

## **BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL**

**Jacques GAILLOT**

If I were asked to draw mercy, how would I do it? A person approaches me with arms extended, with a face full of goodness and eyes that speak of the tenderness of his/her heart.

Mercy shows excess, disproportion, superabundance, gratuitousness... It goes beyond our pittances.

It is no wonder that we are surprised and taken aback.

Surpassing the logic of giving and receiving, it exceeds strict justice, expecting nothing in return.

**Mercy is Jesus' signature:** a gift that exceeds all justice.

|  |
|--|
| In the Gospel, only women show evidence of superabundance! |
|--|

***"I love them so much I find them beautiful"***

Some time ago I was invited to visit a home for people with severe disabilities. It was a house that lay on the outskirts of a town. The person who accompanied me through the different rooms was a priest. Normally he worked at night but he had to be there so that I could pay the visit.

I passed disjointed bodies, broken faces that seemed covered with masks of ugliness. I found their screams unbearable.

I was anxious and upset. The one accompanying me noted my unease, he looked at me and made this extraordinary statement that I have never forgotten:

*"I love them so much I find them beautiful!"*

This pierced my heart. A path opened before me to discover my fears and weaknesses. .

I understood that loving is not doing something for someone, it is to discover that it is beautiful. Is happiness not knowing that one is beautiful in the eyes of others?

This priest had a heart of "flesh" not a heart of "stone". He didn't put up walls of fear to protect himself from others. He was free to approach them and love them. He could understand each disabled person: *"You are important! I love you! With your wounds and*

*your weaknesses, you can be great and be yourself”.*

***“I can’t forgive”.***

One afternoon, a woman I barely knew, begged me insistently to go to see a great friend of hers who was about to die in the **Salpêtrière**, the great Parisian hospital: she was suffering from Charcot joint disease (hereditary motor and sensory neuropathy).

I refused: to go to the hospital to see a woman I didn’t know and who was about to die; was difficult. Why? But the woman on the telephone ignored my reluctance.

*“I beg you, come here”.*

I left everything and went to the hospital, with leaden feet and unwillingly: I knew nothing of this sick woman who was about to die, not even her name. Was she married? Was she a Christian? And if there were two patients in the room, which one was her?

**Knocking at the room door I stopped my questioning and put my trust in the Holy Spirit..**

I saw an enormous smile on the face of this woman with Charcot joint disease. The man at the foot of her bed was her husband. He left hurriedly.

I found myself alone with this woman who was very thin and was unable to speak. She was writing on a small slate without pausing and showed me the slate. I liked what she wrote.

- *“Thanks for being here. Can I ask you a few things?”*

- *“Yes, if they are not too difficult”.*

She began to laugh. Her question surprised me:

- *“What will happen when I reach the hereafter?”*

- *“You will see when you are there, what is important is what is happening now”.*

My reply caused her to laugh out loud. All was well between us.

*“I think the same as you”*

Then came the crucial question:

- *“I haven’t managed to forgive those who have wronged me. I would like to die in peace. I have a weight in my heart”*

- *“It is not easy to forgive. Despite our efforts we don’t manage it. Let us both ask our heavenly Father for the strength to forgive those who have harmed us”.*

I took her hand and slowly said the Lord's prayer. I noted that she joined in the prayer with all her heart.

I gave her a blessing. I kissed her on the forehead and left.

One afternoon I received a text message on my phone:

*"I have forgiven. My heart is at peace. Thanks be to God. Thank you for this light-filled encounter."*

Next morning a new text-message:

*"My heart is at great peace. I am ready to go when the Lord wants. Thanks again for that meeting of peace and light"*.

She died soon afterwards.

Mercy is not manufactured; it is received.

God's gift is not bought, is not sold, it is not a return call.

Give freely without expecting anything in return, without anybody losing hope.

Risk loving until the end.

*"Mercy is the best way to enter the Kingdom of God"*. (Pope Francis)

*"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy"* Mt 5,7



**Jacques GAILLOT,**

Bishop of Partenia,

Priestly Fraternity Iesus Caritas

Paris, 20 June, 2016

(Text of Jacques GAILLOT exclusively for [iesuscaritas.org](http://iesuscaritas.org))

(Thanks, Liam, for English translation)