

**ADDRESS OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE**  
**APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**  
**“THE JOY OF MERCY: POPE FRANCIS AND THE CARMELITES”**  
**SECULAR ORDER OF DISCALCED CARMELITES CONGRESS:**  
**RADIATING GRATITUDE AND LOVE**  
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My Dear Friends in Christ,

As the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, I am pleased to be with you as you explore the theme, “Secular Carmelites: Radiating Gratitude and Love.” I bring you the greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis and assure you not only of his spiritual closeness but also of his prayers. Allow me to express my gratitude to your Provincial Delegate, Father Matthew Williams, for his kind invitation to give this conference, entitled, “The Joy of Mercy: Pope Francis and the Carmelites.”

From the beginning of his Pontificate, Pope Francis has emphasized the Mercy of God. Through the proclamation of the Gospel, through the sacraments of the Church, and through the Church’s members, all men and women should experience the closeness and tenderness of the Father of Mercies. Certainly, this was one of the reasons, he called the Jubilee Year of Mercy and exhorted the whole Church to exercise the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. His interview with Andrea Tornielli was translated into many languages and is entitled, “The Name of God is Mercy.”

The Holy Father knows that if the Church is called to bring the “joy of the Gospel” to the whole world, then the Church herself must have a change of heart and must live her identity as a Mother, offering tenderness to her children, rather than acting as a cold and anonymous institution, known for its severity and bureaucracy. Attentive to the challenges of evangelization, he understands quite clearly that sin and alienation are obstacles to having an authentic, life-changing encounter with Christ, which opens new horizons for sinners and helps people have a sense of belonging and inclusion. The Holy Father speaks and writes about mercy, so often, that it is almost impossible to find a speech or discourse in which he does not mention it.

For our purposes this afternoon, I would like to limit myself to some ideas found in his Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et Misera*, by which he concluded the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. In this conference, I would like to demonstrate how the Holy Father’s ideas about mercy are quite consistent with Carmelite spirituality, in particular those found in the thought of Blessed Marie-Eugene of the Child Jesus and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. This conference will be divided into three parts: The revelation of God as Mercy and Love; the gratuity of God’s grace in His outpouring of mercy; and finally, the response of the person to mercy, that is, how concretizing mercy is part of our mission.

*Part I: The Name of God is Mercy*

In the first paragraph of his Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et misera*, Pope Francis wrote:

*Mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the Church; it constitutes her very existence, through which the profound truths of the Gospel are made manifest and tangible. Everything is revealed in mercy; everything is resolved in the merciful love of the*

*Father.* (Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et misera* (MM), 20 November 2016, 1)

For the Holy Father, it is not just that the Name of God is Mercy; rather, that Christians have a basic duty to reveal the Merciful Face of the Father through concrete actions. The scriptures reveal God as Mercy, and in the first paragraph of his letter, the Holy Father describes the encounter between Jesus and the woman caught in adultery in the eighth chapter of Saint John's Gospel. *Misericordia et misera* are the words used by Saint Augustine – Mercy and misery. Augustine was describing what, or, rather, who remained after everyone else had walked away. Jesus was there, alone with the woman. He was Mercy itself, revealing the face of the Father of Mercies, to a woman who found herself in a miserable condition, above all, spiritually.

Blessed Marie-Eugene expands the idea of God as Mercy beyond Jesus, the Son of God, to also include the Holy Spirit, equating mercy with love. He writes:

*For us, the love of God is mercy. The Holy Spirit is in us to sanctify us. He is in us to carry out the plan of God, to carry out the outpouring of God onto our soul, according to the measure of grace which he has destined for us. He is the Spirit of love. (Croyez à la folie de l'Amour qui est en Dieu, (Toulouse : Éditions du Carmel, 2016) 36).*

Speculating as to why God shows us His mercy, he refers to the very nature of God:

*Why? Because mercy has chosen to give; because it loves; because the depths of misery, and lowliness attract it. When poverty, misery, and sin call, God cannot resist. He must rush. Even when misery does not call, God sometimes gives Himself, that is, he creates, by giving Himself, in us the capacity, the desire. (Ibid., 40)*

In *Misericordia et misera*, Pope Francis alludes to this desire of the sinner to really experience mercy and to encounter mercy when meditating upon the encounter between Jesus and the woman:

*Here what is central is not the law or legal justice, but the love of God, which is capable of looking into the heart of each person and seeing the deepest desire hidden there; God's love must take primacy over all else. (MM, 1)*

For Pope Francis, if there is a primacy of "law", it lies in the law of love. Love must be primary. God is both mercy and love, and central to His identity as God is His desire for that which is best for His children. In Marie-Eugene's description of the God "who must rush", one cannot help but think of the father in the story of the Prodigal Son who rushes out to embrace his son with tenderness.

