

LIVING-OUT OUR CHARISM TODAY
“Instruments of Mercy in God’s hand”

This is a topic I started reflecting on three years ago. I think it began to hit me and made me come into focus each time I attended meetings on Human Trafficking, watched Television and read some awful stories from around the world.

Later when Pope Francis announced the “Year of Mercy”, it gave me an opening and a bigger opportunity to reflect more deeply and honestly, on how I should live out our Charism concretely in our world of today. I began to go more and more into the Scriptures and into the writings of our Founder. Further still, I connected it all with our looking forward to celebrating 200 years of our Foundation, (which is also my own Golden Jubilee Year!). Given my age and state of health, what are the possibilities still open for me to live our charism faithfully?

I now share with you my reflection and in a way my commitment to being an instrument of Mercy in God’s hand.

In The Bible, I read the following:



“Be holy, for I the Lord, (Yahweh) your God am holy”. Lev. Ch. 19 v. 1-2, 11-18.

“Set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none to his”. {Mt. Ch. 5, v 48. Jerusalem Bible}

“Be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect”. {Mt. Ch. 5, v 48. African Bible}

“Be compassionate just as your heavenly Father is compassionate”.

{Luke.Ch. 6, v 36-37 Jerusalem Bible}

Be merciful, just as your heavenly Father is merciful”.
 {Luke. Ch. 6, v 36-37 African Bible}

It seems to me that all these texts talk about the same thing but in different ways. They all have something to do with my love for God and everyone. Love cannot be shown just in words and thoughts or even prayers. It has to be in concrete actions. What is it that I am called to do now? My response was to return to the roots: **Bible, & DMJ Constitution.**

What hit me first is the following:

“You have already been told what is right, and what Yahweh wants of you. Only this: to do what is right, to love loyally (or to love tenderly) and to walk humbly with your God”. (Micah Ch. 6, v 8)

Or

“You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice, to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God”. (Micah Ch. 6, v 8)

FROM THE VISION AND PRAYER OF OUR FOUNDER:

"I HAVE ASKED PARTICULARLY FOR YOU THAT JESUS WOULD SEND HIS HOLY SPIRIT, WHO ENLIGHTENS, PURIFIES AND SANCTIFIES THAT HE WOULD MAKE OF YOU INSTRUMENTS OF MERCY"

"You are the Instruments of the mercy of God. Let no difficulty stand in the way of this ministry".
(Origin of the Congregation)

It makes a big difference to read and re-read over and over again all these quotations; to really ruminate on them. Since I started doing that, I am seeing what I could have done in the past but also what I can still do now.

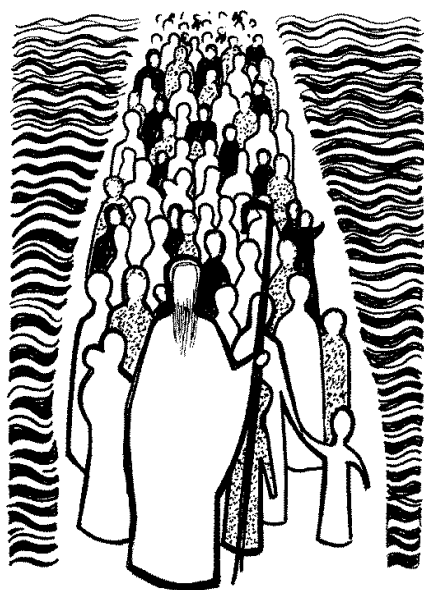
Given the words from the Bible, I have understood that MERCY, COMPASSION and PERFECTION in God's terms, flow from an unconditional love.



They show me that to be merciful or compassionate, is to treat others with kindness. It is being lenient and forgiving to anyone in my power, or under my care, my jurisdiction; or one that deserves any kind of punishment or anger from me.

People who have offended others and deserve punishment from them: people who have sinned against their God or gods and ought to be punished or deserted by this God or gods have to seek MERCY AND FORGIVENESS.

It has shown me that where there is no love, real forgiveness, real mercy and real compassion cannot take place.



God created us out of his love. Our forefather and mother sinned against him, He had **pity** on them and came to meet them; and covered their nakedness with clothes he made for them.

When His own chosen people were harshly and brutally treated by the Pharaoh of Egypt, they cried to him. He said to Moses:

"I have seen, I have heard, I am well aware"...Therefore, I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians... and lead them out into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey...". (Ex. Ch. 3 v.7-8)

While on their journey, these people rebelled against God and made a calf which they started worshipping as their god. God was angry with them, and so was Moses, their leader. However, Moses got very concerned. He felt compassion for his people, which gave him courage to appear before God and plead, and even make demands from God for them. He said:

“Turn from your blazing anger, and renounce your plan to punish your people.”

And the Lord then proclaimed the grace and compassion of the Divine Inner Self:

“The Lord! The Lord! A God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin”. (Ex. 34 v. 6 &7)

This is real love. This is compassion. This is having pity on those who have sinned, thus cutting off relationship. They can no longer help themselves. The one who can, the one who has power and means, takes the initiative and comes to their rescue! I am convinced that for this to happen there must be **genuine love**.

