

PRAYER FOCUS FOR MONTH OF AUGUST

Gratitude for the gift of God's mercy

REFLECTION ONE



In our world that is marked by wars, divisions, gross inequalities, uncertainties, injustice and fear, it is easy to be lulled into a sense of despondency, disillusionment and depression. Pope Francis, in his very first homily as Pope, challenged us:

“Today amid so much darkness, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others. To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope; it is to let a shaft of light break through the heavy clouds; it is to bring the warmth of hope.”
(March 19, 2013)

Do you remember the saying?

***“Two men looked out from prison bars,
One saw the mud, the other saw stars.”***

The challenge to us this year, then, is to see the stars, even as we also experience the mud of life's reality.

It is a challenge to be grateful for all that we have received from God, for all the mercy we have received for ***“the steadfast love of God never ceases; God's mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”***(Lamentations 3:22–24)

In Pope Francis' Easter message, he reflected on God's mercy with these words;

“God's mercy can make even the driest land become a garden; it can restore life to dry bones (cf. Ez 37:1-14). ... Let us be renewed by God's mercy, let us be loved by Jesus, let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too; and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish.”(March 31, 2013)

Let us pray then, during this month to have grateful hearts, as we are deeply touched by God's loving mercy.

***Let the rain come and wash away
the ancient grudges, the bitter hatreds
held and nurtured over generations.
Let the rain wash away the memory
of the hurt, the neglect.
Then let the sun come out and
fill the sky with rainbows.
Let the warmth of the sun heal us
wherever we are broken.
Let it burn away the fog so that
we can see each other clearly.
So that we can see beyond labels,
beyond accents, gender or skin color.
Let the warmth and brightness
of the sun melt our selfishness.
So that we can share the joys and
feel the sorrows of our neighbors.
And let the light of the sun
be so strong that we will see all
people as our neighbors.
Let the earth, nourished by rain,
bring forth flowers
to surround us with beauty.
And let the mountains teach our hearts
to reach upward to heaven.
Amen.
Rabbi Harold S. Kushner
(written after September 11, 2011)***

REFLECTION TWO

Gratitude for God's mercy



This month, as we reflect on God's mercy to us, in a spirit of gratitude we pray with Mary in her Magnificat as she says:

***"I acclaim the greatness of God,
whose mercy embraces the faithful,
one generation to the next."***

(Luke 1. 46, 50).

Let us pause to reflect on that phrase **"God's mercy embraces us"**; the infinite tenderness of God towards us!

In the words of Pope Francis:

"The question put to us simply is: do I allow God to love me?" (Dec 24, 2014.)

A simple question, but depending on our answer, it will colour all our life.

Ron Rolheiser reminds us **"Only mercy, receiving it and giving it, can lead us out of the choppy waters of our own anxieties, worry, and joylessness. Only in knowing mercy do we know gratitude."** (May 9, 2016)

It is well worth reading the beautiful reflection of Pope Francis:

‘Misericordiae Vultus’

where he announces the Jubilee Year of Mercy. **“It is good to feel God’s compassionate gaze upon us, just as it was felt by the sinful woman in the house of the Pharisee. ... We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is the wellspring of joy, serenity and peace (MV 2)... In mercy, we find proof of how much God loves us.” (MV14)**

How different our world would be, if instead of distrust, suspicion, and bitterness, there was a real sense of gratitude. **“How much I desire that this year be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God...” (MV 5)**

In our own lives, there can be the simple practice of thanking God each night before we go to sleep, and in the morning, a prayer of gratitude for the gift of another day.

Let us take some time this month to be really grateful for all God’s goodness and mercy to us.

Let our prayer, then be that of St Paul:

**“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
to which indeed you were called in one body.**

**And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,
teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom,
singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
with thankfulness in your hearts to God. “**

(Colossians 3:15–17)

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