

Good afternoon, and welcome to the World Apostolate of Fatima First Saturday Devotions, held here at Holy Family Church – the most beautiful church in mid-Michigan.

First, a housekeeping issue: In April, First Saturday falls on Holy Saturday; and the only Mass allowed on Holy Saturday is the evening Mass of Easter Vigil. Because of the liturgical intricacies of Holy Week, there is no such thing as a morning Mass on Holy Saturday, and so we cannot have a special Mass for First Saturday.

Because of that, our next First Saturday Mass will be in May.

My suggestion for all of us who wish to honor Our Lady in April, is that on First Saturday – alone or in a group – pray the Rosary, and reflect on the mysteries of the Rosary for 15 minutes. Also, get to confession sometime within two weeks on either side of Holy Saturday. And finally, on that day make a Spiritual Communion – asking for the graces of Sacramental Communion – if you cannot take part in the evening Mass at a parish for the Easter Vigil.

The elements of First Saturday are, of course, Sacramental Confession, Holy Communion, praying the Rosary, and reflecting on the mysteries of the Rosary – all done in a spirit of reparation for the blasphemies committed against Our Lady and her Immaculate Heart.

Today's Gospel is lengthy, and because of that, I want to keep my comments brief.

However, as familiar as the Parable of the Prodigal Son may be to us, it is a common thing for people to miss the point.

We have three takes on “mercy” in the story – mercy as seen by the two sons, and mercy as shown by the Father.

The younger son's approach to mercy is that he has sinned, and so must take a demotion in order to make up the difference.

The older son's approach to mercy is that the younger son has already received his share of the inheritance, and is now looking to come back to take even more.

And both of those are very human ways of looking at mercy.

Despite the one Beatitude on mercy: Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy; most people treat someone who has offended them as beneath them. Or else if someone has taken something from us – time, property, money – we want to get back what we have lost.

Yet, mercy is a Divine attribute of God, and not a human statute on how to restrict the distribution of resources to those who have committed some crime or offense.

We must move outside of our human understanding of mercy to truly understand what God desires of us.

God's mercy is infinitely generous. The un-repentant sinner refuses God's mercy for whatever reason. Or the judgmental sinner scoffs at God's mercy for his own reasons.

Yet the truly repentant sinner knows that God's mercy is a valuable gift – not only to be received, but also to be shared.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us pray for God's mercy to so penetrate our lives that we might become beacons of His mercy.

And through our acts of reparation, may we know and share that mercy.