

Pastor's Ponderings . . .

"Mercy, Mercy, Mercy!" "Have Mercy!" Often one hears these words from the veteran radio voice of the Cincinnati Reds and Hall of Famer, Marty Brennaman. Mr. Brennaman will beg for mercy on behalf of the Cincinnati Reds professional baseball team from the opposing team when the game is all but lost for the Reds and there is no chance that the Reds would be able to win the game. When the opposing team is so much better than the Reds or when the Reds are playing so badly, the kind and loving thing to do for everyone, including the fans in the stands, is to ask the other team to have mercy. Go easy. Let the substitutes play. Take out the starting players. Get the game over quickly so everyone can go home and the pain of losing and watching the home team who is beaten so badly can end.

Once, I stood before a judge in a court of law, on behalf of someone who had been found guilty by a jury of her peers. It was at her sentencing hearing that I begged the judge and the court to show mercy. Based on the fact that the accused had no prior record and that she was a very good person and an asset to society and a blessing to the many people she served in her profession; based on the fact that she had already served a couple of years in jail waiting on her trial and knowing and believing that she had shown remorse for what she had done and that she had suffered much pain being separated from her children for so long, I asked the judge to show mercy and to be lenient in sentencing her.

What is mercy? It can be difficult to define and describe. But I believe when we ask for this incredible virtue for ourselves or for someone else or when we are asked to show it or offer it to another, mercy has everything to do with not inflicting unnecessary pain upon another or allowing the existing pain to cease and the healing and redemptive qualities for suffering to begin. It is a choice to love and not to condemn. With mercy, one receives the gift of salvation and redemption and one is restored to life. With mercy, love and life get the final say over us and not death. Mercy includes forgiveness and allows one to distinguish the sin from the sinner. Mercy doesn't abolish the Law. It fulfills it. The Good Samaritan who cares for the man who was beaten by robbers, the Prodigal Son and the Prodigal Father, the woman caught in adultery, Jesus forgiving the good thief and offering him eternal life are wonderful stories of mercy.

Psalm 118 uses love and mercy synonymously. The refrain is: *Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.*

The first verse is *Let the house of Israel say, "His mercy endures forever." Let the house of Aaron say, "His mercy endures forever." Let those who fear the Lord say, "His mercy endures forever."* And again the refrain: *Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.*



In this Easter time, the eternal life and love that the Lord offers to everyone through his Resurrection is clearly expressed with an everlasting mercy that covers all of creation. It redeems and saves. Jesus redeems and saves us with a merciful love. Behind, around and deep within every Alleluia that we sing is God's merciful love. Singing and saying Alleluia, the church praises and thanks God for God's redeeming, saving, eternal, merciful love.

Let the House of St. Leo and the Church of God say, *"His mercy endures forever."* Giving food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty, *Let those who fear the Lord say, "His mercy endures forever."* Visiting the sick and those who are in prison, *Let those who fear the Lord say, "His mercy endures forever."* Welcoming the immigrant and the refugee, bringing light and love to those who are in darkness, healing the broken-hearted, lifting up the lowly, forgiving endlessly, praying ceaselessly, serving others selflessly, let the entire House of God say, *"His mercy endures forever."*

The Easter Season ends this month with the great Feast of Pentecost. We are reminded that the Lord appeared to the frightened apostles after his resurrection and offered them "peace". He breathed on them and gave them the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins and to help others live freely over sin and death with God's merciful love. They witness to the Lord's resurrection and new life and they live as the Body of Christ for others. As Christians, who are baptized, confirmed and who receive Eucharist regularly, we can do the same. Let the House of God say: *"His mercy will continue forever!"* "This is always the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!" Amen. Alleluia!

—Fr. Jim

St. Leo's Prayer Wall is a place where all, regardless of age, race or creed, are invited to sing God's praises, give Him thanks, and/or call upon His presence for help in times of need. The wall, a place of prayer for all peoples (much like the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem), captures the faces of the community, as well as peacemakers and saints who have inspired us through the ages.



The Wall is a place for staff and volunteers, youth groups, community meetings, and for individuals who pass through our parking lot on the way to work, school, etc., to pray, reflect and pause. We invite you to share in this special way of prayer, joy, and thanksgiving. Praise God!

God cares about every need in your life and knows what you need even before you ask Him for help. Our St. Leo the Great parish community promises to remember you in our private prayer, as well as in our communal prayer, which is to say that we are praying for you all the time.

All prayer requests are held in strictest confidence. **Send your prayer request to:** Saint Leo the Great Church, 2573 Saint Leo Place, Cincinnati, OH 45225. You can also submit your prayer request online at: <http://saint-leo/WorksofMercy/PrayerWallMinistry.aspx>.