

Solemn Novena to St. Ann

100th Anniversary

July 22, 2024

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It's incredible how fast time is flying. We're already celebrating the sixth day of this solemn novena. On Wednesday, when we started, Father Nelson gave us a wonderful reflection on gratitude. On day two, we spoke about joy and the importance of finding joy amid our sufferings, because God is with us in our pains and sufferings, and because, as we said, grateful people are joyful people.

On the third day of our novena, we were called to faith by Father Nelson. Our faith in God is at the root of our gratitude and joy. We are invited each day to grow in our faith by learning about Jesus, by reading the Bible and through other ways, by listening to the Word of God speaking to us in our hearts and in every action of our lives, and by living what we learn and listen to from God.

Our faith must always be put into action. This is what we talked about on Saturday, the fourth day of our novena, when we spoke about Mary's gratitude. As I said, Mary knew who she was and embraced the realities of her life, praising God for His goodness.

Yesterday, Father Nelson reminded us of God's constant call to love. He shared the beautiful story about the two-dollar bill and how it is often hidden and kept by collectors because it is perceived as rare. Still, in reality, there are many of them, and in the same way, love, too, is often kept as a rare value, but it, too, needs to be shared with the rest of the world.

So today, I want to expand on that a little bit. Today, we are called to be people of compassion. Mercy and compassion are both related to love. They are concrete ways of expressing our love. It's very easy, perhaps too easy, to say the words, I love you. But when it comes to showing our love, it often becomes a little more complicated.

Compassion comes as a result or as a fruit of our love. There is much that we can say about mercy and compassion. When Jesus tells us to love one another, he is also telling us to be compassionate and merciful.

The Bible is full of passages that speak about mercy and compassion. From the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation, we find a story of compassion and love, God's love and compassion for us. We were created out of love from God. We are forgiven and loved by God because of his compassion for us. When we hear today's readings from God's perspective, we can see what it means to be compassionate. God judges us with compassion. God loves us constantly. He makes the sun come out for the good and for those who we would think that do not deserve it. I think of my vocation as a result of God's compassion and love.

When I was a child, my aunts and my grandmother took me to church. I went to religious education and to mass every weekend. But when I finished my confirmation, I turned my

back on God. I decided I didn't want to go back to church. And yet, out of love, a few years later, God called me, and he gave me a seat at the table, just as we all have. God does not expect us to return to him what he gives to us because he gives to us out of the abundance of his heart.

But he does want us to act in the same way that he acts with us, with love, with compassion, caring for one another. Throughout the years, I've learned to see God's love in the simple things. I constantly try to reflect on that question, Who am I? And I always end up looking at God's presence in my life as the source of who I am.

I have learned to listen to God and to look at myself with compassion, which is also very important. We cannot give what we don't have in our hearts. So, we cannot give to others compassion if we don't have compassion for ourselves.

Today, God is calling us to have compassion for others. But it must begin with the compassion that we have for ourselves. When God calls us to love one another, he is calling us to be compassionate to one another. He is calling us to be merciful just as also the Father is merciful to us. In his book, *The Art of Happiness*, the Dalai Lama wrote, Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.

For us Christians, compassion is a fundamental element of our faith and our way of life. We are called to walk with those who suffer and to see them and look at them with the eyes of God, even when it is complicated for us to do so. Practicing the spiritual and the corporal works of mercy, counseling the doubtful, instructing the ignorant, admonishing the sinner, comforting the sorrowful, forgiving those who hurt us, bearing wrongs patiently, praying for the living and the dead, but also in very concrete ways like feeding the hungry or giving drink to the thirsty or sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, visiting those who are imprisoned, burying the dead and giving alms to the poor.

So, brothers and sisters, as we continue our solemn novena to Saint Ann on this sixth day, let us be mindful that there is compassion in the world. Sometimes we may think that it is hidden, but very often it is in plain sight. We just choose to ignore it or we just choose to not be compassionate, after all it's not the things that come out in the front page of the newspapers and magazines.

All we see is bad news and conflict, but if we look closely, we can see compassion around us. We can find the love that we are looking for and if we can't see it or find it, we are called to be that compassion, to be that love, starting in our own homes, starting where we are at this moment, with the people who are around us. So, as we continue this solemn novena on this sixth day, let us look back and thank God for the compassion that He has had for us.

Let us look forward and trust that God will continue to be merciful to us. Let us look above and praise God for His loving mercy. Let us look around and serve God with generous love and compassion for those around us.

And let us look inside of us, in our hearts, and find God so that we may be compassionate sons and daughters of God. Let us remember that every one of us is capable of compassion and we all deserve and need a little bit of compassion every now and then. Let us look

around today at everyone around us and let us see a face of compassion. Let us be a face of compassion for the world.