

## ***The Fourth Sunday of Lent - The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)***



***“...and when he saw him, he was moved to mercy...”***

(Carlos made us attentive on Friday to the Spanish translation)

During Holy Week, it is Jesus who falls among robbers and endures violence that beats and strips him of his garments. Yet, unlike in the parable, the robbers do not leave him half-dead; He is crucified, “being despised and rejected by me” (Isaiah 53:3). Joseph of Arimathea is moved by mercy. He takes the body of Jesus and, anointing it with the spices brought by Nicodemus, wraps it in a linen shroud and places it in a new tomb. At the time, they did not believe in the Resurrection, yet mercy brought them

close to it. It is mercy because it did not expect anything in return. (On the contrary, Joseph and Nicodemus risked their reputations among the Pharisees).

Like our sister from Uganda, who shared on Friday that she likes to pray. She does not pray for God to take her out of shelter. She does not ask for anything, but rather she prays because: “I just love my God, you know”.

It is also mercy because Joseph and Nicodemus did what God needed at that time: someone to care for the body of Jesus. Like the Portuguese homeless sister who said on Friday that mercy attends to what people truly need. It does not impose itself with numerous gifts. It does not come with an agenda.

The mercy of Joseph and Nicodemus, although it may have seemed futile at the time, received its reward in the resurrection of Jesus’ body. Thus, mercy becomes a witness and a prayer for resurrection, which puts God in depth and opens a path to the resurrection from the dead. At times, mercy is rewarded with life, like in the parable. At other times it must be patient and wait in silence while shedding tears, until the light shines forth from the tomb where the body was laid. This is true in the life of the community and in the life of every person. Mercy can embrace all and yet it is not always embraced by life in this time. That is why mercy is better than life (Ps 63:3) because it fully rewarded only in the resurrection.

Mercy is sweeter than honey and the honey comb. The lack of it in the heart makes us deaf and mute, like the man in the gospel of Mark on Saturday (Mark 7:31-37). Hardness of soul appears when we see the brokenness around us and we are not moved to mercy in our heart. What is left in us if we cannot be moved to mercy? We become like empty whitewashed tombs, ready to swallow others (Mt 22:37). Like the Pharaoh, who was not moved by the suffering of his people, and brought about catastrophic destruction for the whole country. His heart remained cold until his own son died. When we are not moved to mercy, everything left in us is an empty soul. We neither offer nor receive any gift that brings about life.

Jacob asked during the reflection on Friday, or rather he reminded us the words of Jesus that if we are not reconciled with our brother, we should leave our gift at the altar and go and reconcile first with him (Mt

5:24). But the priest and the Levite remained unreconciled with their wounded brother while bringing their offering to the temple. Is God going to receive their gift? We could ask ourselves the same question even though we are taught not to: can we, the church, bring wine and bread at the altar in order to receive communion, if we are not reconciled with our brother who is dying alone today?

Do we truly find or receive communion with God without being moved to mercy? Is the Liturgy valid without the church caring for the sick, the homeless and the poor? We are taught that the Liturgy is valid, no matter what, because God is merciful and He cares for our wounds. And it is so. However, a simple uncomfortable question that looks at our personal life and the life of the community could bring comfort to heart of the church. And even though the quarrels and the wars and death caused by overdose, by MAiD and by abortion would not end overnight, it will bring us closer to the resurrection. And the days would be shortened because mercy tames the violence within the heart, giving it a dynamis towards creativity and renewal of life. It is our time that has been thirsting for man's mercy since the beginning.

God empties himself through a kenotic act so that our hearts may overflow with mercy. This is the mystery of creation from the very beginning: God empties Himself in order for the creation to happen (father's words on the creation). The emptiness of his glory becomes for us the beauty of creation and the gift of his body. Within this "emptiness" man is moved to act with mercy. From the very beginning Adam is called to care for creation. This act is an act of mercy. He cares with his mind, body and soul. With his heart. The mercy of Adam for every living creature is filling the emptiness of God's glory.

That's why, we can be moved to mercy by a multitude of things: the beauty of creation; the candle light reflected in the eyes of a child during a vigil; the stars at night that Michael was describing on Friday, which woke him up taking away the fear of death because they pointed him towards our Father; a voice that sings for joy; or the rainbow when rain and sunshine meet together. We are moved also by the faith of our sister who loves and prays in silence for her friend to die in peace and her parents to survive war back home, from whom she has heard nothing for the past couple of days. How many times have we been moved to mercy by beauty and warmth, by kindness and truth? By the gift of tears for the sake of hope who never runs away in the face of our own self-destructive behavior.

But above all, we are moved to mercy by the kenotic movement of God who becomes man in order to share in the suffering of our brother, in his distress on the streets and in his forgotten death. Above all He wants us to be moved to mercy by the brokenness of our brother, with whom Jesus shares a place on the cross. For our sake, He has become destitute and humiliated, mocked and rejected, betrayed by a friend, so that we might be moved to mercy and fall in love with Him. He is still waiting and His patience is His forgiveness. We behold Him on the cross so we can recognize Him in the light of the resurrection. He knows us by name and through His Word we will become mercy.

*"What is built on violence perishes; it has no future, but it also creates a void around itself: fear, resentment, hatred — all that which, in Christian language, belongs to the world of death. It does not allow you to see anything beyond yourself..."*

— Pierbattista Patriarch of the Latins, Jerusalem (March 18, 2026)

In January, on the occasion of the Mission's 40 anniversary, Patriarch Bartholomew sent a letter to our community. This was not a just a formal greeting of congratulation. It was more an **exhortation to continue to live the essence of the Orthodox faith**. Each week we take a closer look at each paragraph so as to savor each exhortation and try to implement it better in the life of the community.