The concept of God as mercy is also seen in the life of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus. Thérèse saw her early life in three distinct phases. The first was her happy infancy; the second, following the death of her mother, was a period of great anguish; and the third, was her transformation and healing by a singular act of mercy of God. This act, we could say, occurred on Christmas night in 1886, when she was nearly fourteen years old. The family had returned from midnight Mass, and Thérèse has left her wooden shoes by the chimney, to which her father remarked, "Well, fortunately this will be the last year." Celine, overhearing the remark, thought this would cause Thérèse to have a flood of tears and warned her not to go downstairs, but she did, and as she did, she was transformed psychologically and spiritually. She felt the change in her soul and attributed this to God's mercy.

Emerging from her misery, about six months later, she had another experience. This time it was when a prayer card slipped from her missal. The card depicted the Crucifixion, and she pondered the drops of blood flowing from the hands of Christ. She resolved always to remain spiritually at the foot of the cross to gather these drops of blood and to pour them out upon sinners. Thérèse “heard” the cry of Jesus: “I thirst” and interpreted this to mean that the Lord has a thirst to spread his redeeming love, his mercy.

She wanted to make this diffusion of His Mercy her mission and asked the Lord for a sign. The sign she received was when the convicted murderer Pranzini was about to be executed. Thérèse prayed: “*My God, I am quite sure that You will pardon this unhappy Pranzini. I should still think so if he did not confess his sins or give any sign of sorrow, because I have such confidence in Your unbounded Mercy; but, this is my first sinner, and, therefore, I beg for just one sign of repentance to reassure me.*”

Sure enough, when he was led to the scaffold, Pranzini turned to the chaplain and asked for the crucifix, which he kissed three times. Upon hearing the news, Thérèse remarked: “*I had obtained the sign I asked for, and to me it was especially sweet. Was it not when I saw the Precious Blood flowing from the Wounds of Jesus that the thirst for souls first took possession of me?*” (cf. Manuscript A, 46 v, 136)

Thérèse perceived the joy that accompanies the diffusion of mercy. Blessed Marie-Eugene believed that these experiences constituted the nucleus of the spiritual experience of Saint Thérèse. She had the experience of the excessiveness of the Mercy of God, of its absolute gratuity, of its desire to be diffused; and of the joy that it brings to every heart that is open to receive the gift of Divine Love. What we see then in the Carmelites and in Pope Francis is the revelation of God as Mercy. His love is intertwined, almost inseparable, from His love, which seeks to give itself gratuitously to sinners.

The idea of the gratuity of God’s love and mercy is not easy for us to grasp, or even accept. Certainly for Saint Thérèse and for Marie-Eugene, coming from a French background, they would have had the experience of a Church that was at times marked by Jansenism, which strongly emphasized the rights and sovereignty of God against freedom and human reason, which the Jansenists thought could not be trusted due to our corrupted nature. Since reason could not be trusted, the best course of action was to follow the dictates of the law strictly, especially as revealed by the Scriptures, the Fathers and the early Councils of the Church. The emerging image of God was not the God of Mercy but of a God who ruled and judged with severity.

In contrast, in *Misericordia et Misera*, Pope Francis writes:

*Forgiveness is the most visible sign of the Father’s love, which Jesus sought to reveal by his entire life. Every page of the Gospel is marked by this imperative of a love that loves to the point of forgiveness. (MM, 2)*

Saint Thérèse too found the Merciful Face of God on every page of the Gospel. Commenting on how Thérèse came to know God, Blessed Marie-Eugene wrote:

*Thérèse read the Gospels. What did she find there? Mary Magdalen: God had forgiven her much and therefore she loved much. Thérèse also contemplated the prodigal son and the father’s joy in receiving him back: joy, for this was his opportunity to give himself. “There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner repenting than over ninety-nine upright people who have no need of repentance.” What glorifies God and “delights him” is to be able to give Himself and be able to give Himself freely...more than what is required by*

*strict justice, freely based on our needs and the exigencies of his nature which is Love ...*  
(Marie-Eugene of L'Enfant Jesus, *Under the Torrents of His Love* (New York, Alba House, 1995) 23-24.)

