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THE EXPERIENCE OF MERCY IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Summary: One of the dimensions of Christian hope is precisely mercy. It appears in the Gospel as a pedagogical principle of universal application. Jesus Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, said: Blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy (Mt 5:7). Jesus Christ Himself convinces us that the Blessed are those who show mercy to others. Love and mercy are the basis of human life. They always have a reference to hope. Believing in God's mercy means believing in the forgiveness which God wants to bestow on man. The qualities of God's mercy do not in any way stand in opposition to other God's qualities. One of the works of mercy is the incarnation of the Son of God. Another is the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, which is clearly called the Sacrament of Mercy. Also the Eucharist is the manifestation of God's mercy and the summit of God's mercy. Speaking of God's mercy, one should mention the Church, which is also its manifestation. It is in it that God's mercy is proclaimed.

Key words: Mercy, Sr. Faustyna, the Catholic Church

Introduction

The truth about God's mercy, revealed in the pages of the Holy Scriptures, was reminded to the modern world by Jesus Christ Himself through the person of Sister Faustina Kowalska. To understand it, it is necessary to go back to the times in which Christ lived. When the Apostles preached the Good News, Jesus Christ confirmed their words with extraordinary signs and miracles. Even today, the proclamation of the truth about infinite mercy is confirmed by God with miraculous signs. One of the dimensions of Christian hope is precisely mercy. It appears in the Gospel as a pedagogical principle of universal application" . Jesus Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, said: *Blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy* (Mt 5:7). Jesus Christ Himself convinces us that the Blessed are those who show mercy to others. The Blessing is nothing less than the extraordinary power of words that each of us can utter every day. These words have a special promise that if we utter them, in a real way, by invoking the Word of God, we will strengthen our homes, multiply the good, make our lives fertile. The first word addressed by God to man was a blessing. Man, showing mercy to others, acts as a true follower of God himself. Jesus Christ shows the face of God as the merciful Father. He is full of forgiveness and mercy, which He directs to people.

It should be stressed that love and mercy are the basis of human life. They always have a reference to hope. In one of his articles Mariusz Bernyś notes that "the basis of mercy is goodness, because it is in its essence to give oneself, so everything that God has created comes from it (...), while mercy consists in the fact that God removes deficiencies from the world" . Mercy exists in all that God has created and given man possession. What is most beautiful in God's own attitude are merciful plans, God's providence and, as Pope Leo the Great teaches, God's mercy

itself, which has no limits . It is true that human hope is closely connected with mercy and watches over man. However, man must open himself to divine action. Restoring the face of the merciful God to the world is a rediscovery of the Holy Scriptures, in the light of which we can experience the Gospel more deeply, in order to carry it like a ray of light to the people of our times. This is a great hope for the modern world, which God gave to the Apostle of Mercy to prepare mankind for the final coming of the Lord Jesus - the so-called "pariah". Faustina was above all the secretary of the spiritual diary of events and words which she treated as revelations and words of God himself. In her Diary she emphasized that: "there are souls in whom I can do nothing; they are souls who constantly follow others and do not know what is happening inside them. They constantly talk about others, even in a time of strict silence, which is meant to talk to me; poor souls, they do not hear my words, they remain empty inside them, they do not look for me inside their own heart, but in a talk where I am never there. They feel their emptiness and yet do not recognize their own guilt" .

Believing in God's mercy means believing in the forgiveness that God wants to bestow on man . Jesus teaches to forgive, even to His tormentors. He teaches that one forgives many times, which is also closely related to God's mercy, whose secrets were discovered by Revelation . Through this action, man experiences victory over mistrust and betrayal, and human hope has nothing to do with utopia and cannot be reduced to any futurology . E. Sienkiewicz, in his book on Christian hope, writes that "the witnesses of this hope are to announce to the people of all times that the Lord has risen and defeated death, which until now has been the end of all human hope, and has sent his Spirit to us". which comes to convince the world of sin, of justice and of judgment (cf. Jn

16:7nn). The hope that comes from such an experience is to discover the relationship with God in one's daily life.

