

Divine Mercy: the Fire of New Evangelization

Reverend Father Joel Rudi, DMP spiritual director
My brother-priests,
Dearest religious sisters
Distinguished organizers,
officers and volunteers of this 3rd Visayan Apostolic Congress on Mercy,
Our beloved devotees and disciples of Divine Mercy,
My brothers and sisters in Christ,

Divine Mercy: the Fire of New Evangelization

Please accept my profound gratitude for your kind invitation. I am honored to be with you and to speak before you. Thank you so much for your gracious presence. And surely with God's mercy He will reward your patience as you listen. Let us praise our merciful God!

Evangelization as we know from our catechism classes is to make the **message** and **mission of Jesus** known to all. Simply put it is to proclaim, to preach the Good News, that is, the Word of God. This is to fulfill His command to His apostles as He ascends to Heaven, "*go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation*" (Mark 16:15).

So to evangelize is **first** of all is to proclaim, to repeat what Jesus said. To evangelize is to speak, to teach the what, the why Jesus has told. Thus, with what is happening around us as evangelizers must not remain silent, or tongue-tied. Even if we will be labeled as politically incorrect, or we will be unpopular, we still have to go out, speak and denounce what is illegal, what is immoral. To remain silent when abuses are rampant is to compromise with evil. To keep quiet when misdeeds are openly sinfully committed is connivance with evil doers.

As evangelized and as evangelizers we are tasked by our Lord Jesus to open our lips. We have to speak. We have to do what Jesus did. Jesus during His time spoke about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scholars of the Law. He condemned injustices committed against the children, to the poor and to the least of the society. Jesus was not afraid. He did not succumb to the threats nor gave into bribes. Jesus showed up and He spoke. And also we must be.

What are the words we have to speak? What are the words that must come out from our lips? The answer is Mercy.

And so let us not forget that the spiritual works of Mercy are words. They are words to say or to hear. They are words to repeat and to ponder. These are words to share and like our Blessed Mother "*kept all these things in her heart*" (Luke 2:51).

What are these spiritual works of Mercy? You know them very well. And to refresh your memory let me enumerate them with you:

1. Instructing the ignorant
2. Advising the doubtful
3. Correcting the sinners
4. Being patient with those in error or who do wrong
5. Forgiving offenses
6. Comforting the afflicted
7. And praying for the living and the dead

My dearest devotees and disciples of Divine Mercy, the common denominator of these seven spiritual works of mercy is to speak. They demand for words. And so the challenge for us is to say something, to open our lips and to tell them something.

And our words must be comforting and consoling, forgiving and enlightening, right and true. Our words should never be misleading and scandalous, nor offensive and discriminating. Much more our words should never be artificial, fake and false.

The words of Jesus are life, and life-giving. His words promote life, to enhance life to be better and safe. The words of Jesus are not to extinguish or to undermine a person. Jesus speaks to defend life, to preserve life, and not to suppress nor to end life.

The words of Jesus are truth. With His words, Jesus inspires His listeners to be better and to do their best. Jesus speaks and they are encouraged to hope in life, not to harm nor hurt but to heal and help one another.

Have you been told "*your words give me hope?*" Have you approached someone and said to them "*thank you so much for your kind and comforting words?*" If your answer is yes, then you have just fulfilled the spiritual works of mercy. Let us all praise God!

Let me share with you this story. An overseas Filipina migrant was asked about the best thing she remembers with her employer. With that question of the most positive example she would not forget from her employer, she replied "*never in my stays with them my Madam and her family never utters any offensive nor violent words against me.*" She continued, "*even with my shortcomings or mistakes, her words were consoling which makes me to improve and correct myself.*"

And she added, "*maybe it is because whenever I recite the **three o'clock habit** I remember my employer asking our Lord Jesus to be merciful to her to be merciful to me.*"

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, when we speak of mercy, our words then become gentle, kind and fair.

Secondly to evangelize is to practice the message and mission of Jesus. After we speak, we act. After we preach, we perform what we profess. We live the message of Jesus. We fulfill His mission. We put into actions or we continue what and how Jesus worked out His life on earth.

What are the works of Jesus we must do? The answer is Mercy. And these are the **corporal works of mercy**.

1. Feeding the hungry
2. Giving drink to the thirsty
3. Clothing the naked
4. Sheltering the homeless
5. Visiting the sick or imprisoned
6. Ransoming the captive
7. and Burying the dead

My dearest devotees and disciples of Divine Mercy, again the common denominator of these **seven corporal works of mercy** is to act. They demand for concrete actions. And thus they challenge us to do something, to open our hands and finally to work for them.

