



PRESENTED TO

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A YEAR
WITH
DIVINE
MERCY

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WITH
DIVINE
MERCY

DAILY MEDITATIONS ON
GOD'S ETERNAL LOVE

VINNY FLYNN
ERIN FLYNN

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Introduction



Many people, perhaps most people, when they hear or read the words “Divine Mercy,” automatically think of the devotional elements and prayers found in the *Diary* of St. Faustina: the Divine Mercy Image, the Chaplet, the Hour of Mercy, The Feast of Mercy, and the Novena before the Feast. But as powerful and fruitful as these are, it’s important not to focus so exclusively on the devotions themselves that we miss the teachings and insights they are meant to reveal—about who God is and who we are in His love. It’s all about the Father’s great plan of mercy to share His own life with us and to make us one with Him and each other, drawing us into the embrace of the Trinity Itself.

As St. Paul tells us, God “has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Ephesians 1:9–10, NRSVCE).

“Everything is grace,” wrote St. Therese. And she might well have said, “Everything is mercy,” because without mercy there would be no grace. The source of all grace, all blessings, all the sacraments, all the manifold ways that God works in our lives, is Divine Mercy. Indeed, Divine Mercy, as the endless outpouring of Trinitarian Love, lies at the heart of everything that is.

All of creation is an act of mercy! As I explained in *7 Secrets of Divine Mercy*, devotion to Divine Mercy is not just “a private devotion.” It’s *the* devotion, the “umbrella” over everything else. Every other devotion in the Church, every ritual, every activity, every teaching is under that umbrella. It’s all there to help us understand and enter into Divine Mercy. Everything in our lives becomes more meaningful, more powerful, more life-changing once we understand and embrace Divine Mercy. It’s the primary reality of our existence.

It’s this all-encompassing reality of Divine Mercy that Erin and I have tried to keep in mind as we searched for and edited the passages we’ve gathered here. As you read through them, you’ll certainly find selections relating to the Divine Mercy Image, the Chaplet, and the other devotional elements from the *Diary* of St. Faustina. But you’ll also find excerpts from

the scriptures, the *Catechism*, saints and mystics, theologians and scholars, popes and poets, prayers and hymns. You'll even find some passages that don't actually contain the word "mercy," but that we felt might help you "to understand fully the mystery," the plan of mercy and its application to you in your life. [In this context it might be of interest to recall St. Pope John Paul II's comment about the parable of the prodigal son that, "Although the word 'mercy' does not appear, it nevertheless expresses the essence of the divine mercy in a particularly clear way" (*Rich in Mercy*, #5)]

It is our prayer that this year of reflection on Divine Mercy will be a great blessing to you, a joyful, day-by-day rediscovery of the Father's love and of your own place in the Heart of the Trinity—not in an abstract way, but with a growing awareness and acceptance of how completely and personally you are loved.

—Vinny Flynn

How To Use This Book



This is not primarily a book to learn about Divine Mercy, but to encounter it. Or more specifically, to encounter the One who *is* mercy. Even the most erudite scholar at some point needs to move beyond the intellectual pursuit of God and His attributes, and be touched in the depths of his being by an *experience* of God Himself. It involves that difficult process of moving from the head to the heart; dismantling those barriers that protect the vulnerable places within. The hope is that in these pages you will not only begin to recognize the tributaries of mercy that run through your entire life, but that you will open yourself up to experience God's mercy each day in a new way. Consider these two words: *observation* and *exposure*. As you read, it can be powerful to observe the origin and action of mercy—through God's word, the saints, and contemporary writers—but the only thing that will lead to the deep personal transformation needed for holiness, is to *expose to God those places where you need mercy most*.

In this pursuit, we encourage you to use the *Lectio Divina* method of simply becoming aware of what has your attention. Some of these passages, especially those from the Fathers of the Church and the Catechism, can be a lot to take in as a whole. Stay where the grace is, even if you never finish reading the rest of the quote. Ask yourself “What has my attention?” as you read through, and then invite God into that place. It could be a word, a phrase, a thought that causes an affective response in you. If you are drawn to or moved by something, if you feel anything like resistance, joy, grief, or contrition, pay attention! These are often trailheads that lead to places of deep encounter and grace. They provide opportunities to pause for a moment and be present, asking God to be present there with you. And these are the very places where He wants to speak, the areas of the heart He longs to inhabit.

