

Incarnating God's Self in Us to be Merciful

"Jesus is expensive!" somebody said at a meeting I attended while discussing the cost of crucifixes. Certainly, Jesus is not expensive; some crucifixes are! *God is generously merciful and his being merciful is the gift of his own Self for us.* This might mean that mercy is not like a candy that God has in "his pockets" (as something outside of himself) ready to give us when we disobey him so that we might "feel good again;" rather, *mercy is the gift of God's own Self in his beloved Son Jesus Christ to heal our wounded humanity and restore it to the place it is meant to be.* Thus, mercy is part of God's nature, instead of "something" merely outside of himself.

We are also called, by Jesus, to "be merciful, just as [our] Father is merciful," (Luke 6:36) instead of just having mercy as "something" outside of ourselves. It might mean, for us, *to "incarnate" God's mercy in our inner self by allowing Jesus to heal our misery, and by doing so, to become healers of others' misery in the same way God has been with us.* We might discover that our own good yet limited willingness is insufficient for us to be merciful, and that we can become merciful with others, ourselves and creation only by the merits of Jesus Christ on the Cross working in us.

Does our inner self—mind, imagination, will, soul, emotions and body wounded by pride and self-determination—need to be healed? Is it difficult to be merciful, especially when resentment, anger and despair have become part of who we are? Yes, it is! But, let us allow Jesus Christ's own Self to work in us, especially through the Sacraments and in the community of faith, so that we can be healed and empowered to be merciful as the Father is, even against all rationality or in the most painful situations.

God longs to heal our being with his Own so that we can be, authentically, merciful. Do we, likewise, long to heal others with the mercy we have embodied? An embodiment in which we and God—in Jesus Christ—are one, a oneness that does not make us identical to God but allows us to share in his divine life.