Blessed Marie-Eugene describes the revelation of God in the Gospels quite succinctly: *The Gospel reveals the madness of mercy*. Yes, God is madly in love with humanity. In concluding Part One, we can summarize by saying that God reveals Himself as Love. He reveals that He is the Merciful Father. It is of the very nature of God to be generous in showing mercy to those who are willing to open their hearts to Him, and even in those who are stubborn, the Holy Spirit is at work, creating a desire for His mercy. It is no wonder that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* lists conversion as the first work of the Holy Spirit. Today, many people lament the fact that the culture is permissive and observe that people have lost a sense of sin. If this is the case, then perhaps what the Holy Father and the Carmelite saints are trying to do is not to disregard sin, but to propose a healthy image of God – one of mercy and love. It seems to me that the image of God is integral to any and every attempt at a New Evangelization.

*Part II: The Gratuity of God's Grace*

As I was saying, the idea of God's gratuity is difficult for us to accept. The Council of Trent had declared that God bestows his gifts in two ways: out of justice, that is, as a reward for merits, and out of mercy, that is, surpassing all merits. Even those who did not embrace Jansenism, often emphasized, we might even say over-emphasized, justice, while neglecting mercy. This outlook is still with us. Perhaps, living in a society dominated by the legal system and the market in which a "fair exchange" is necessary, it seems natural for us to always adopt a "*quid pro quo*" mindset.

But is this really natural or even good for us? God certainly does not adopt a *quid pro quo* attitude. In *Misericordia et misera*, the Holy Father states directly:

*Mercy is always a gratuitous act of our heavenly Father, an unconditional and unmerited act of love. Consequently, we cannot risk opposing the full freedom of the love with which God enters into the life of every person. Mercy is this concrete action of love that, by forgiving, transforms and changes our lives. (MM, 2)*

The idea of gratuity is found in abundance in the writings of the Carmelites. Consider the words of Blessed Marie-Eugene:

*What is mercy compared to justice? ... Mercy is the love that overthrows all the barriers of justice, which gives itself to the extent of the deficiencies and needs of the soul, which gives itself, above all, to the measure of God's choice, of God's will.*

He continues:

*We must open our souls and believe in the madness of the love that is in God, the immense joy that the love of God finds in overcoming all the measures of justice, all the barriers of our insufficient merits. He wants to give Himself freely. He needs to show that He is God; that He is free in his giving of gifts ... to the point that His love seems crazy to us. (Blessed Marie-Eugene of the Child Jesus, *Croyez à la folie de l'Amour qui est en Dieu*, 40, 44)*

Here we must use caution. It is not that justice and mercy are opposed to one another. He is writing in the context of a culture affected by Jansenism. Justice and mercy are two inseparable concepts in revelation and cannot be opposed. The justice of God is merciful and seeks to transform the sinners. In the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, we experience both justice and mercy. Commenting on this, the Holy Father observes:

*Yet grace always precedes us and takes on the face of the mercy that effects our reconciliation and pardon. God makes us understand his great love for us precisely when we recognize that we are sinners. Grace is stronger than sin: it overcomes every possible form of resistance, because love conquers all (cf. 1 Cor 13:7). (MM, 8)*

Saint Thérèse lamented the fact that despite the gratuity of God's gift, He was not loved in return, and so she vowed to make reparation. It seemed to her that many people appealed to justice without any reference to mercy. They set themselves up as accountants and saw God as one also. While her contemporaries appealed to Divine Justice, hoping to receive a proportionate recompense for their merits (cf. Manuscript A, 84 r<sup>o</sup> (238)), she thought of forgetting herself and of committing herself only to being pleasing in the sight of God. People present their merits to God, but these in her mind, are small, even

paltry. What if people would open their hearts to God and receive the mercy that He wishes to give to them? Thus, the Little Flower could “selfishly” write: *“Give me this Love. I accept to be a victim of Love, that is, to receive all the Love which others do not receive because they will not let you love them as you wish.”*

It is precisely by accounting herself as little, forgotten, and eventually nothing, that she could make her offering of Merciful Love, the starting point of her spiritual journey and the “Little Way.” She made her offering of Merciful Love, not to directly receive love, but especially to please God, so that He could give himself to her as intensely as he desired. Thérèse rejected the idea of presenting her merits. In simplicity, she could say:

*“I shall take care not to present any merits of mine, but only those of our Lord. As for me, I shall have nothing. I do not want to present anything. I prefer to let God love me as much as He wants, adding, “It is because of this that I shall get such a good reception! ... I will receive much more from God by loving him, by obliging Him to give me according to His desire rather than by asking Him to reward me according to my merits.”*

