

## *“Mercy - A Legacy, A Promise...”*

*Associates Liturgy Reflection; Fiftieth Anniversary - June 23, 2019*

*by Richard S. Zazycki, Mercy Associate*

Good Morning!

Our dear friend and celebrant Father John just proclaimed to us one of the “classic” parables from the Gospel of Luke (Lk 9:11b-17), about the miracle of the “Five Loaves and Two Fishes”...

If you can for just a moment, try to picture again that parable - here we are gathered in a “deserted place” with 5,000 people, surely locals, some strangers and other travelers, maybe some who were immigrants, all who have come together following Jesus, to hear Him talk about the Kingdom of God. Some have also come because they are in need of “healing”. The crowd is tired and hungry, and what do the Disciples initially wanted to do? To dismiss and send everyone away - talk about the lack of hospitality!

But the merciful loving Jesus has a plan to take care of the large crowd. He tells the Disciples to have everyone sit down, and then He quietly performs His miracle of the “Five Loaves and Two Fishes”, feeding everyone and having plenty of left-overs.

Today we celebrate the *Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ* which used to be known as the feast of *Corpus Christi* - (the reality of the presence of God in things of the earth and human flesh), which is the second of the Church’s three traditional feasts observed at this time of the year. The first having been last weekend; with the celebration of *Trinity Sunday* (a reminder that God is present and ‘at one’ in the midst of community and mutual relationships), and then this coming Friday being the feast of *The Sacred Heart of Jesus* (a [spiritual] witness to the loving heart of God beating at the core of the universe).

Today is a happy occasion, not just for the Mercy World, but for our new Associates, who will be making their initial covenants. This year we also celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Mercy Association. The promises that are being made are an important witness to the fifty year history and tradition of Mercy. As Associates - you are joining a mercy family and tradition that is rooted in the core elements of: *Community, Service and Prayer*; your covenants reflect your own personal commitment to this way of life (or to borrow a phrase - "*Mercy, A Legacy, A Promise*"), and we as a Community of Mercy will affirm and support you in this effort, now and always.

The "legacy" of Mercy began in our area over 155 years ago just across the Hudson River in "New Greenbush". Since then the Religious Sisters of Mercy and their Associates have taken care of the Poor, the Sick and Uneducated, by living their vocation and promise with the performing of the corporal and spiritual works of Mercy. Your initial solemn promise today, builds upon the shoulders of these Sisters and Associates present here now and upon the "legacy" of all those who have gone before us.

As Associates we "promise" to support and participate along with the Sisters through our working commitment. From those early days in 1863 and onward in time, the Sisters have seen to the needs of individuals and families; beginning with many of our grand-parents and great-grand-parents; immigrants that came to early America like people from Poland, France, Italy, Ireland, Germany and Africa.

Care of immigrants is not a new concept for Mercy. As a community we continue to address the Critical Concerns, especially for the newer immigrants suffering today at our country's southern border, as well as those here at home who are in need; like Hispanics and Indians living in the

Tri-Cities, the Burmese Refugees in Rensselaer, Puerto Ricans in Amsterdam, or the Guyanese in Schenectady.

With new immigrants and others, there remains tremendous suffering and injustices that need to be taken care of. We continue to witness the disenfranchisement of *“the poor...”* - who as Catherine McAuley would tell us *“...need help today, not next week”*. So our promise this day is not to “dismiss and send them away” like the Disciples initially wanted to do in the gospel reading, but to be merciful like Jesus showed through His miracles and healings. We must also strive to be like our founder Catherine McAuley, who devoted her life to the care of the poor, trying to meet the needs of the times with the thought that; *“Our charity must be in our hearts and from our hearts...”*

The corporal and spiritual works of mercy lead us from contemplation to action. To live “a legacy” of mercy means “a promise” to live a life fully in, and of, the Spirit. To our newest Associates; (*Gail, Drew, Pat, Marge and Beth*), and to all of our Reverend Sisters and Associates here present, by coming into our community of Mercy;

- you make us more whole;
- you make us more one;
- together we act with greater power in the Spirit,
- to care for a broken world...

*“Mercy - A Legacy, A Promise...”*

*“This is what God asks of you - only this:*

*That you love Mercy, be just - and walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8)*

Thank you for answering the call of the Spirit, and for promising to share in our life of Mercy...