs you, pray a Divine Mercy Chaplet for the person (we have the prayers at the entrance of the Church, or you can go to thedivinemercy.org/message/devotions/chaplet.php). If you struggle with bearing patiently with being wronged, beg God for this supernatural Grace to go beyond yourself. He will answer. He may give you opportunities to practice this Work of Mercy, but He will be faithful in helping you overcome the natural reaction of retaliation.