With her childlike faith, Thérèse thought only of bringing joy to God by being pleasing in his sight. There is a deep connection between mercy and joy. Pope Francis speaks about this connection but from the point of view of the joy received by the sinner, writing:

*Mercy gives rise to joy, because our hearts are opened to the hope of a new life. The joy of forgiveness is inexpressible, yet it radiates all around us whenever we experience forgiveness. Its source is in the love with which God comes to meet us, breaking through walls of selfishness that surround us, in order to make us in turn instruments of mercy. (MM, 3)*

The Carmelites, while acknowledging the transformative power of mercy, enlighten us by speaking of the joy of God in embracing us with mercy. The parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates this joy. There is a joy, not only in the younger son who is embraced by his father, but there is the joy of the father who rushes out to embrace him, seeing his hopes for the return of his lost son fulfilled.

Actually, it is in the very nature of God to rejoice, especially in giving of Himself. The Blessed Trinity is a community of love, of self-giving. Blessed Marie-Eugene, noting that the love of God is infinite, says that God finds His joy in giving of Himself and that this is God’s supreme joy. Suffering for God then is the rejection of His love; he writes:

*We could say that the great suffering for God is that He cannot give His love. Take for example, the love of a mother: she needs to love her child. If the child refuses her testimonies of love, there is suffering in the heart of the mother. (Blessed Marie-Eugene of the Child Jesus, *Croyez à la folie de l’Amour qui est en Dieu*, 57)*

Since God is a Merciful Father, he needs to love us and delights in loving us as his children. Just as mothers need to be loved so too do fathers. Even Thérèse’s saintly father needed her to be close. He enjoyed having her gaze upon him. In the same way, our Heavenly Father enjoys not only when we spend time with Him in prayer and contemplation but also when we simply appear before Him, pleasing in His sight, ready to receive His love.

In contrast to the rejection of love, Blessed Marie-Eugene points out the joy of giving that God possesses when His mercy and love are received:

*What we feel in human love, we must magnify considerably in God. God's happiness is to love. It is in the gift that He finds His joy, and His joy is the measure of the gift. More than that, the joy of God is the measure of the gratuitousness of the gift; it is the gratuity of love. The one who is content to come to God with his accounts in order is a person who does not feel the need for this love of God. The poor man, the sinner, who has spent all his goods is a poor person in every sense of the word, and he will present himself before the infinite love of God. He has nothing of his own merits. (Ibid., 58)*

Thus, we can understand why sometimes poor people have great faith. They understand that they are dependent upon God, and they turn to Him, knowing His love for them. This is true not only for material needs but also for spiritual ones, including forgiveness. This is what is disconcerting about mercy; it operates outside the "laws" of our accounting. God's gratuity and His joy in giving of Himself also brings joy to the hearts of men and women, especially to the poor. Once more, Blessed Marie-Eugene, quoting Saint Thérèse, writes:

*She (Thérèse) says, "I would like to make this clear to souls. These are not mere words. Jesus also says that He gives Himself to the poor, to little ones and to the children. We will be made rich only by the gift of God. Who is the one who will receive the most? The one who is the simplest, the poorest, and who will rely most on his poverty in order to receive the mercy of God. (Ibid., 63)*

### *Part III: The Human Response to Mercy*

How then ought we respond to the gratuity of the gift of God's grace? To His loving gaze upon us, even in our poverty? I believe the answer is by concrete gestures of mercy toward others, exemplified in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, which Pope Francis treats near the end of his Apostolic Letter. This necessarily involves prayer and sharing in the lives of others. He writes:

*The culture of mercy is shaped in assiduous prayer, in docility to the working of the Holy Spirit, in knowing the lives of the saints and in being close to the poor. It urges us not to overlook situations that call for our involvement. The temptation to theorize "about" mercy can be overcome to the extent that our daily life becomes one of participation and sharing. (MM, 20)*

For the Holy Father, *realities are greater than ideas*. Mercy must impact people's lives, and not only other people's lives but *our lives*. Mercy equips us for mission. To emphasize this point, Pope Francis takes the example of Saint Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. He, who had persecuted the Church, was transformed by the power of God. He thought he had all the answers as a respected scholar of the law, but it took being blinded and humbled on the road to Damascus and a fundamental encounter with the Lord to change him.