...in feeding the hungry, accompanying the lonely, sheltering the vulnerable and affirming the dignity of every human person created in the image and likeness of God, you are participating in the hallowed labor through which the Church reveals the nearness of the kingdom and the radiant beauty of divine philanthropy...."

The mission feeds the hungry, houses those in need and now, with Starosta's outreach, it connects with the lonely. We think of "Church" as liturgical services or clerical meetings or university scholarly programs. Such activities are all part of the church work. Yet there is also a fundamental work and one that clearly speaks of the nature of the church itself. When, for example, we serve food, offer shelter and provide human connection to abandoned people, **we are participating in the sacred work of the church**. The mission has on a daily basis the opportunity to reveal that the Kingdom of God is near and to show to each person the beauty and radiant light of God's love for humanity.

When you read such words don't you just want to come and talk to father Nicolae and see how you can be part of the life of the church at the mission?

**What could be more important than to participate in revealing the nearness of the Kingdom of God and show God's love for people?**

### **Community life:**

A brother's word to us, listened and shared by Br Luke:

You don't know how much good this place does. It's not about the food. You are outside and you're cold and you are looking in at other people and thinking why can't I have that and feeling resentful all the time. And people are judging you and they are suspicious of you wherever you go. They consider you trouble. When you come here there is good energy. I count the hours in the night for when I can come here. Out there everyone is watching you and judging you. No one wants you wherever you are and you are always ready for confrontation.

When you don't have anything, you go to stores and stare at things and can easily shoplift and get in trouble. When you have some food here and are treated well and can relax a bit it helps a lot and it takes away some of the anger and resentment.

Sometimes I explode at people when I feel they are coming after me. When you are living outside you are full of anger. And I try to explain to people with jobs and homes etc. that their anger is not like my anger. It's at a different level. A manager asked me to move the other day and I exploded and shouted very loudly so everyone left. It made me feel free, I felt good at the time. But afterward, I regretted it. I think about it over and over like it just happened. I try to avoid conflict because of this.

Where I come from, in the Caribbean, they have a saying and belief about angels. They say cleanliness is next to godliness. They believe that if everything is not clean the angels will come and not be happy. So they always clean up before bed. When you are on the street or depressed or suicidal you lose the will to do

these things for yourself. Being clean and wanting to be clean is what pulls you out of depression. That's why churches are always neat (gestures to room). If it's not neat and clean we can't relax. We see the volunteers here and they are very neat and disciplined (gesturing to the cooking team visible in kitchen and over dishes). This inspires us.

Even if you are on the street or especially you need to still look good. But you don't have place to do so. A shower, a meal, a good rest refreshes you. It makes you feel like a different person.

The night is like hell. You are moving around and cold and watching everybody and they're watching you and anything can happen. I count the hours until I can come here.

### **More community life**

We prayed for peace during the vigil on Friday, with people from Iran and Sudan in the room, from Ethiopia and from other parts of the world, even someone from Israel during the week. We hear their distress and their sorrow within the community as well as their belief that only prayer is the only thing they have left. That we all have. On Friday, a brother from the city of Toronto in high distress was confessing he could not find reasons to live. We remembered how happy he was while he was waiting for his apartment when he was homeless. He was on the stairs at the mission early in the morning with flowers coming out from his backpack. He is in his late fifties or early sixties. The apartment he got is good, but not the people who run it. They are threatening to throw him out. He does not understand what the problem is but meanwhile the tension grows with each day. "I feel like a soldier, you know, who never left the war. It's like having PTSD. Like a city soldier who fights a war that makes no sense. I cannot do it anymore. I try to look for reasons not to give up. I told that to Johan a couple of weeks ago". He returns in the afternoon and has some coffee while we were preparing for the church service around 5:00 pm. He is only looking for a quiet place, so that he does not lose his mind completely, just like a city soldier who never gets treated for PTSD.

Another brother is sleeping on the floor. He asks for a pair of socks and a sweater. "I am too old for this", he says laughing, while pointing at his torn sweater. "I think the coyotes got to it at night". He is very thankful for the woolen socks we find and for the clothes. He says that on the street he is trying to keep to himself and not to "despise the little one". "You know, as Jesus said. Because it will be the worse for that person. Like a rock around your neck while going down at the bottom of the sea. Worse than that. That's why I try to do that. You know, on the street, things always somehow get fulfilled. When you need something. When you are in need of something, somehow it comes to you. Whatever you need. It passes on from people. There is care on the ground. And I try to do the same". At the end he asks if we can pray and he accepts to say a prayer. And as he prays, he blesses us all. He is on his way to the East Coast. That's the plan. If he can ever escape from Toronto.

Last week, a sister had a journal in her transparent bag. "What do you write in it?" "You know, I write that I am beautiful. It says to love your neighbour as yourself. I've never known how to do that. My mother did not tell me. But I realise that you cannot love your neighbour if you do not love yourself. And that's why I write that: I am beautiful".



"Does it work?" She started laughing. "Not really. Not a change so far. But I keep trying", she continued laughing.

*The community would like to sincerely thank sister Catherine for her visit, her teaching and for praying and breaking bread with us. We look forward to seeing her again in the future, to be able to return her kindness with mercy from the poor, with whom she payed and ate while visiting. Thank you, sister Catherine!*

**Do not forget, this coming Saturday is the great day for the Easter Play!**

**All are invited on Saturday March 28 at 11:00 am.**

Br Luke has been working very hard for the last three weeks, together with the people from the mission. Come and see and let your heart be moved. Take time and put away other plans. We have a great gift to receive on Saturday. And we can receive it only together. All, young and old, believers and nonbelievers, rich and poor, sinful and/or innocent, the Easter play will speak to all with mercy.

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