In the Divine Mercy Image, you see that His left foot is forward coming toward you, the rays issuing forth from a heart always open to you, His hand raised in blessing over you. When you invite Him into these deep places, this is how He comes—with the kindness and benediction of mercy.

—Erin Flynn

Acknowledgments



We would like first of all to acknowledge Conor Gallagher and his wonderful team at TAN Books for inviting us to take on this project and for their patient support and guidance throughout the process. Special thanks to Brian Kennelly (co-author of *Divine Mercy for Children*), who was our initial editor and supervisor for this book and provided invaluable direction and assistance. We owe a great debt of gratitude also to Jason Gale and John Vella, who kept us on track and worked closely with us—answering questions, offering suggestions, and giving direction, especially during the final editing stages.

There are so many pieces to compile in a book like this. Many citations have been taken from public domain sources, scripture, the *Catechism*, and Church documents. In a few instances we have modified the phrasing of certain passages from ancient sources in order to make the text more accessible or clear. We have carefully chosen excerpts that we felt would be of the greatest value to our readers, both in terms of deepening their understanding of Divine Mercy and as an introduction to inspiring authors whom they might not previously have read.

We gratefully acknowledge the Congregation of the Marians of the Immaculate Conception for their gracious permission to draw from several of their titles, most especially from *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, the *Diary* of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska. Special tribute must be paid to the contemporary writers featured here. They bring out in unique ways a more complete understanding of Divine Mercy in light of the direct revelations from Christ through St. Faustina.

We are deeply indebted to Fr. Avram Brown, a dear friend and longtime board member of MercySong Ministries of Healing, for partnering with us in co-writing some of the intros, applications, and prayers. As a scripture scholar and priest in deep communion with the Father of mercy, his input was rich and greatly appreciated.

We profoundly thank our friends and family who have supported, encouraged, and prayed us through the compilation of this book, which, for various reasons, ended up being a much lengthier process than any of us could have anticipated! May the Lord richly reward you for your patient endurance. We hope all of it has led to a work that will be a blessing to each reader.



A YEAR WITH DIVINE MERCY

The Daily Readings

My Special Task

On November 22, 1981, St. Pope John Paul II made his first public visit outside of Rome, following a lengthy recuperation from medical complications he had suffered in the aftermath of the attempt on his life earlier that year on May 13. He traveled on the Feast of Christ the King to the Shrine of Merciful Love in Collevalenza, Italy, where he shared with the world his conviction that the message of mercy was the special task assigned to him by God.



A year ago I published the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*. This circumstance made me come to the Sanctuary of Merciful Love today. By my presence I wish to reconfirm, in a way, the message of that encyclical. I wish to read it again and deliver it again.

Right from the beginning of my ministry in St. Peter's See in Rome, I considered this message my special task. Providence has assigned it to me in the present situation of man, the Church and the world. It could also be said that precisely this situation assigned that message to me as my task before God, who is Providence, who is inscrutable mystery, the mystery of Love and Truth, of Truth and Love. . . .

Therefore I am praying here today together with you, dear Brothers and Sisters. I am praying to profess that merciful love is more powerful than any evil that gathers upon man and upon the world. I am praying together with you to implore that merciful love for man and the world in our difficult age.

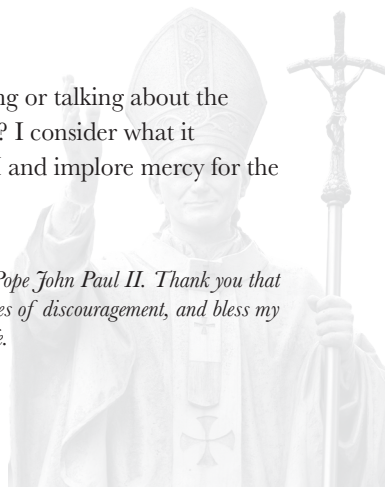
—St. Pope John Paul II, Angelus, November 22, 1981

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER . . .

Compared to the amount of time I spend thinking or talking about the problems all around me, how often do I pray for it all? I consider what it would mean for me to truly join St. Pope John Paul II and implore mercy for the whole world in a time such as this.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, thank you for the mission of mercy you entrusted to St. Pope John Paul II. Thank you that your merciful love is greater than any evil. Remind me of this in times of discouragement, and bless my resolve to let this prayer for mercy become an enduring part of my life.



