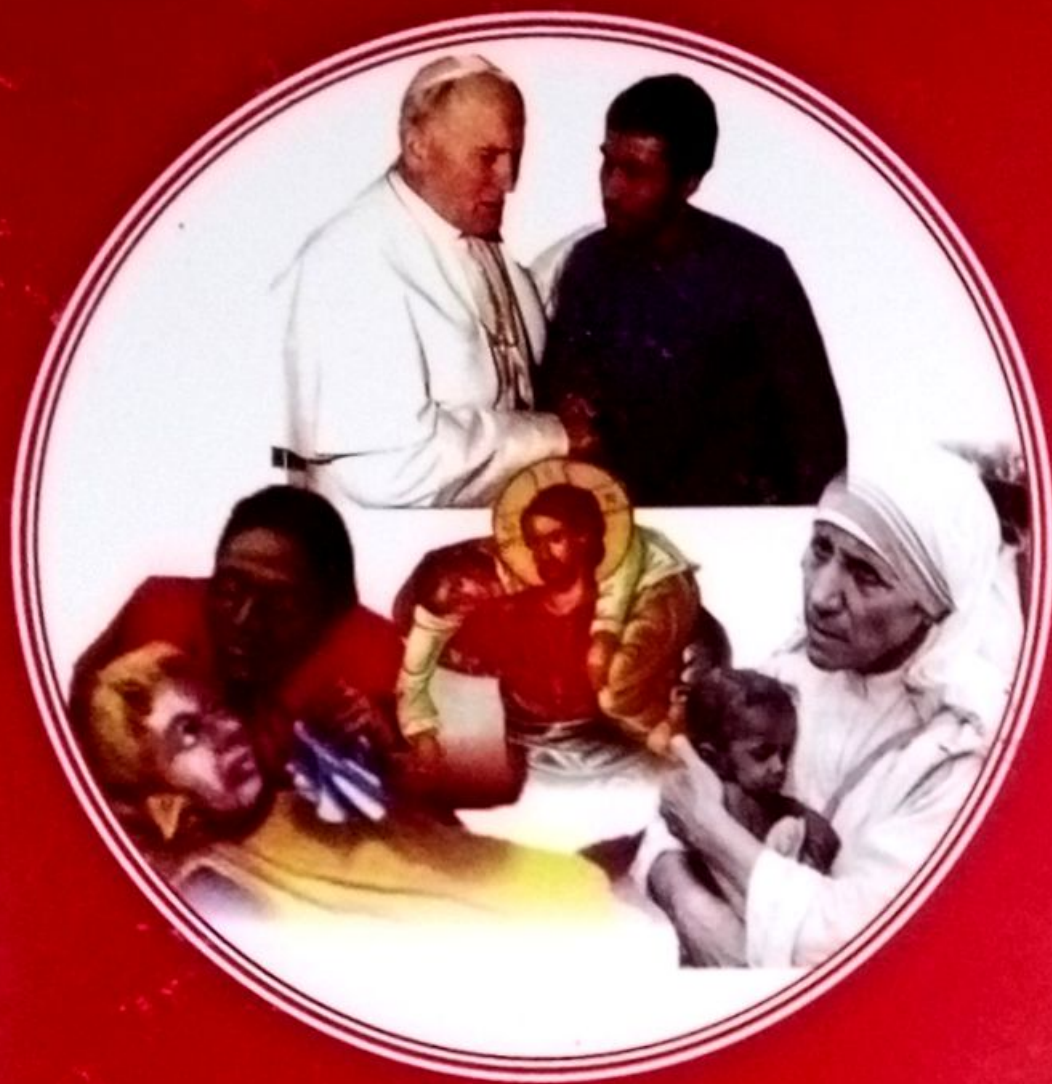


The Spirituality of Mercy

in the Life and Teachings of Pope John Paul II



Chilota Elochukwu, DDL

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DEDICATION



I dedicate this work to all members of the
Congregation of the Daughters of Divine
Love and to religious Congregations,
which recognise mercy as an animating
part of their charism.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Pontificate of John Paul II carried a distinct air of great concern about mercy. The theme of mercy was important for him, as he repeatedly wrote and spoke about mercy.¹