The works of Jesus are service. The works of Jesus are to save. Jesus did not come to punish or to condemn. He was born to redeem us. And so His deeds are love in action. How Jesus lived His life is mercy in progress, His mercy in concrete works.

These concrete actions are very basic, so simple and very essential to man. They are expression how we can help, yes how much we have to serve. So to be merciful is to act, to perform or to provide. And what is being asked from us are the most common, and very necessary needs of man: food and drinks; shelter and clothing; presence and companionship. From this aspect what is being demanded from us is to be more compassionate, to be more charitable. Simply put mercy is to give, to act.

How diligently have we fulfilled the corporal works of mercy? They are passports to Heaven. Fulfilling those corporal acts of mercy will merit us to hear the final verdict of Jesus, telling us "*come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the Kingdom promised to you*" (Mathew 25,34).

Let me share with you this personal experience of our Filipino chaplain in Italy. After few months, he saw again this lady who was an active member of their Filipino chaplaincy in Rome. The priest greeted her and said, "*I have not seen you for more than three months. Where have you been?*" That overseas Filipina worker replied, "*it was an emergency. I returned to our country, there in my home town in Mindoro. And I took care of my husband.*"

The priest knowing the sad marital situation of that lady migrant worker inquired "*did he return? And are you now reconciled to each other?*"

That lady migrant worker came to Italy in order to support her two children. Her husband left her for young girl. With almost thirteen years as domestic helper in Rome, she supported and sent her children to College. And she narrated to this priest her husband has stage four liver cancer. The girl left him when he was sickly and has no more money. Her husband has nowhere to go. And he returned to our house. My son and my daughter did not want to accept or to take care of him. Then I decided to go home and take care of him in his final moments. After all I said to myself *"I am married to him and before God I promised to take him in sickness and in health. And so I think that was the sickness."*

In dying moments he was so sorry and he asked our forgiveness. We forgave him and we are just happy that he died at peace with God. *"Father,"* the lady continued, *"with what he did to us, surely we cannot accept him at all and forgive him. Maybe being member and worker in the Church made me forgive him. But I think it is God's mercy which makes me strong, faithful and forgiving."*

My brothers and sisters, Divine Mercy makes us to preach and to practice our faith. We speak of mercy. We share mercy. Mercy makes us to say I forgive you. Mercy empowers to do something good and beneficial even to those who neglect us or have hurt us.

How many times we have to speak Mercy? How often we must perform works of mercy? The answer lies with that Jesus said, *"I have come to bring fire upon the earth and how i wish it were already kindled"* (Luke 12,49). Fire, we know consumes and purifies rusts from metals, making it anew. With fire it can dissolve anything or to configure an object.

Divine Mercy is our **fire** to consume us and to change us so that our words and works become echoes and examples of Jesus whom we preach and pattern our lives. When Divine Mercy consumes our thoughts, surely all the words coming out from our lips would be gentle, polite and sincere. We can say to them *"I am sorry. It is my faults. Please forgive me."* With Divine Mercy takes us over or takes control of our thoughts, we can tell them *"I believe in you. You can surpass those obstacles and even succeed. I trust you and will entrust you again with other duties."*

Divine Mercy as a **fire** to change and to convert us, we do again and again, even more than being expected from us those corporal works of mercy. And so we can give food and drinks, but not only bread and water, but much more chicken joy and iced tea. Or we can share clothes, but not surplus or overruns but *'branded'* and not only one piece but complete dress. And when we visit the sick or the imprisoned, because mercy inflames us, we are not only present but we pray over them and even bring *'pasalubong.'*

Divine Mercy makes our hearts very soft and caring; our hands open and ready to share something; our heads humble and with utmost thoughts for their welfare and wellbeing.

Evangelization is words and actions. Evangelization is to preach and to perform. Divine Mercy is spiritual and corporal, that is, words and works; spirit and body. Simply put our message, and our mission.

And with Divine Mercy, we are messages and missionaries of New Evangelization.

My brothers and sisters, thank you so much. Jesus, King of mercy. I trust in You!

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(Conference talk of +Ruperto Cruz Santos during the 3rd Visayas Apostolic Congress on Mercy at the Grand Xing Imperial Hotel corner Iznart and Muelle Loney Streets, Iloilo City on December 5-6, 2017).