1. The attributes of God's mercy

The attributes of God's mercy are in no way in opposition to other attributes of God. The greatness of God's mercy is determined by the terms which they wish to give personal meetings with the God of mercy. Among them we can find such as: the sea of mercy, the abyss of mercy, the bottomless ocean of mercy, the mantle of mercy and others . They express the truth that God's mercy is a special form of God's love and goodness which God bestows on every man . It is impossible not to notice that "God's mercy is the eternal perfection of the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier with regard to creatures, and in particular to men; through them God brings creatures out of misery and makes up for their deficiencies".

It is, therefore, the help offered by the Lord God to man. Mercy is revealed through God, who himself is rich in mercy. In addition, the plan of God's love and His mercy is fulfilled by the action of the Holy Spirit . Thus, God's mercy lasts from generation to generation. It is the eternal cause of everything that exists. God Himself created the world out of love and has given it love from the very beginning. This love is merciful, because Mercy is simply love in action. Everything that exists, that was created, the whole universe is a work of Mercy.

2. The dimensions of God's mercy

One of the works of mercy is the incarnation of the Son of God. The fact that Jesus united in the body with mortals was the result of His great mercy. However, this does not mean that He renounced His divine power. The work of God's redemption was a manifestation of God's

justice and mercy. In this way, man can hope for eternal life. Hope is so much higher than our everyday life. It is commanded for us, as is every duty incumbent on a believer. Apart from these gifts, the grace of trust in God's mercy also deserves attention. As St. John Paul II emphasizes: "The God who "inhabits the inaccessible light". (1 Tm 6, 16), at the same time speaks to man in the language of the whole cosmos: "For from the creation of the world, the invisible qualities of his qualities - his eternal power and his deity - become visible to the mind through his works". (Romans 1:20). This indirect and imperfect cognition as the work of the mind seeking God through creatures, through the visible world, is not yet a "vision of the Father". "No one has ever seen God ..." writes St. John, to make the truth all the more clear: "The only-begotten God who is in the womb of the Father has instructed [about him]". (J 1, 18). This "instruction" reveals God in the unfathomable mystery of his being - one and Trinitarian - surrounded by a "light inaccessible". (cf. 1 Tm 6, 16). But through Christ's "teaching" we know God above all in his relationship with man, in his love: "philanthropy". (cf. Tt 3:4). And it is here that the "invisible qualities of him" become particularly "visible", incomparably more so than through all his other "works". They become visible in Christ and through Christ, through his actions and words, ultimately through his death and resurrection on the cross.

It is impossible not to mention here another dimension of God's mercy. The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, which is obviously called the Sacrament of Mercy, should be indicated. It is the sacrament during which man is purified of all sins. Thanks to it, we hope that the Lord God will forgive us all the sins that we have committed against His will, showing our disobedience to God's will and breaking the commandments. Everyone needs God's mercy, because thanks to him we

are purified and receive a "clean sheet". He prepares us to fill our soul in the Eucharist . J. Krasieński notes that "God's mercy has established this sacrament, God's mercy works in it and God's mercy is granted through it" . God gave it to man, thus showing him his great love.

In addition to the sacrament of reconciliation, the Eucharist is a manifestation of God's mercy. One can safely say that the Eucharist is the summit of God's mercy, which takes place on earth. Moreover, the sacrament of the sick was instituted in order to awaken in the sick person a feeling or attitude of trust in God's mercy. Thanks to it, it is easier to endure all temptations of Satan. Therefore, hope must always be placed in the person of Jesus Christ.

Mercy is the source from which everything takes existence. Therefore, "St. John Paul II - speaking of God manifesting Himself as Mercy - puts it succinctly: *as Love that bears, raises from the fall, invites to trust*" . The Pope has repeatedly called for mercy to help modern man and recommended to experience God's merciful love . Without "the message of God's mercy it is very difficult to be a man of hope in the modern world" . Once again, it is clear that one cannot speak of hope by separating it from God's mercy.