The reality of mercy was most important for John Paul II. His pontificate which I describe as the pontificate of mercy in this book bears witness to this reality. The central place of mercy in John Paul II's Petrine ministry motivated my interest in writing this book. The aim of this work, therefore, arises from the desire to produce an in-depth study of the spirituality of mercy that marked the pontificate of John Paul II. The importance John Paul II attached to mercy during his pontificate was, and is, a prophetic voice calling people's attention to mercy. Mercy is the attribute of God in his *ad extra* action in relation to his people who are afflicted with physical and particularly moral evil, with the desire to offer them assistance which uplifts and liberates them from evil and misery, and particularly sin.² Mercy spurred God right

¹ Throughout this work all quotations and citations from John Paul II's Encyclicals, Apostolic Exhortations and Letters, are taken directly from the English Language translations of Pauline Books & Media of a particular work (unless otherwise indicated), then refer to the number of the Latin text in *AAS*, giving the page.

² The people of the Old Testament had a full taste of this mercy. In John Paul II's explanations, mercy signifies a special power of love, which prevails over the sin, and infidelities of the people of Israel. God pardons Israel's sins and brings them back to

from the beginning to create and to provide for what he created (Gn 1, 27-28; Ws 14, 3; 17, 2; Ps 104, 30; Ws 11, 12).³ This mercy led God not to condemn those he created when they rebelled against him; instead he sent his Son, Jesus Christ to teach them mercy. Therefore, Christ, the Incarnate Word, whose external example can be seen and imitated, was sent to make the Father's mercy visible for his people, and to demonstrate for them the way to this mercy.⁴ «No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known» (Jn 1, 18).⁵ John Paul II called attention to mercy when he wrote: «confirmation has to be given once and for all of the fact that "God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ"» (Ep 24-5).⁶ This mercy means that God the Father, in Jesus Christ, is close to people, loving and saving them through the mercy given through the power of the Holy Spirit.

grace when he becomes aware of repentance and conversion (Jr 31,20; Ezk 39, 25-29): JOHN PAUL II, *Dives in Misericordia* Encyclical Letter, n. 4, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1186-1187 (henceforth: *DM*).

³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *God Father and Creator: A Catechesis on the Creed*, vol. I, Pauline Books and Media 1996, 244-260 (henceforth: *GFC*).

⁴ John Paul II explained that God did not send his Son, Jesus Christ into the world in order to condemn it, but that the world might be saved, through him (cf. Jn 3, 17). According to John Paul II, the world that Jesus found when he became man deserved condemnation, because of the sin that had dominated all of history, beginning with the fall of Adam and Eve. But God relented and mercy prevailed. Explaining further, John Paul II said that, to save, means to embrace and lift up with the redemptive love that is always grater than sin. In this sense, John Paul II referred to the prodigal son as the unsurpassable model: cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, V. MESSORI, ed., Random House, London 1994, 57-58 (henceforth: *CTH*).

⁵ According to the explanation of the Second Vatican Council, the most intimate truth which revelation gives about God and man's salvation shines forth in the person of Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus that we come to know God in the mystery of his being and in his relationship to man: cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum* Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, n. 2, in *AAS* 58 (1966), 837-884 (henceforth: *DV*).

⁶ *DM*, n. 1, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1178.

Jesus makes known and brings close to people the attributes of God in a most perfect way. God who is rich in mercy becomes visible in Christ in a special way:

Through his lifestyle and through his actions Jesus revealed that love is present in the world in which we live- an effective love, a love that addresses itself to man and embraces everything that makes up his humanity. This love makes itself particularly noticed in contact with suffering, injustice and poverty- in contact with the whole historical "human condition", which in various ways manifests man's limitation and frailty, both physical and moral. This love is called mercy.⁷

Jesus, the Incarnate Word, makes God present as mercy. The merciful acts of God, taking pity on human weakness, are revealed in the history of salvation and particularly in the merciful actions and lifestyle of Jesus. This meant that Christ, by his way of life and actions, personifies mercy and en-fleshes it in the situations of everyday life, thereby becoming a model of mercy for others. He points out to people how they are called to mercy, and the part the Church and humanity are to follow.⁸ This revelation of mercy culminates in the Paschal Mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, with the sending of the Holy Spirit to keep mercy alive and to perpetuate it in the mind and heart of people.⁹

John Paul II experienced this mercy in a multitude of events throughout his life and later reflected on mercy. He allowed himself to be formed by this truth. This allows John Paul II to state that anybody attempting to understand him and his actions has to start from «inside». The statement of G. Weigel helps to explain this affirmation by John Paul II. G. Weigel highlighted people's diverse perspectives about John Paul II's accomplishment during his pontificate. He wrote:

⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Dive in Misericordia*, Encyclical Letter, n. 3, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1183-1184.

