

Second Monday of Lent – 2/18

"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." (Luke 6:36,38)

I love to eat many different kinds of candy, but the appearance of one particular type has always fascinated me. This is the peppermint-flavored variety that people put out on their coffee tables or on the kitchen counters. The candy is about the size of a nickel and is wrapped in clear plastic. It can be purchased in most stores and it is relatively inexpensive. It is red and white in color, and what intrigues me is the way the red color seems to swirl from a point in the middle outward into well defined and widening spokes of color.

It seems to me that the gift of mercy is a lot like this red and white swirled candy. In the middle of mercy is the presence of God. God is the great vortex at the center of all good works and holy initiatives. At the core of our noble actions it is the Spirit of God stirring the pot of charity. The more that we allow this compassion to move within us the more it will move out of us into the world around us. Just as the candy is delightful to look at so too the works of abundant mercy are sights for the sorest of eyes.

Like the red and white colors of the candy, mercy must be found along side forgiveness. They compliment and define each other. Compassion for our neighbor cannot exist where forgiveness is not readily available. Mercy and forgiveness each have their own mission but the mission of one will fail if the other is not present. Both are essential parts of the Christian's life.

The reward for eating a piece of the swirling peppermint candy is a momentary sweet, fresh taste in one's mouth. Those who have responded to the stirrings of mercy and forgiveness in their hearts can expect a bounty of the same to come back to them.

For those who have experienced mercy and forgiveness there will be no doubt that in the middle of the heart of their benefactor will be found the dynamic swirling activity of God.

Reflection Questions

- 1. Which aspects of my life am I withholding from God?*
- 2. Do I believe that God has forgiven and forgotten all my sins? If so, how does that influence my thoughts and actions?*

Prayer: Jesus, be in the middle of my heart always urging me to be more merciful and forgiving that I thought I could be. Amen.