

In today's Psalm, we hear repeated over and over "*his mercy endures forever.*" And in fact, in this Psalm of which we've heard exactly half today, this phrase is repeated 26 times.

Mercy, in Scriptures, is a complex subject. In English, mercy implies that one has power over the individual to whom mercy is shown. Yet this is a cultural connotation which does not exist in the Hebrew.

Mercy, in the Old Testament, implies a relationship ... most often a familial relationship ... husband and wife ... father or mother and child ... brother or sister to a sibling.

And the lack of mercy implies a broken relationship ... and a broken heart ... or a broken mind.

Finally, mercy - in Scripture - is not only an idea or a static thing, but rather is expressed in actions.

The First Reading gives us a run-down of God's relationship with Israel ... from Abraham unto Joshua's times ... expressed not only in the constancy of God's mercy, but also in the ways that God has acted ... because of His relationship to His people.

And the Gospel presents one of Christ's "hard teachings" on marriage. Speaking of the permanence of a true marriage ... implying that God has effected this joining ... and that while God's power joins ... human weakness divides.

For us, living in the post-New Testament age, our relationship to God is most often expressed through the Sacraments. Baptism brings us into the Life of the Trinity; Confirmation strengthens that relationship for service; Eucharist provides the spiritual nourishment to persevere in the Divine Life; Penance restores what has been broken in that relationship; Anointing strengthens us in our physical weakness; while Orders and Matrimony are external manifestations of the Divine relationship between people and within communities.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... may our reception of the Eucharist strengthen us in our relationship to God, through Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit ... so that all of our relationships may become manifestations of God's Life and Love in our lives. And may this grace configure us so that we may be examples of God's mercy ... in our daily dealings with one another ... and in all of our relationships.