⁸ Cf. *DM*, n. 3, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1184.

⁹ Cf. *DM*, n. 7, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1201; JOHN PAUL II, *Dominum et Vivificantem* Encyclical Letter, n. 58, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 882-884 (henceforth: *DeI*).

The world and, indeed, many Catholics—had understood John Paul II from the outside: as a dynamic statesman, a media superstar, a resolute defender of human rights, a compelling public intellectual, a voice for the voiceless, a man of dialogue, reason. All of which he was. But understanding Karol Józef Wojtyła from the «outside» through his public roles—never really got you to the core of the man.¹⁰

John Paul II himself, after seeing many articles, books, and biographies written about him and their emphasis on his role as a statesman remarked: «They try to understand me from «outside». But I can only be understood from «inside».¹¹ The above quotation contains some of the views that led John Paul II to assert that he needed to be understood «from inside». In other words, we are called to recognise that the truth that drove John Paul II's life and action has to be grasped from inside and not from the exterior.

This book attempts to reveal the foundation and dynamic of John Paul II's spirituality of mercy. The significance of this work therefore, focuses on the exploration and discovery of how John Paul II understood, taught, and lived mercy; the motivating force for his mercy disposition, and the reason for his insistence on this mercy. This book also offers insights that are beneficial to those Congregations that recognise mercy as an animating part of their charism. The Congregation of the Daughters of Divine Love to which I belong, is among those that will benefit from this study.

John Paul II recalled that the primary source of mercy is God. He called to mind that all the good that we receive and do to others comes

¹⁰ G. WEIGEL, «The death of a Priest», in *God's Choice: Pope Benedict XVI and the future of the Catholic Church*, Harper Collins Publishers, New York 2005, 3.

¹¹ John Paul II disclosed this concern during his conversation with his biographer, G. Weigel on 7th March, 1996: cf. G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, Harper Collins Publishers, London 1999, 7, cf. Notes, n. 8, 887. This brief summary of various views about John Paul II's ministry as pope seems to be pointing to the fact that building only on these public roles would be a misconception of who John Paul II was.

from God. From the beginning of the world, God endowed humanity with his mercy. Every act of human mercy has its origin in God and flows from him. It is on such foundations that John Paul II's attitude of mercy was shaped.

Having been formed in this truth about mercy, John Paul II felt that his pontificate is a fertile ground to create an awareness of this mercy. He saw his Petrine ministry as an arena to teach mercy. He stated that the dissemination of mercy was his assigned task by Providence.

Among the ways through which John Paul II had accomplished this task of the proclamation of mercy was by his writings, preaching, speeches, journeys, and by example. It is important to mention that among these various means he used to create this awareness, his encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, is outstanding in creating the awareness of mercy.¹² In it, John Paul II presented for our prayer, study and action the richness of God's faithful love and mercy.¹³ John Paul II's intention for creating the awareness of mercy was to recall God's love, revealed in the whole messianic mission of Christ, beginning with his coming into the world up to the Paschal Mystery of his Cross and Resurrection. John Paul II, was convinced that the Church and the world need mercy; his pontificate therefore offered him an opportunity to remind the Church and humanity that God is merciful, that «God is rich in mercy» (Jp 2, 4),¹⁴ and that Christ is the revelation of this truth. In him the mercy of God has been revealed in the Incarnation.

According to John Paul II, reflection on mercy as revealed in Christ is important for people to know their true worth, and their transcendent root. In John Paul II's explanation, in order to understand what it means

¹² JOHN PAUL II, *Dives in Misericordia* Encyclical Letter, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1177-1232. It is in the *DM*, that John Paul II poured out his heart with regard to his understanding and application of mercy. Of course there were other places that carry the print of his understanding and living of mercy, as we affirmed in our research, but the high point of his understanding and application of mercy is found in the *DM*. This means that while we search through his other writings and teachings on mercy, *DM*, will serve as our major base for the discovery and understanding of what John Paul II said about mercy.

