

“We ponder, O God, your mercy within your temple” (Ps 48:10). The Responsorial verse proclaiming God’s mercy is indeed something which we should ponder. Saint Paul teaches the Corinthians, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?” What an awesome God who calls you to holiness through your body, a temple of the Holy Spirit.

This is most clearly seen when we reflect on the Incarnation. The Angel Gabriel came to Mary and invited her to be the mother of Jesus. Mary was confused but trusted in God’s messenger. To help her understand, the angel explained, “The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God” (Lk 1:35). From the moment of conception, Jesus began to grow within Mary’s womb. Sometimes, we liken the womb of Mary to a tabernacle, for she holds within her blessed womb, the Body of Christ. All this was possible because Mary was open to doing God’s will and with her consent, the Holy Spirit helped her entire body to become a temple.

God wants everyone to bear him. God wants every soul to be fully receptive to becoming a temple of the Holy Spirit. We receive a special grace through our Baptism. Jesus suffered and died on the cross to set us free from sin. Through our Baptism, we become a beloved son or daughter of God. We are welcomed into the Church which we sometimes refer to as the Body of Christ. Original sin is forgiven, any deliberate sin on our part is forgiven. With this initial sacrament of initiation, we receive a portion of the Holy Spirit. Reflecting on our own baptism gives us much to ponder about the mercy of God.

At Mass, simple bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and the sacred words of Jesus spoken by the priest. With this second sacrament of initiation, we receive Jesus into our bodies. Jesus wants us to return to him again and again to receive his precious Body and Blood. Jesus wants to change and transform us that we may become holier. Yes, our entire bodies are called to become temples of the Holy Spirit. As we ponder these divine gifts from our loving God, we are called to be merciful to others.

“Love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:35-36). This connection between the Eucharist and mercy is also echoed in the Lord’s Prayer. We ask our heavenly Father for “Our Daily Bread.” In the Mass, he offers us Jesus, the Bread of Life come down from heaven (Jn 6:58). We are called to respond in mercy forgiving others as we have been forgiven.

Mercy becomes most concrete for us when we have failed and need to come before our Lord asking for the forgiveness of our sins. We might think of the woman at the well who encounters a merciful Jesus and is born again with a missionary zeal to call others to come to Christ for healing and redemption.

In the sacrament of Confession, we have an opportunity to ponder the mercy of God firsthand. In praying our Act of Contrition, we acknowledge the saving power of Christ. “Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.” And the priest helps us to understand in the prayer of absolution how God the Father of mercy through the death and resurrection of his Son has sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. With a good confession, the luster of our baptismal grace shines forth once again.

“We ponder, O God, your mercy within your temple” (Ps 48:10). Take some time today in prayer to thank God for his mercy and to ponder how the Lord has designed your body to be a temple of the Holy Spirit.