The Holy Father writes:

*I would like us all to meditate upon the words of the Apostle, written towards the end of his life, when he confesses to Timothy that he was the greatest of sinners, “but for this reason I received mercy” (1 Tim 1:16). Paul’s words, powerful as they are, make us reflect on our lives and see God’s mercy at work in changing, converting and transforming our hearts. “I thank him who has given me strength for this, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful by appointing me to his service, though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him; but I received mercy” (1 Tim 1:12-13). (MM, 11)*

God shows us His mercy so that we may be faithful in His service of making His mercy and love more widely known – so that we may be missionaries of his mercy. To be *credible* missionaries of His Mercy involves committing ourselves to holiness, which is not a result of our Pelagian or semi-Pelagian efforts, of our merits and our accounts, but which rather is a result of God’s work in us, even in our nothingness.

This is the genius to the spirituality of the Little Way. Holiness involves acknowledging our littleness and God’s greatness. The day that we become poor and small or that we present ourselves to God with the same attitude as the Little Flower or that we call on the mercy of God as beggars is the day that we will be approaching sanctity. Holiness is not our work. It does not consist in our virtues; rather, it comes from the gift of God in our souls. Clearly, the Blessed Virgin Mary indicates this in her canticle of praise when she sings: *My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For he has looked with favor on his handmaid in her lowliness.* Taking the example of Saint Paul once more, we hear him say, *“Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

Blessed Marie-Eugene writes:

*We so easily confuse holiness with heroism. We would like to be heroes and to assure the success of our physical or intellectual powers or in either case the success of our human, natural powers. In battle, the hero is the one who conquers; the saint is the one who lets God conquer in him. This is the difference. We are holy when God does all within us; we are only perfect children when God guides and enlightens us, when we give him a perfectly free hand. (Blessed Marie-Eugene of L’Enfant Jesus, *Under the Torrents of His Love*, 47.)*

To be conquered by God means to really know Him, and this requires nurturing our friendship with him in silent prayer and being faithful to our prayer even when we do not receive consolation. As the Holy Father said, *“The culture of mercy is shaped in assiduous prayer.”* Writing to Sister Agnes, Saint Thérèse explained, the need to pray, even without receiving consolation:

*My Beloved doesn’t say anything to me and neither do I say anything to him except that I love him more than myself. The path that I am following is not for me any consolation. (Saint Thérèse, Letter 110 to Sister Agnes of Jesus, 30-31 August 1890)*

In periods of spiritual dryness, we show our fidelity by adhering to God. The *Catechism* (2609) defines faith as “a filial adhesion to God, above and beyond that which we feel or understand.” In prayer, even without feeling or understanding, we place ourselves in contact with Him and in communion with Him without always being aware or conscious of the love and light that we are receiving. Sometimes we are tempted to abandon prayer because of spiritual dryness or to dedicate ourselves to more and more

physical activities because we do not experience His closeness. The Little Flower related her experience of why perseverance was so necessary:

*At every instant the Lord guides me, inspires that which I must say or do. I discover, right in the moment when I need to, the light that I had not previously seen; more often than not, it is not during prayers that these lights are abundant, but rather during daily work.*

Having faith in God is the means by which we unite ourselves to Jesus, who transforms us by his power. This same faith is the means for spreading His Mercy to others. Prayer opens us to relying on God's power to make His Mercy known. Thus, Thérèse could sing:

*'Tis heaven to have the power, great grace from Christ to win for Holy Mother Church, for all my Sisters dear, for every soul on earth that he may enter in, enflame our sinful hearts, and grant us joy and cheer. All things my love can gain when, heart to heart, I pray, alone with Jesus Christ in speechless ecstasy. Beside His altar blest with Him I gladly stay, Oh, this is heaven for me! (Saint Thérèse, Poem 32, str. 2)*

If we are to carry out our mission in the world, then we also need silence for prayer - to listen for the voice of God, to discover our mission, and to prepare ourselves. In *I Want to See God*, Blessed Marie-Eugene writes:

*Any task at all that requires a serious application of our faculties, presupposes the recollection and silence that render it possible. The scientist needs silence to prepare his experiments. The philosopher recollects himself in solitude to put order into his thoughts and penetrate into them. The silence that the thinker is avid for, that his intellectual energies may not be disturbed in their reflections, is still more necessary for the spiritual person, that the whole soul may be applied to the search of its divine object.*

Silence in prayer with Jesus also teaches us how to learn to remain silent especially when offering others consolation. The Holy Father teaches us that consolation is another face of mercy:

