

## FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

One of the great beauties of the Mass is that God *actually speaks to us!* Isn't it GREAT?! Through the Scriptures proclaimed at Mass, God has a word for you and for me each week, each day. Most often, the clergy (myself included) will preach on the Gospel, and sometimes on the first or second reading. Rarely have I found that I preach on the Psalm of the day. Yet, the Psalm is also part of the Scriptures. In the Liturgy (at Mass), the Psalms are most often proclaimed through song. Have you ever wondered about that? It is not because the Church thought, "Hmm, I think it would be good to have a musical interlude between readings." The Psalm is chosen as a reflection on the first reading, and it is (most often) *sung*, because the Psalms are SONGS. The writers of the Psalms were song writers, and they would have sung these hymns as part of the Israelite prayers.

This week's Psalm response is from Psalm 33 and says

***Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.***

This short verse speaks *volumes!* It is a cry to God for **mercy**; it is a cry of **trust** to God. As we prepare ourselves for the great Jubilee Year of Mercy that Pope Francis has proclaimed (beginning on December 8, 2015 – the Immaculate Conception – and going through the Solemnity of Christ the King next year – November 20, 2016), we need to see there is a deep connection between these two part of the Psalm – **mercy** and **trust**.

First we have to understand what mercy is. As we move closer to the Year of Mercy, we'll examine this more, but let's just start by saying that mercy is *NOT receiving what we deserve*. We have sinned. We have all sinned. Our choices to run after our own will, our own desires, our own wants – and not to take into account what God wants for us – leads us to hurt or even sever our relationship with God. Because of this, does God look down on us with disdain? **NO!** He is a loving Father! He wants our good. He is longing for us to return to His loving arms. He waits for us to show any sign of sorrow, and He runs to embrace us. He **IS** mercy, and wants to pour out His mercy upon us. Note that I am not saying that sin is nothing, a trifle to be ignored. Never do we say, "Oh, I know it's bad, but God'll understand." Rather we must say, "My sin is horrendous in the sight of God. It grieves His Heart beyond any measure of human grief." The first ("God'll understand") says that I don't need mercy because it isn't really an offense against His Heart and our relationship. **Here's a hint:** we can't receive mercy if we don't think we need it! We need to recognize our sin for what it is ("it grieves His Heart") in order to receive mercy. We have to **know** we need mercy in order to **open ourselves, avail ourselves** of that mercy.

Here's where the second part of the Psalm response is SOOOOOOOO important and necessary. When we no longer sugar-coat our sins and come to a full realization of what it *really* is, then we can be attacked by self-loathing and shame. Discouragement or even despair can set in. This is not God's desire. This is where we must then "place our trust in [Him]". This can be hard. Really hard. I think this is why we no longer want to look at sin as sin in our culture. It has led too many to despair, to a darkness of depression. I have experienced this at several times in my life. Looking at my sin has, at times, led me to a darkness of self-hatred that only the grace of God was able to free me of it. In the *light* of the acknowledgement of what our sins are, we must also then **TRUST in His mercy**. We may find ourselves on the edge of an abyss, but it is only in *falling* into **His arms of love** that we will find our way out of the abyss. We cry out with broken hearts, with hearts pierced for our offenses, with the deep understanding of how we have broken the Heart of God and say, "***Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.***"

The devotion to Divine Mercy given to us through the revelation of Jesus to St. Faustina – which will take center stage in this Year of Mercy – encompasses both aspects of this Psalm. The chaplet cries out to God the Father, "**For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.**" The image of Divine Mercy shows the rays of Jesus' merciful love (the blood and water) coming from His heart to wash us clean. At the bottom of the image are the words, "Jesus, I Trust in You".

As we prepare for this great Jubilee Year of Mercy, let us practice **now** (after all, why wait?!) crying out to God, "***Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.***"