

GOD IS CALLING YOU TO SHOW MERCY IN WAYS BOTH GENERAL AND SPECIFIC

The ability to listen to God—to avail ourselves of the ways God reaches out to each of us—often leads to messages of mercy. Because mercy is one of God’s most prominent attributes, our response to God’s promptings often entails us being merciful like the Father (Luke 6.36).

In some ways we can show mercy no matter what specific vocation God chooses for us and presents to us over the course of time. Each specific vocation also includes unique opportunities to share God’s mercy.

Generally we show mercy when we provide assistance that helps the body or soul or our neighbor; these are the spiritual and corporal works of mercy that God doesn’t assign either to those who receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders or to those who’ve celebrated the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. What, then, are some unique ways that people living these respective vocations can do so in ways that reflect God’s mercy?

A married woman or man pledges fidelity to a specific person for a lifetime no matter what life brings by way of good times and bad, sickness and health, riches and poverty. To show mercy to the same person over and over again—the one person to whom a spouse is united by a solemn vow—is a specific way of answering God’s call to be merciful, a way that married couples live out by God’s grace. If God blesses the couple with children, the call to be not only primary educators but also primary mercy-bearers to their daughters and sons is a vocational ingredient that discipleship-focused parents collaborate with God by including in the recipe of family life.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders brings its own unique opportunities to be merciful like the Father. Only the priest feeds and gives drink with the Bread of Life and Cup of Eternal Salvation—the most holy Eucharist. Only the priest anoints the sick sacramentally, healing one way or another in accordance with God’s holy and perfect will. Only the priest goes beyond admonishing sinners to forgiving their offenses in the name and Person of Jesus.

Can the world have too much mercy? Does one vocation entail a greater obligation to show mercy such that any of us can simply leave it to the other person to do all that mercy stuff? Marital mercies and ordained mercies complement each other. The diversity of vocation-specific mercy marinates in a unity of merciful works, each adding flavor to the behavioral bounty that God sets before us each day. By answering God’s call to offer the sacrifice of mercy in ways both common to all His children as well as unique to those He calls as priests, wives and husbands, each person living out one of these Sacraments at the Service of Communion truly helps draw God’s holy people together for good. For the glory of His name. For the ultimate mercy: the gift of eternal life.