Study Guide

Mercy in the Teachings of the Popes

Introduction

Pope Francis has mentioned three popes from modern times who had a special interest in the theme of mercy: Pope St. John XXIII, Pope Paul VI, and Pope St. John Paul II. For the past two centuries, these popes have exercised a strong influence on the spirituality of Catholics, especially around the topic of mercy. Pope St. John Paul II sensed that this was the “time for mercy” when he shared his devotion to the divine mercy message of St. Faustina with the world. And both of the popes who presided over the Second Vatican Council (Pope St. John XXIII and Pope Paul VI) called for the “civilization of love” through patience and dialogue. In their own way, each of these popes, while still continuing the teachings of the Church in the unbroken apostolic line, opened the modern world to the loving salvation and mercy of Jesus Christ. We encourage you to use *Mercy in the Teachings of the Popes* as a springboard for deepening your own understanding of mercy.

Reflection Questions:

1. In the introduction of the text, the author cites the frequency of receiving the Eucharist as a significant way in which we deepen our friendship with Christ. What does receiving the Eucharist mean to you? How does this relate to the idea of mercy?
2. “The goal of the papal magisterium is to be an echo of the Incarnate Word, preaching that is centered on love.” (p. 19) What does this mean to you?
3. What are some of your favorite Gospel stories that talk about mercy? What new insights have you gained about this stories from the writings of the popes?
4. The popes have had said that their special devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to Divine Mercy have deepened their faith lives and relationship with God. Is the same true for you? If you haven’t considered one of these devotions might you do so now?
5. Pope Paul VI talks about mercy within the family (p. 79). How does your family show mercy to one another in Christ? How can you do more?
6. What are some ways you might live out the teachings of the popes on the merciful mission of Jesus Christ in your daily life?

**Process Activity:**

After having read the teachings of the pope, discuss which one(s) made the greatest impression on you. Talk about why this aspect of mercy is important to your personal faith life. Share this quote with a friend or family member who is in need of mercy. If possible, turn the quote into a prayer for the increase of mercy in your own life.

**Prayer:**

Loving and gracious God, I know that your mercy is inexhaustible. You have given us these popes as a reflection of your Son, Jesus Christ, the light of the world, so that we might better understand what it means to be merciful. Grant that through their intercession we might always have a merciful heart toward those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. Amen