

We see in this Sunday's Gospel that Jesus is the incarnation of divine mercy and acts in the same merciful way as his Father. Therefore, it is not surprising that from very early on the parable of the good Samaritan was interpreted as an allegory. St. Augustine, for example, sees the good Samaritan as standing for our Lord, and the man fallen among robbers as Adam, the origin and symbol of fallen mankind: "Our God wanted to be our neighbor, and Jesus Christ our Lord presented the good Samaritan as a symbol of himself: he came to the aid of a man struck down by thieves at the side of the road and left only half alive" (St. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 1, 33).

Moreover, the man left on the roadside is healed of his wounds in the Church: "My soul, where are you, where are you laid while you are cured of your wounds and pains by the one who has made reparation for your sins? You are in the same inn to which the good Samaritan brought the man that he had found lying at the side of the road, beaten by a band of thieves and left only half alive" (St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 15, 27, 50).

Mercy is "the disposition to be kind and forgiving. Founded on compassion, mercy differs from compassion or the feeling of sympathy in putting this feeling into practice with a readiness to assist. It is therefore the ready willingness to help anyone in need, especially in need of pardon or reconciliation" (Fr. John Hardon, *Modern Catholic Dictionary*).

God is the ultimate source of pardon and reconciliation, and he has chosen to extend this power to the Church, especially through the sacraments of penance and communion. This is one reason why the Church has five precepts that encourage us to seek pardon and reconciliation with God and with our neighbor. The five precepts are: "You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation"; "You shall confess your sins at least once a year"; "You shall humbly receive your Creator in Holy Communion at least during the Easter season"; "You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church"; and "You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2042-2043).

However, the precepts of the Church go beyond encouraging us to seek pardon and reconciliation with God and with our neighbor. Indeed, the precepts of the Church – obligatory in character – "guarantee to the faithful the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2041).

We would do well at Corpus Christi to follow the five precepts of the Church and, indeed, to exceed them, for in so doing, we would dispose ourselves to better receive God's grace and the many gifts he wishes to bestow upon us: his pardon, mercy, and love. The peace of the Lord be with you all.

Father Frei