This is what I am called and missioned to do daily. I have only to open my eyes and see. I have to open my ears to hear. Looking at television, reading newspapers, listening to people, will all make me aware of what is going on around me, and will call me to respond as Jesus would have done. **“Love one another as I have loved you”**. (Jn. Ch.13V 34)

Thus, **Mercy/Compassion** is concerned with more than mere words, or even justice; it is a matter of attentiveness and sensitivity to the concrete needs of my brothers and sisters whom I encounter every day: in my community, in the kitchen or compound, in school, in hospital, on the farm: anywhere I live or work. It is being really present to them as Jesus was present to those around him, and ever endeavouring to bring God’s love for them to them; always trying to put an end to their miseries.

We see that Jesus is sometimes asked to heal, and at other times he takes the initiative. He doesn’t always wait to be asked. I think it should be the same for us: we should not wait for people to ask us for help, but go out to them.

When Pope Francis was opening the Holy Door at the Cathedral of Bangui, in the Central African Republic, on 29th November 2015; he said:

From this Cathedral, I reach out, in mind and heart, and with great affection, to all the priests, Consecrated men and women, and pastoral workers of the nation, who are spiritually united with us at this moment. Through you, I would greet all the people of the Central African Republic: the sick, the elderly, those who have experienced life’s hurts. Some of



them are perhaps despairing and listless, asking only for alms, the alms of bread, the alms of justice, the alms of attention and goodness. But like the Apostles Peter and John on their way to the Temple, who had neither gold nor silver to give to the paralytic in need, I have come to offer God's strength and power; for these bring us healing, set us on our feet and enable us to embark on a new life, to "go across to the other side".

I see that even the **time** I give to my sister or brother, listening attentively and lovingly to their feelings, their needs, or any situation they are in, is already a healing presence. This I can do even from my bed, (if I am bed-ridden).

It is often focussing on myself that makes me deaf and blind to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of others. I must work on dissolving the hardening of my heart to God's call to be an Instrument of His mercy in his hand. As an instrument, it is God who is doing what is happening and not me. I am only being used. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis put this in better words:

"If we are to accompany those who suffer, then like the light passing through the stained glass windows of this Cathedral, we must let God's power and healing pass through us. We must first let the waves of his mercy flow over us, purify us, and refresh us, so that we can bring that mercy to others, especially those on the peripheries." Message of Pope Francis to the Priests, Religious and Seminarians of Uganda. (28th November 2015)

There is another side of MERCY and COMPASSION.

I too have great need of Mercy and Compassion from God and from others. I sin daily against him and against my brothers and sisters. I too call on him daily to listen to me, to have pity on me to show his compassion to me.

Before God I am pitiful, I am poor and wretched. I am ever in need of so many things for my well-being: spiritually, physically, emotionally etc. I too call on him daily to listen to me, to have pity on me to show his compassion to me:

"Hear me, Lord and answer me, for I am poor and needy (oppressed)...You are my God, pity me, Lord; to you I call all the day long. Gladden the soul of your servant..." (Ps. 85/86)

God looks on me and has pity on me. He takes on my state and lifts me up to be somebody great. That is what Our Lady saw and sang with joy: **"He has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; ...has done great things for me... His mercy is from age to age..."** (Lk. Ch.1.v.46-55)

Then from Ps. 103 v.2-14; I get the consolation:

"Bless the Lord, my soul; do not forget the gifts of God, who pardons all your sins, heals all your ills; delivers your life from the pit, surrounds you with love and compassion, fills your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord does righteous deeds, brings justice to all the oppressed....Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger, abounding in kindness. God does not always rebuke, nurses no lasting anger, has not dealt with us as our sins merit, nor requited us as our deeds deserve..."

This God calls me to be like him and do the same for others.

The church being aware of our need for mercy and compassion from our heavenly Father, urges us always to humble ourselves and beg for it.

Thus every day, this call is heard umpteen times: during morning hours, at Mass, during Vespers, and Night prayers. We ask our Heavenly Father to have MERCY on us. Our hymns, most Psalms and prayers are full of this plea.

It is by being aware of what the Lord is doing for me daily that I too will learn from him and do likewise for my brothers and sisters.

**“Our Founder experienced God as all-merciful, all compassionate,
And he calls us to reflect in our lives
The merciful love of God, centred on the heart of Christ.
We return love for love, allowing God to use us
As instruments of mercy in his hand.
By drawing close to Christ, gentle and humble of heart,
Growing in his attitudes of tenderness, humility, and patience,
We become flexible instruments of the mercy of God.” (Cons. 2.)**

If I can struggle and endeavour to grow in the above attitudes, then I will not be far from living the very attitude our founder asked of us:

**“The inspiration of our Founder calls us to live in a distinctive way
The beatitude, of mercy”. (Cons. 39)**

I thank God for helping me to see so far and continue to beg him that I may see farther, then may he give me the grace, the strength and courage to live what I see.

Josephine Kashemeire Beebwa,
Bethany Community, MBARARA.