



## HOMILY FOR THE MASS ON FRIDAY, JULY 20<sup>TH</sup> DAY 4: “MERCY”

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**READINGS:** First -Isaiah 38 / Psalm -Isaiah 38 / Gospel -Matthew12: 1-8.

The Word of God calls us to experience mercy, receiving divine mercy and witnessing to mercy, especially in marriage and in the family. Mercy is expressed through compassion and solidarity, with the heart turned to those brothers and sisters who suffer the most. Mercy manifests itself in forgiveness and reconciliation, with the heart turned to those who are fallen due to their own sins or wounded by the sin of so many others. Let us be guided by the Word of God that we hear, to lighten our steps and warm our hearts, often insensitive to the suffering and sin of so many. They are the readings of today, which are being proclaimed throughout the worldwide Church.

The first reading portrays the situation of sickness suffered by King Hezekiah, his anguish and his plea to God. The proclaimed text speaks of divine compassion, of the mercy of God toward Hezekiah, and at the same time, speaks of his prayer. Amid pain, suffering severe illness, he "began to pray to the Lord." In distress and tears, he turns to God with sincere prayer. In His infinite mercy, the Lord answers him: "I heard your prayer and I saw your tears". In moments of distress, instead of discouragement or resistance, our attitude should be one of confident and persevering prayer to the Lord. Instead of just looking at one's own sufferings, one must also pray for others who suffer. In the Psalm, we pray: "restore me to health and let me live!" In the name of so many sick people who come to Fatima to plead for the grace of health, may we pray saying: "restore me to health and let me live!" In the name of so many couples suffering from a lack of physical, spiritual or moral health, we may say, as Hezekiah did: "restore me to health and let me live!" Praying for those who suffer, praying to those who suffer, is always the first act of mercy, a sign of compassion that is also expressed through a friendly presence, a witness of Christian hope, a service of closeness and solidarity.

Today, there are countless couples and families, who go through times of suffering with illness, in particularly serious and prolonged cases, sometimes sicknesses whose origin and explanation are not easy to discover. There are cases where suffering is a mystery. They can be overcome only through faith, with a fixed gaze on the Crucified and Risen Jesus, with the trust and the hope nourished by prayer, by the couple, the family and the community, and especially by the Word of God and the Eucharist. Moreover, situations of suffering are overcome by mercy, by Christian charity, by a fraternal and supportive presence alongside those who suffer. The Old Testament Job who is within us and who questions God about situations of pain, is needed to be replaced by the Good Samaritan, that is, to rise from complaining and turn the gaze and heart towards God and to all those who are crucified with Christ. The response to suffering in the lives of many families is not achieved through rational explanations or justification. The overcoming of



suffering is obtained because of the mercy of the Good Samaritan, who is Jesus, and all of us, men and women, must be His disciples.

Mercy also manifests itself in forgiveness without limits, needed so much in married and family life. Forgiveness is the criterion and sign of merciful love. The crises in the lives of so many couples are overcome by the experience of divine mercy, by the acceptance of God's forgiveness and by the forgiveness offered to each other. In addition, there are many couples who have grown and become stronger in married life, whose love has been purified and matured, in that they have been merciful not only to each other, but also to other couples or people who go through great suffering: sickness, poverty, unemployment, violence, among many others.

In the Gospel, Jesus shows us clearly what God wants from us: "I want mercy and not sacrifice." What God wants from each couple, from each family, from each Team of Our Lady, is mercy. But, we need to consider carefully the meaning of the words of Jesus in the context of His teachings. Sacrifices, through renunciation and effort, or as an experience of the cross, are part of the life of those who want to be faithful to Christ and to their commitment to the Christian life, including married and family life. Love and faithfulness require sacrifices. The greatest sign of love is the giving of one's own life, which includes surrender and sacrifice. We can say that sacrifice has meaning as an expression and consequence of mercy in the Christian life, as part of a path of holiness to be followed by each disciple of Christ. However, what Jesus questions are the unmerciful sacrifices imposed by the legalistic religiosity of the Pharisees, restricted to worship in the temple or exterior religious practices. The sacrifice pleasing to God in the preaching of the prophets and of Jesus Christ is a sign and consequence of mercy and holiness.

Mercy, in the Christian life, is nourished in the liturgical celebrations, which are its source, but extends into daily life, not solely restricted to worship. As Pope Francis insisted, particularly in the Year of Mercy, it is necessary to rediscover the value of the works of mercy, putting them into practice, in a world marked by so much suffering caused by selfishness, injustice and violence. To do this, according to the proclaimed Gospel, we must recognize Jesus as Lord: Lord of the Sabbath, Lord in labour and rest, Lord in joys and sorrows, in sickness and in trials, Lord of the couple and the family.

We are in the Shrine of the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, venerated as Our Lady of Fatima. To come to Fatima is to visit the mother's house with a childlike heart, united in the great family to which we belong. Her loving intercession accompanies us, bringing us hope and peace. Her example motivates us to walk following Jesus, in the Church and with the Church. She is the Mother of Mercy, who comes to the rescue of her children in their sufferings, as happened in Cana of Galilee, as happened to the little shepherds of Fatima, and what happens to us today. She was the merciful and intercessory Mother at the Marriage of Cana. She was the merciful Mother, full of compassion, at the foot of the cross on Calvary. She showed herself to be the merciful Mother in the upper room, forgiving the disciples who had abandoned her Son on the cross and praying with them. Through her example and intercession, she helps us to live and witness to the word of Jesus: be merciful like the Father! May the Teams of Our Lady be more and more messengers and witnesses of mercy in the Church and in the world! Praised be our Lord Jesus Christ! Forever be praised!