Faustina's Mission

The Diary of St. Faustina is filled with references to her mission of mercy—a mission which would continue after her death. The Lord also granted her a great privilege, telling her to “distribute graces as you will, to whom you will and when you will” (31).



I feel certain that my mission will not come to an end upon my death, but will begin. O doubting souls, I will draw aside for you the veils of heaven to convince you of God's goodness, so that you will no longer continue to wound with your distrust the sweetest Heart of Jesus. O my God, . . . I want to tell souls of Your goodness and encourage them to trust in Your mercy. That is my mission, which You yourself have entrusted to me, O Lord, in this life and in the life to come.

I heard a voice in my Soul: . . . My arm is supporting you; fight for the salvation of souls, exhorting them to trust in My mercy, as that is your task in this life and in the life to come.

Poor earth, I will not forget you. Although I feel that I will be immediately drowned in God as in an ocean of happiness, that will not be an obstacle to my returning to earth to encourage souls and incite them to trust in God's mercy. Indeed, this immersion in God will give me the possibility of boundless action.

Write down everything that occurs to you regarding My goodness. . . . Your thoughts are united to My thoughts, so write whatever comes to your mind. You are the secretary of My mercy. I have chosen you for that office in this life and the next life.

Despite the diligent care of my superiors and the efforts of the doctors, my health is fading and running out. But I rejoice greatly at Your call, my God, my Love, because I know that my mission will begin at the moment of my death.

—St. Faustina, *Diary* (281, 1325, 1452, 1582, 1605)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER . . .

In many ways, I am a “doubting soul” in need of greater trust in God's goodness. I need help trusting in Him, yet I also want to join Faustina in her mission to tell others of His great mercy for them! She and Jesus both said that her call was for this life and the next, so I take her as my special intercessor.

CLOSING PRAYER

St. Faustina, you knew your mission would truly begin with your death. Pray for me in all the areas where I need to have greater trust in God's goodness and mercy, and help me work with you for the salvation of souls.

Love, Not Mercy

The endless exchange of love within the Trinity is not mercy, Fr. Cantalamessa explains, it's love. Mercy is when that love pours out upon us from the Trinity as a free gift of Itself.



The unique God of the Christians is . . . the Father—not, however, conceived of on his own (how can he be called “father” unless he has a son?), but as the Father always begetting the Son and giving himself to him with an infinite love that unites them both, which is the Holy Spirit. This love in the Trinity, which constitutes the Trinity, is their very *nature*. . . . *It is love, not mercy.* The Father loving the Son is not a grace or a concession; it is in a certain sense a necessity. The Father needs to love in order to exist as Father. The Son loving the Father is not a concession or a grace; it is an intrinsic necessity even if it occurs with the utmost freedom; the Son needs to be loved and to love in order to be the Son. The Father begets the Son in the Holy Spirit by loving him; the Father and the Son breathe forth the Holy Spirit in loving each other. . . .

What happens when God creates the world and human beings in it who are made in his image and likeness? *Love makes a gift of itself.* Love, like the good, by its nature “tends to pour itself out. . . .”

This love poured out is grace and no longer “love as God’s nature”; it is gratuitous. It could not be otherwise and is thus a gift, a condescension. It is *hesed*, mercy.

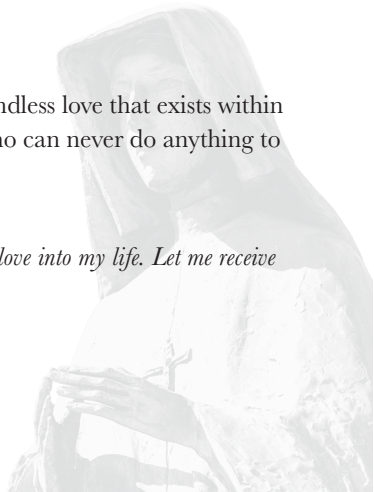
—Raniero Cantalamessa, *The Gaze of Mercy* (Emphasis added)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER . . .

When I receive God’s mercy, I am receiving the endless love that exists within the Trinity. It is being poured out on me, a creature who can never do anything to deserve it. It is pure gift.

CLOSING PRAYER

Most Holy Trinity, thank you for the outpouring of Your love into my life. Let me receive everything as mercy and every mercy with gratitude.