Mercy, if properly understood, does not mean leniency and permissiveness. It is only by the grace we receive from God that we are able to apply in our lives all the Christian attitudes that build the true man in us. Not only threats and punishments transform us, but also God's mercy. This proclamation of mercy has become the main task of a Christian in today's world. It enables man to return to the Father. Everyone has the right to mercy, even the most hardened sinners, if only they repent of their sins and trust in God. This thought comes from the conviction that mercy opens all, even the most resistant hearts, giving

them a new beginning and new opportunities . Everyone who experiences or has experienced God's mercy finds a new life and a new motivation even after a long time.

There are different voices in theology regarding the problem of the emergence of this great gift from God, which is mercy. Some theologians see that this appearance of sin has led to the birth of mercy, because previously it was not necessary for God, because there was only love in him. St. Thomas' teaching also states that God's mercy is closely related to human misery. If human misery is connected with it, we can confidently state that there is also room for not only human, but above all divine hope to get out of all evil. Mercy is not closely connected with help, but it is an escape and a refuge for all souls, especially those who are lost in their lives .

From a different point of view, we can say that God reveals Himself to man from the beginning of creation through mercy. We see this in both the Old and New Testaments. We can confidently state, after Bishop Kazimierz Romaniuk, that God's mercy is one of the major and fundamental themes of biblical theology. It occupies an important place in the teaching of today's Church.

When talking about God's mercy, one should mention the Church, which is also its manifestation. It is in it that God's mercy is proclaimed. St. John Paul II states that "the Church confesses to the mercy of God himself, the Church lives it in her extensive experience of faith, as well as in her teaching - constantly gazing at Christ, concentrating on him, on his life and Gospel, on his Cross and Resurrection, on all his mystery" . It follows that the Church cannot exist or act and develop without proclaiming the doctrine of God's mercy, which is infinite.

By proclaiming mercy, the Church also proclaims the hope of Jesus coming again and the hope of a better future. It is impossible to separate mercy from hope. These two aspects of God's love work closely together. "The Church must not forget prayer, which is a cry of God's mercy towards the multiple evils that weigh upon humanity and threaten it" . This is undoubtedly a fundamental task of the community of the Church.

God is the mercy that creates us, redeems us, brings us out of nothingness, saves from evil and leads to happiness . Saint John Paul II emphasized that only "in God's mercy will the world find peace and man find happiness" . Therefore, it is necessary for each of us to fully be a man of God's joy. He further emphasized that only the imagination of God's mercy allows to see in the face of Jesus Christ the face of the Good Father who speaks to the human imagination through concrete actions and words: "all that you have done to one of these least of my brethren, you have done to me" (Mt 25:40). If man understands in this way the essence of God's mercy, he can have an unwavering hope for salvation. It therefore has a positive dimension and builds up positive qualities in man.

Marian Kowalczyk emphasizes that "this very truth about God - infinite Love, constantly updated thanks to the human imagination of mercy, becomes the ultimate source of hope for the world and a signpost of our responsibility for the world, which is to become a new creation" . As St. John Paul II emphasizes, the explanation of the mystery of Divine Mercy is demanded by human hearts, their hopes and sufferings, their doubts and expectations . Therefore, it is necessary to take up with confidence the effort of searching and getting closer to this reality.

Conclusions

God's mercy is deeply rooted in Scripture and Church documents. It corresponds to the encyclical *Dives in misericordia* of Pope John Paul II. In a special way, it is St. Faustina Kowalska who gives an example of how to open up to Jesus Christ, who reveals the mercy of the Father and how to contemplate the mysteries of God in His face. The message of mercy leads to God, who is a close God, trembling with the desire to forgive man's sins and to witness to love .

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