

My friend Ric once described being punished as a child for something he did not do. When he protested to his father how unfair that was, he thought his father would rescind the punishment and offer him a pardon. Much to his surprise, his father let the punishment stand. He was sure his son had gotten away with a few things for which he was never disciplined so this evened the score.

One might argue that there is a certain unfairness to this approach, but upon more careful reflection we see that this is the way God has shown his love for all of humanity. God the Father asked his Son Jesus to bear the punishment for our sins. “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). “The world is under condemnation and in spiritual darkness on account of sin, but the Father does not want any to perish. Hence, he gives his Son so that the world might be saved through him. The gift of salvation, which the Father offers us all through Jesus, is eternal life: a participation in the divine life of the Trinity.”<sup>i</sup>

God is full of mercy and asks us to be merciful to others in appreciation for his great sacrifice on our part. We should be careful not to take the mercy of God for granted. He still looks for us to repent of our sinfulness and return to him. The Prophet Ezekiel teaches, “if the wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed, if he keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live. He shall not die! None of the crimes he has committed shall be remembered against him; he shall live because of the justice he has shown” (18:21-22).

Jesus offers us a model for loving others. To love is to will the good of another. It involves sacrifice and if we follow the example of Jesus, we reach out to our enemies and to those who can never repay us. Through the suffering of Christ, we are delivered from sin. Through our own sacrifice for the good of others we pay it forward to help make the world a better place.

There are many ways we can do this, but let me focus on several ways we can show God’s love to others through prayer.

- When we pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet, we call upon God to help us and also to help the entire world. “For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.”
- When we gather as a community for liturgy, we offer universal prayers. We pray beyond the needs of our own interests as we reach out to the larger community and to the whole world. Timothy instructs us: “I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity. This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim 2:1-4).
- We are also encouraged to remember the lost souls in purgatory. They await the prayers of the world to help liberate them so they may join the angels and saints in heaven.

“Coming to Christ in faith requires [us to] turn away from sin and embrace a way of life marked by love, in imitation of Jesus. If we are animated and empowered by God’s own action, the divine light ultimately reveals the true character of our lives: so that our works may be clearly seen as done in God.”<sup>ii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Martin, Francis; Wright, William M. IV. *The Gospel of John*. Pg. 74.

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid*, pg 75.