

## An Oasis of Mercy

*'An oasis is a small fertile or green area in a desert region, usually having a spring or a well'*

**Song**                      **Let Your Mercy Wash Over Us (Trevor Thomson)**

**All sing:**              Let your mercy wash over us as the rainfall refreshing the earth  
Let your mercy wash over us we your people are thirsting for you

**Reflection**              **Pope Francis – Misericordiae Vultus, 12**

'The Church's first truth is the love of Christ. The Church makes herself a servant of this love and mediates it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of oneself. Consequently, wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident, in our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, **wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy.**'

**Reflection**

'When you fall into the **ocean of mercy**, you stop all counting and measuring. In fact, counting and weighing no longer make sense; they run counter to the experience of grace. As long as you keep counting, you will not realize that everyone is saved by mercy anyway.' (Richard Rohr O.F.M.)

**All sing:**              Let your mercy wash over us as the rainfall refreshing the earth  
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**Reflection**

'I recently visited the 9/11 Memorial at the site of the Twin Towers in New York City. A huge waterfall drops down into the darkness of a lower pool whose bottom you cannot see. It struck me deeply as a metaphor for God: **mercy eternally pouring into darkness**, always filling an empty space. Grace fills all the gaps of the universe. Counting and measuring can only increase the space between things. Even better, water always falls and pools up in the very lowest and darkest places, just like mercy does. And mercy is just grace in action.' (Richard Rohr O.F.M.)

**All sing:**              Let your mercy wash over us as the rainfall refreshing the earth  
Let your mercy wash over us we your people are thirsting for you

**Thought**                      **Brother Alois of Taizé**

**Mercy** is not sentimental but demanding; it **knows no limits**. A law sets clear limits to a duty, whereas mercy never says, "That's enough; I have done my duty."

**Song**                      **Kyrie (Taizé)**

**All sing:**              Kyrie, Kyrie eleison, Christe, Christe eleison, Kyrie, Kyrie eleison

**Prayer**                      **Medieval Irish Lyric (trans. Carney)**

God, grant me a **well of tears** my sins to hide or I am like arid earth unsanctified!

**Song**                    **Living Water (Ronan McDonagh)**

**All sing:**            I will give you **living water**, no more shall you thirst  
I will give you living water, springing up within you.

**Reflection**            **Pope Francis – Misericordiae Vultus, 22**

‘From the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God, the **great river of mercy wells up** and overflows unceasingly. It is a spring that will never run dry, no matter how many people draw from it. Every time someone is in need, he or she can approach it, because the mercy of God never ends.’

**All sing:**            I will give you living water, no more shall you thirst  
I will give you living water, **springing up** within you.

**Thought**                **Pope Francis – Laudato Si, 91**

‘A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings.’

**Prayer**                    **Let us pray,**

**All say:**            Source of mercy,  
Plant in us seeds of tenderness and generosity that will bear fruit  
in the unfolding days of Lent.  
Water the roots of forgiveness and green the arid areas of our  
lives with gentle drops of compassion.  
Pour your living grace into our hearts so that we can be an oasis  
of mercy wherever we are.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Create an oasis of mercy in your home, office, school or church inspired by this reflection. Water it with thoughtful, listening prayer and generous acts of mercy flowing from your own heart during the season of Lent. Wait with loving patience for the blossoming.*

**Psalm**                    **Like The Deer (Joseph Walshe OCSO)**

**All sing:**            Like the deer that yearns for running streams,  
so my soul is yearning for you, my God.

*(You are invited into an ‘Oasis of Mercy’ for an evening of music, reflection, drama and prayer on Monday **22 February** 2016 at 8.00 p.m. in the Monastery of St. Alphonsus, Drumcondra or view on webcam [www.rednuns.com](http://www.rednuns.com))*

**(Pat O’Donoghue - Dublin Diocesan Liturgy Resource Centre – Lent 2016)**

**Oasis of Mercy – Planting suggestions:  
Early and late Spring Garden – for Lent and Easter 2016**

**Bulbs**

Hyacinth Bulbs  
Narcissus Bulbs  
Tulip Bulbs

Crocus Bulbs  
Iris Bulbs  
Muscari Bulbs  
Scilla Bulbs  
Convallarian Bulbs - (Lily of the Valley)  
Ornithogalum – (Star of Bethlehem)  
Hyacinthoides Bulbs - (Bluebell)



