

Column041121

Companions on the Journey

April 11, 2021

Dear Friends,

Sometimes I hear people say that they are chagrined at the lack of politeness, comity, and care in our world today. Some will reference how wild and woolly it can be in the internet world of texting, Instagram, FaceBook, Twitter and the like. Things are said there and things are communicated there in ways that are not only offensive but really hurtful, uncaring, and sometimes actually harmful. Believe it or not, there was a time when there was more respect in conversation. There was a willingness to listen even when there was strong disagreement. Debates were powerful but not hateful.

There is something lacking in many areas of our world today—in politics, in business, in the world of public interaction and even in our own families. And part of what is lacking is mercy, and a willingness to extend a forgiving hand to the other. One of the very reasons why the Word became flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth was to bring God's forgiveness into our life, via a human being. Jesus speaks a word of forgiveness from the cross as one of the very last things he said before he died. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He said that even though those to whom he spoke it were actually very sure about what they were doing. They were eliminating him. Putting him to death. Silencing him. Silencing the Word of God. Hmmm!

Our God is a merciful God. And that remains true even though we are not always willing to admit our wrongdoing, or the hardness of our hearts, or the stoniness of our faces, or the selfishness of our actions, or the lack of genuine care towards others. God is love and when love encounters selfishness and sinfulness it looks like mercy to those who are selfish or sinning. Mercy offers a second chance. But for many today there is no mercy. I was listening recently to a Sports Talk Radio Station and the topic was Spring Training and whether a particular member of the Phillies Spring training team should be allowed to play for them because of his assault on his girl friend two years ago. The callers and the hosts were pretty divided and pretty strong in their opinions.

Some said that he was entitled to a second chance because he had apologized and gone through counselling and was trying to lead a different life. They thought he should be given the opportunity. Others said that what he had done in choking her so damaged his person—and hers—that he was beyond repair. At least in Philadelphia. He could go somewhere else and good riddance. Let him play baseball for another team. One of the hosts said: "He is beyond forgiveness because of what he did. That's the problem with our world today. There is too much forgiveness."

Believe me that is exactly what he said. Ask yourself. Do you think that the fundamental problem in our world today is that we are too forgiving with each other, too willing to turn the other cheek? Is that the fundamental problem in your own family at present? I believe it is the opposite. I believe that there is too often a spirit of unforgiveness and that is accompanied with a certain feeling of righteous anger and condemnation.

So Jesus reveals himself to a little Polish nun (Sister, now Saint Faustina) about ninety years ago under a new image. The Divine Mercy. Jesus is the Divine Mercy incarnate. He is that and his Spirit can affect that because he knows that our world, our family, our own hearts need that. Come this afternoon and pray for Divine Mercy in your family. I will—for your family and my own.

**In the peace of Christ,
Msgr. McHenry**