The Gift of Love

Pope Benedict calls us beyond a superficial faith and knowledge of God to a deep, personal decision to receive and give His love.



“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 *Jn* 4:16). These words from the *First Letter of John* express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith: the Christian image of God and the resulting image of mankind and its destiny. In the same verse, Saint John also offers a kind of summary of the Christian life: “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us.”

We have come to believe in God’s love: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. Saint John’s Gospel describes that event in these words: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should . . . have eternal life” (3:16). In acknowledging the centrality of love, Christian faith has retained the core of Israel’s faith, while at the same time giving it new depth and breadth. The pious Jew prayed daily the words of the *Book of Deuteronomy* which expressed the heart of his existence: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might” (6:4–5). Jesus united into a single precept this commandment of love for God and the commandment of love for neighbour found in the *Book of Leviticus*: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (19:18; cf. *Mk* 12:29–31). Since God has first loved us (cf. 1 *Jn* 4:10), love is now no longer a mere “command”; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us.

—Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est (God is Love)*, 1

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER . . .

In Jesus, the centrality of love is integral to the response it demands. Have I come to really know and believe in God’s personal and unique love for me so that it shapes and directs the way I respond to Him and to others? Has it formed me in such a way that it gives my life a “decisive direction”?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, “I do believe, help my unbelief!” (Mk 9:24, NABRE). Help me to gratefully receive Your love and pass it on to others.

Trinitarian Love

There's nothing casual or haphazard about creation. It's an expression of outpouring Love. We don't exist by accident, and we don't exist because God was bored and wanted to amuse Himself by playing with clay. We were "Fathered-forth" by Love.



The Trinity—the mystery of mysteries, the greatest mystery in the Church—is all about love! It's all about Divine Love, given, received, and extended to all.

In the Trinity, God the Father is eternally loving the Son; the Son is eternally returning the love of the Father; and the Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son!

In this endless cycle of self-giving love, the Son deserves the love of the Father, and the Father deserves the love of the Son. Who else deserves it? Nobody! Nobody else deserves it.

But true love longs to give of itself. So the Father decided to create more beings to love. In reality, that's what mercy is—when God, who is all-deserving, all-worthy, stoops to extend His love to mere creatures, who can't possibly deserve it.

Pope John Paul II, in his homily for the canonization of St. Faustina in 2000, explains that this extension of love, this “great wave of mercy” from the Father, comes to us through the pierced Heart of Jesus and is poured out upon us through the Holy Spirit. The entire Trinity is involved. *Mercy is the endless outflowing of Trinitarian love . . .*

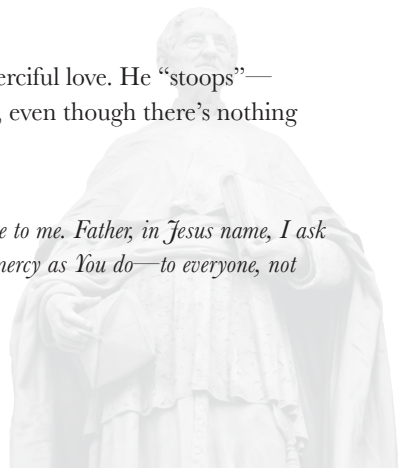
—Vinny Flynn, *7 Secrets of Divine Mercy*

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER . . .

The Father has given us such an example of merciful love. He “stoops”—bends down toward us to pour out His love upon us, even though there's nothing we have ever done or ever could do to deserve it.

CLOSING PRAYER

Most Blessed Trinity, thank you for extending Your love to me. Father, in Jesus name, I ask you to give me, through Your Holy Spirit, the grace to offer mercy as You do—to everyone, not just to those I consider “worthy.”



Receive the Blessing

Sirach is far too underappreciated in contemporary Catholicism. The early Church held this rich work in high esteem; we should join Clement, Origen, Augustine and Jerome, amongst others, in drawing upon Sirach's deep awareness of God's providence and mercy.



And the people besought the Lord Most High
in prayer before him who is merciful,
till the order of worship of the Lord was ended;
so they completed his service.
Then Simon came down, and lifted up his hands
over the whole congregation of the sons of Israel,
to pronounce the blessing of the Lord with his lips,
and to glory in his name;
and they bowed down in worship a second time,
to receive the blessing from the Most High.
And now bless the God of all,
who in every way does great things;
who exalts our days from birth,
and deals with us according to his mercy.
May he give us gladness of heart,
and grant that peace may be in our days in Israel,
as in the days of old.
May he entrust to us his mercy!
And let him deliver us in our days!