**Plants**

Dictamnus – (Burning Bush)  
Hellebores – especially variety called ‘Lenten Rose’.  
Viola (common-name is Pansie)  
Primula  
Polygonatum – (Solomon’s Seal) – needs shade  
Trollius – (globeflowers) – needs wet soil.  
Cardamine – (Lady’s Smock)

**Shrub/Small Trees**

Magnolia – especially ‘star magnolia’ variety  
Camellia – needs partial shade, away from early morning sun. Also needs ericaceous soil.  
Daphne – ‘eximina’ variety  
Rhododendron – praecox variety. Needs full sun, but frost may damage flowers  
Forsythia  
Malus (crab-apple tree) – blossoms in spring, fruits in autumn.  
Dicentra ‘bleeding heart’.



### Some Ideas

Many of the early flowering species in spring are bulbs. Mostly they are woodland carpet bulbs in their wild/natural state. This is because the tree canopy above them gives them shelter from the wind, frost and winter conditions in general. The canopy also absorbs much of the rain so that the bulbs are not overwatered and the flowers do not suffer from wet rot. I think we can draw many parallels from this with regard to relationships with one another and with God. We are protected and thrive in the shelter of the other. It is the early bulbs that need forest protection. Later the canopy will thicken with leaf growth and block light in the summer which would stunt carpet growth. Also the canopy would absorb the reduced summer rainfall and leave the carpet parched. So it's about knowing when to move close and shelter or when to move apart and give room to breathe. The desired result for both cases is to facilitate the blossoming of the person/plant.

The camellia shrub is among others which need partial shade. This is because it blooms so early that frost can encase it during cold nights. In partial shade as the day heats up the frost will slowly melt and leave the buds unharmed. In direct morning sun the interaction between hot and cold is too intense and the defrosting process will damage the buds and blossoms. This is a good example of what Teilhard de Chardin referred to as "the slow work of God". The scriptures refer to this gradual process of merciful encounter repeatedly. The haggling of Abraham for the salvation of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah is an early case in point. God gradually allows Abraham to grow bold in his presumption upon the mercy of God. Therefore the haggling starts with high figures. Having secured that figure he builds upon it until he bargains God down to a promise to save the cities even if only 10 just men can be found there. Had he continued he would have found out what we now have the privilege to know. God was willing all along to save the whole world for the sake of one good man, Jesus. The enormity of the depths of God's mercy can only be absorbed over an entire lifetime, and indeed into eternity.

Dante understood this well. In the Divine Comedy he chooses Mary as the one most worthy to gaze deeper and deeper into the depths of God's love. Beholding these levels of Divine love adds a special nuance to the invocation "turn your eyes of mercy towards us". Mary is not the source of this mercy, but her eyes are the channel through which God communicates it to Dante/us in ways which he/we can comprehend.

The story of the Conversion of St Paul reminds us that while the intervention of Christ was sudden the subsequent conversion was a more gradual process until the scales eventually fall from his eyes. The core message, of course, is that if God did not give up on Saul the persecutor then there is hope for all of us. Paul's story reminds us that every Saint has a past and every sinner has a future!

The Gospels parable of the mustard tree celebrates the tiniest of seeds and the largest of shrubs. Again a reminder to allow the potential in us and all things to develop to the full. Let us not limit our vision to the meagreness of our starting point. The parable of the sower is also apt. The work of human hands is part of the story of the harvest, both in the sowing, tending and reaping. But there is more to the story. The cycle of nature and its inbuilt drive to live is at work in seed, soil and climate. We are part of life, not masters of it. We are called to responsible stewardship of the earth and its resources. We are dependants of this generous natural cycle. Our contemporary disconnectedness from the reality of our contingency upon the bounty of nature is at least in part responsible for our lack of the sense of God as part of the very air we breathe.

The remedy can be to get our hands dirty in harmony with nature, to appreciate it and to let it teach us so much about the beauty of creation and the infinite beauty of the creator of all that is.