*Another face of mercy is consolation. ... Sometimes too, silence can be helpful, especially when we cannot find words in response to the questions of those who suffer. A lack of words, however, can be made up for by the compassion of a person who stays at our side, who loves us and who holds out a hand. It is not true that silence is an act of surrender; on the contrary, it is a moment of strength and love. Silence too belongs to our language of consolation, because it becomes a concrete way of sharing in the suffering of a brother or sister. (MM, 13)*

Still, we cannot always remain trapped in our "cells" in prayer. As Secular Carmelites, you understand the necessity of bringing the fruits of contemplation into the world. Returning to what I said earlier, Saint Thérèse often learned what it was she was to say or do in daily activity. It was not enough for her merely to be united to Jesus in prayer. The Little Flower was quite clear that "love is proven by works." (cf. manuscript B, 4r (257)).

In *Misericordia et misera*, Pope Francis writes:

*The works of mercy affect a person's entire life. For this reason, we can set in motion a real cultural revolution, beginning with simple gestures capable of reaching body and*

*spirit, people's very lives. This is a commitment that the Christian community should take up, in the knowledge that God's word constantly calls us to leave behind the temptation to hide behind indifference and individualism in order to lead a comfortable life free of problems. (MM, 20)*

He exhorts the whole Church to engage in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, noting their immense influence even as a social value (cf. *MM* 18). The Holy Father speaks of "simple gestures" of mercy. Saint Thérèse proved her love for God with a generous and delicate fidelity even in the most menial tasks, remembering always to do them with great love and provided that she would be pleasing in God's sight.

That is, we cannot simply perform works to be seen or to receive accolades for others. The works done by a disciple or at least the spirit with which they are done ought to be different from those done by a social worker. In this regard, the Holy Father reminds us of the transformative power of mercy; having received mercy, we can become instruments of God's mercy:

*Mercy renews and redeems because it is the meeting of two hearts: the heart of God who comes to meet the human heart. The latter is warmed and healed by the former. Our hearts of stone become hearts of flesh (cf. Ezek 36:26) capable of love despite our sinfulness. I come to realize that I am truly a "new creation" (Gal 6:15): I am loved, therefore I exist; I am forgiven, therefore I am reborn; I have been shown mercy, therefore I have become a vessel of mercy. (MM, 16)*

We should be happy to carry out spiritual and corporal works of mercy, whether they are seen or unseen. Carmelite spirituality would suggest that we should be forgotten, even hidden, as long as we are pleasing to God. It may seem that our world needs mercy more than ever with all its problems and permissiveness. Paradoxically, at a time of moral laxity, people are becoming increasingly judgmental, ready to quickly judge and condemn others for their moral failings. We can see a great problem and attempt to do great things, or we can become overwhelmed by the task at hand and grow indifferent, but Saint Thérèse teaches us that the fruitfulness of our prayers and our works cannot be measured with their visible tangible results but with the quality of love and faith that accompany them.

Yes, we must travel along the "little way." The Holy Father did not want the Jubilee of Mercy to be a parenthesis in the life of the Church; rather, he spoke of building a culture of mercy. He reminds us that this is the "time of mercy." (cf. *MM*, 21) I refer once more with the words of the Holy Father:

*The Holy Door that we have crossed in this Jubilee Year has set us on the path of charity, which we are called to travel daily with fidelity and joy. It is the road of mercy, on which we meet so many of our brothers and sisters who reach out for someone to take their hand and become a companion on the way. (MM, 16)*

We must take the hands of our brothers and sisters and walk with them along the "little way", making known by our words and deeds that the Name of God is Mercy. Indeed, God is rushing along that same way to embrace our littleness, our nothingness with the greatness of His Merciful Love. We must walk the path of charity and live in love. I conclude with the words of the Little Flower:

*To live with love: that is, to banish  
Far, far away*

*All fear, all memory of past faults  
 No trace of dead sins left behind.  
 For in one second, Love can burn them to ashes.  
 Divine Flame, sweet and powerful  
 I will make myself at home in your halls  
 Singing on fire, in peace  
 "to live in love."*

*To live with love: that is, to sail away  
 Every happy day  
 Bringing peace and joy to others.  
 Charity, Beloved Captain of my little boat  
 Rows and rows me far and farther  
 For I see in her the souls of my sisters  
 Love the only star to guide my way  
 And written on the sails these words of mine  
 "To live with Love"*

*To die with love: that is to hope  
 Every single way  
 When at last I break my earthly bonds  
 God will be my great reward  
 I want no other  
 In God's arms I would be wrapped  
 To see, to be, united forever  
 Here my heaven, here my destiny  
 "To live for Love"*