

Sunday, April 3, 2016  
EXPRESSIONS by Fr. Ed

## Mercy

In the early days of the Church, the Sunday immediately following Easter was called in “Latin Domenica in Albis” or “Whit Sunday” because the newly baptized exchanged their white baptismal robes for regular clothes. Pope John Paul II re-named it “Mercy Sunday” which is especially apt in this “Holy Year of Mercy”. Today, therefore, is an opportunity to reflect on mercy and its value for both our personal lives and the world.

Mercy is a sign of Resurrection. It forgives, heals, and restores life. Mercy is patient and tolerant; it is generous and benevolent. It finds good and encourages it. It does not carp or criticize. Mercy fosters happiness and kindness. Mercy is its own reward. Most of the good we desire can be achieved by being merciful. If we want to be loved, for instance, all we have to do is be merciful. If we want to improve the conditions of life, just be merciful, helpful, and positive, for mercy is other-center and focuses on the well-being of others. If we want appreciation and respect, just be merciful. Mercy may not change other people — indeed that is not its purpose — but it will transform us.

Mercy, however, is not just a personal quality. It is a necessary attribute for the whole world. All leaders, for example, ought to be models of mercy. This especially applies to religious leaders. It should be a pre-requisite for all office-holders and a prime factor in all their decisions. There would be less war, violence, poverty, and discrimination in the world, if mercy was the guiding motive of leaders in their deliberations and actions. AIDS might have been effectively contained if mercy - not doctrine or politics - had been the first focus. There very well could already have been a cure for malaria, if mercy was a motive of political leaders, and not just philanthropists. This certainly is the case with polio.

There is in my opinion, no difference between mercy and justice. Some, I know, disagree with that point of view. For me, however, mercy is not a favor based on pity or some spontaneous act of generosity on the part of a good-willed individual. Mercy must also be an institutional philosophy, certainly in religion, but also in government, education, and business. The consistent lack of mercy is the cause of most of the problems existing in today’s world. There is no contradiction, then, between justice and mercy. A world that practices only justice is too narrow and small. Mercy is far more humane and friendly, and must be our common goal.