—Sirach 50:19–24 (RSVCE)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER . . .

It is ridiculous for me to try to force my way through life without the one thing necessary: the blessing of my Father. My Father deeply desires to bless me and is waiting for me to accept His gifts.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I bow down in worship before You. Thank you for Your blessing; thank you for Your mercy. You are my heart's desire, and I entrust myself to Your love.

Transformed by Tenderness

In her study guide for the book 7 Secrets of Divine Mercy, Mary Flynn reflects on what happens in our lives when we truly come to know that we are beloved children of a tender Father.



I would like to propose that as you go through this study of Divine Mercy, you reflect specifically upon the *tenderness* of God's mercy. Let your journey into this mystery be focused not just on what mercy is, or even on how much you need it, but most importantly, on the tender Heart of the all-merciful One, who longs to restore you and make you new.

This transformative tenderness of our God . . . is not simply an attribute meant to be looked at and analyzed; it is a peaceful place where our souls can rest. And in the resting, we are transformed.

Pope Francis has a great phrase that I love. At various times, stressing how much God loves us, and how this love must prompt us to then go and love others, he has said that we need a “revolution of tenderness”. . . . This revolution is essentially the fruit of the knowledge of God's tenderness towards each one of us.

By coming to know the Lord's deep and tender love for us, and resting in that knowledge, we take on His tenderheartedness, and are enabled to live love in a revolutionary way. . . .

Allowing ourselves to be totally transformed by His tender mercy, we slowly become more and more able to love others with that same tenderness.

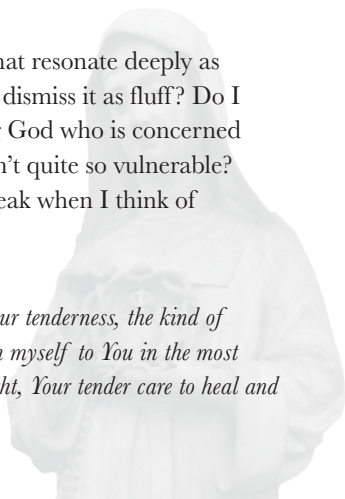
—Mary Flynn, *A Study Guide for 7 Secrets of Divine Mercy*

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER . . .

When I hear that God loves with tenderness, does that resonate deeply as something I long for, or is there part of me that wants to dismiss it as fluff? Do I prefer to keep Him a little more at a distance, as a strong God who is concerned with more important things than tenderness, and who isn't quite so vulnerable? Is it possible that I am the one who feels vulnerable or weak when I think of tenderness?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, one of the ways Your mercy comes to me is through Your tenderness, the kind of love I could never deserve, never earn. Give me the courage to open myself to You in the most vulnerable places of my soul, allowing Your gentleness, Your delight, Your tender care to heal and confirm my identity as Your beloved.



His Mercy “Gushes Forth”

Pope Francis reflects on mercy, not as an abstract concept but as a “concrete reality:” God’s consistent way of responding with tenderness and compassion to all our struggles and weaknesses—even in the face of sin.



When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive. . . . “Patient and merciful.” These words often go together in the Old Testament to describe God’s nature. His being merciful is concretely demonstrated in his many actions throughout the history of salvation where his goodness prevails over punishment and destruction. In a special way the Psalms bring to the fore the grandeur of his merciful action: “He forgives all your iniquity, he heals all your diseases, he redeems your life from the pit, he crowns you with steadfast love and mercy” (Ps 103:3–4). Another psalm, in an even more explicit way, attests to the concrete signs of his mercy: “He executes justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; . . . (Ps 146:7–9).” Here are some other expressions of the Psalmist: “He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds . . . The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, he casts the wicked to the ground” (Ps 147:3, 6).

In short, the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a “visceral” love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy. . . . To repeat continually “for his mercy endures forever,” . . . is as if to say that not only in history, but for all eternity man will always be under the merciful gaze of the Father.

—Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus (The Face of Mercy)*, 3,6,7

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER . . .

It’s true that mercy can seem like one of many abstract theological concepts. But in reality, I see how concrete it is in my daily life when I take some time to reflect on its personal nature. God saves *me*, forgives *me*, heals *my* broken heart, binds up *my* wounds, sets *me* free from bondage, reveals Himself as the original and perfect parent to *me*.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, the more I dwell on Your goodness to me, the more my heart fills with gratitude and awe at who You are. Let my life be a psalm of praise to Your mercy.

God Knows My Greatest Happiness

God's mercy sometimes leads us by a strange and unexpected way. But Newman tells us we can rest assured it is the best way.



God has created all things for good; all things for their greatest good; everything for its own good. What is the good of one is not the good of another; what makes one man happy would make another unhappy. God has determined, unless I interfere with His plan, that I should reach that which will be my greatest happiness. He looks on me individually, He calls me by my name, He knows what I can do, what I can best be, what is my greatest happiness, and He means to give it to me.

God knows what is my greatest happiness, but I do not. There is no rule about what is happy and good; what suits one would not suit another. And the ways by which perfection is reached vary very much; the medicines necessary for our souls are very different from each other. Thus God leads us by strange ways; we know He wills our happiness, but we neither know what our happiness is, nor the way. We are blind; left to ourselves we should take the wrong way; we must leave it to Him.

Let us put ourselves into His hands, and not be startled though He leads us by a strange way, a *mirabilis via*, as the Church speaks. Let us be sure He will lead us right, that He will bring us to that which is, not indeed what we think best, nor what is best for another, but what is best for us.

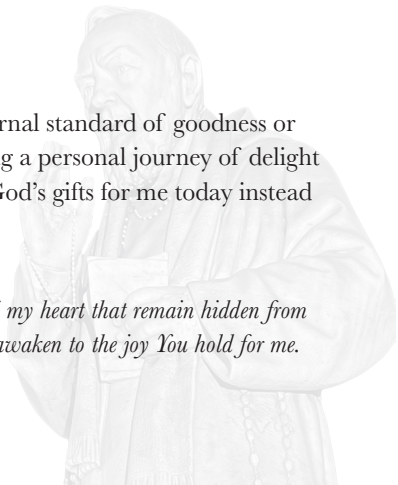
—St. John Henry Newman, *Meditations on Christian Doctrine*, I, 1, 1–3

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER . . .

How often am I trying to conform to some external standard of goodness or holiness, success or competence, while God is crafting a personal journey of delight for me? Can I lean into the freedom of embracing God's gifts for me today instead of rushing past to the burdens I impose on myself?

CLOSING PRAYER

Most loving, merciful Father, You know the longings of my heart that remain hidden from my sight. Let Your gentle Spirit breathe into me, that I may awaken to the joy You hold for me.



The Loving Kindness of God

This psalm extols God's care for Jerusalem. All the good He does on earth and all the blessings He extends to His people flow from His mercy, an outpouring from His merciful Heart. These lines are, in essence, a song of praise for that mercy.



Praise the Lord for he is good;
sing to our God for he is loving;
to him our praise is due.

The Lord builds up Jerusalem
and brings back Israel's exiles,
he heals the broken-hearted,
he binds up all their wounds.
He fixes the number of the stars;
he calls each one by its name.

Our Lord is great and almighty;
his wisdom can never be measured.
The Lord raises the lowly;
he humbles the wicked to the dust.

O sing to the Lord, giving thanks;
sing psalms to our God with the harp.

He covers the heavens with clouds;
he prepares the rain for the earth,
making mountains sprout with grass
and with plants to serve man's needs.
He provides the beasts with their food
and young ravens that call upon him.

His delight is not in horses
nor his pleasure in warriors' strength.
The Lord delights in those who
revere him,
in those who wait for his love.

—Psalm 147:1–11, *Liturgy of the Hours*

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER . . .

Do I see and appreciate every good thing as a gift of God's mercy? He didn't have to fill our earth with beauty, pleasurable food, nature that soothes, music that stirs the soul. He doesn't need to bless my life the way He does. It is *all gift*. Maybe this week is a good time for me to write down my own song of praise to His mercy.

CLOSING PRAYER

God of creation, every good and perfect gift comes from You. And Your mercy extends farther still. Because You take even things that are hard, even suffering, even the effects of sin, and You turn all things to good for those who love You. I resolve to be more aware of Your gifts of mercy.