¹³ Cf. R.F. MORNÉAU, «*Dives in Misericordia*: Themes and Theses», *Review for Religions*, 40 (1981), 670.

¹⁴ *DM*, n. 1, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1177.

to be fully human, it is necessary to know God, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ.¹⁵ In other words, John Paul II insisted that the full significance of the human person could never be grasped in isolation from God.¹⁶ He therefore called on people to turn to mercy as the message of hope for our times. John Paul II insisted that reflection on mercy was a worthwhile task as an answer to both the physical and moral miseries of the present-day human experiences.¹⁷ Focussing on mercy was necessary, John Paul II said, for people to learn to turn to the God of mercy. According to John Paul II, it was not enough to only meditate on the mystery of our God of mercies, but also to have recourse to that mercy.¹⁸ He recalled how the people of the old covenant have had the experience of this recourse to God's mercy, both as individuals and as a community.¹⁹ Through saving deeds and prophetic words, the people of Israel experienced God's mercy. Based on this mercy, Israel continually entrusted themselves, on this God of

¹⁵ Cf. *DM*, n. 1, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1178; cf. also J. M. MILLER, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, J. M. Miller, ed., Our Sunday Visitor, Indiana 1996, (henceforth: «Editor's Introduction»), 98.

¹⁶ Cf. J. O'HARE, «Mercy Appears», *America* 143 (1980), 402. In this sense, K. L. Schmitz says that with the turn from Karol Wojtyła to John Paul II the Pope, key ideas and emphases, salient insights and directions of thought continued to be expressed in his teaching, and the most prominent of these arch ideas was his insistence that mankind – men and women – had to return to their transcendent Source: cf. K. L. SCHMITZ, *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington D. C. 1993, 90.

¹⁷ Cf. *DM*, n. 1, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1178.

¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 2, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1182.

¹⁹ This is why C. Schönborn holds that the Old Testament is a great school of mercy of God. According to him God was revealed to Moses as «a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in faithful love and constancy» (Ex 34.6; CCC, n. 210). The people of Israel were in need of their God, their distancing themselves from him brought unhappiness and misery: cf. C. SCHÖNBORN, «Relazione di apertura al Primo Congresso Mondiale sulla Divina Misericordia», in *World Apostolic Congress on Mercy*, Giovanni in Laterano, Roma 2008, 7; <http://www.worldapostoliccongressonmercy.org>

mercies, both when stricken with misfortune and when they became aware of their sin, as in the case of setting up the golden calf (Ex 32).²⁰

According to John Paul II, it is God's will that his people, both individually and collectively should practice mercy. He provided them with a model, Jesus Christ, who after visible demonstration of God's mercy through his life, death and Resurrection, demanded from people that they too are to practice mercy. This meant that the messianic programme of Christ indicated the path, which the Church and humanity must follow.²¹

From his analysis of the modern world, John Paul II recognised that mercy is not a fashionable idea in the contemporary world.²² The very idea of mercy seems to cause uneasiness in man.²³ In John Paul II's teaching, mercy is resented because of its misconception. According to him, the reason for this contemporary loss of the sense of mercy is because some people understand mercy as a weakness. He felt that the mastery of science and technology has so much fed a sense of dominion over the world that contemporary humanity belittles mercy as weakness.²⁴ For many people the idea of mercy implies a relationship of inequality between the person offering mercy and the one receiving it. According to John Paul II, there are others too who think that the practice of mercy is a kind of shield used to cover up ignoring the demands of justice. To tackle these faulty attitudes, John Paul II used the parable of the prodigal son to enlighten people about mercy. The analogy in the parable of the prodigal son brings out the fact that the

²⁰ Cf. *DM*, n. 4, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1188. This explains the reason why Cardinal Christoph Schönborn says that mercy exists where there is truth. Explaining further, he stated that mercy flourishes where sin is called by its name, and God who hates sin, but loves the sinner takes over: cf. C. SCHÖNBORN, «Relazione di apertura al Primo Congresso Mondiale sulla Divina Misericordia», 8.

²¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 3, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1185.

²² I owe this expression to J. Saravva Martins: cf. J. SARAVVA MARTINS, «Introduzione», in *Dives in Misericordia: commento all'Enciclica di Giovanni Paolo II*, J. Saravva Martins ed., Paideia, Brescia 1981, 15; cf. also J. O'HARE, «Mercy appears», *America* (1980), 402.

²³ Cf. *DM*, n. 2, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1180–1181.

²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 2, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1181.

practice of mercy is based on a shared encounter, where both the giver of mercy and its receiver meet in the experience of the dignity proper to each.²⁵

In his effort to teach and live mercy, John Paul II insisted, that mercy is what the contemporary world needed most, if the physical and moral miseries afflicting present-day humanity are to be overcome. In John Paul II's understanding, the world would grow intolerable if mercy were not available.²⁶

The Church is to proclaim the truth about mercy and makes it known in various ways. According to John Paul II, it is only by professing and proclaiming mercy and by drawing people close to its source, that the Church would be living its authentic life. The Church is to be merciful to people through people because she considers this, to be an indispensable condition for a better, and a «more human» world.²⁷ For John Paul II, mercy means love of God and neighbour. It is a creative love. It is a way of response and imitation of Christ, the One who reveals mercy. Mercy is a particular way of living under the action of the Holy Spirit. John Paul II stated that the only thing that can guarantee a truly human society is the practice of mercy coupled with living in a state of conversion and forgiveness. John Paul II continued to live mercy and call on people to turn to mercy until his death on 2nd April 2005.

In order to understand why and how the spirituality of mercy of John Paul II developed led me to investigate his background and his experiences. I discovered that at different stages of his life, John Paul II was called by various names such as: Lolek, Karol Wojtyła, Father, Bishop, Archbishop, Cardinal, and John Paul II. I used some of these names in their proper time periods.

Karol Wojtyła, throughout his life, experienced God's mercy in various events of his life encounters. He developed an understanding of the mercy of God as it relates to these experiences. He first understands

²⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*; cf. also J. M. MILLER, «Editor's Introduction», 105.

²⁶ Cf. *DM*, n. 14, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1225; cf. also J. O'HARE *America*, 402.

²⁷ Cf. *DM*, n. 15, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1228; cf. also J. SARAIVA MARTINS, «Introduzione», 14.

mercy from the perspective of a young boy in his family who grows and develops into young adulthood informed by many people and events in society and the Church.

His perspective develops throughout his life from his early years, to his understanding of mercy as a priest in Poland, to his developing understanding of mercy as a bishop, archbishop, and participant at the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council as well as a Cardinal, and eventually to the perspective on mercy as Pope, the Vicar of Christ on earth. This book also attempts to describe the situation of Poland at the time of the experience, describing persons, events and practices that gave Karol Wojtyła early information about mercy.

The main body of this book consists of *four parts*, comprising a total of *seven chapters*, with a general conclusion. *Part one* consists of *two chapters*, in which I presented the beginnings of Karol Wojtyła's encounter with the Mystery of Mercy. *The first chapter* presents our journeying with Karol Wojtyła through the environment and situations into which he was born and brought up. *The second chapter* explores the various events and influential persons in Karol Wojtyła's young adult life that depicted means of his experience of mercy.

Part two contains *two chapters*, in which I investigated Karol Wojtyła's contact with mercy as a priest and bishop. *The third chapter* presents the itinerary of mercy experiences in the priesthood of Karol Wojtyła. *The fourth chapter* focuses on Karol Wojtyła's mercy encounter as Bishop, Archbishop and Cardinal in the Archdiocese of Kraków.

Part three is made up of *two chapters* in which I examined John Paul II's doctrine on mercy. *The fifth chapter* is on the revelation of mercy and its requirements as demonstrated in Jesus Christ. *The sixth chapter* deals with John Paul II acute survey of the situations in the contemporary world.

Part four of this book consists of *one chapter*, which contains my final reflections on the theme. *The seventh chapter* is the concluding chapter in which I revealed John Paul II's spirituality of mercy as a response of faith rooted in the Paschal Mystery.

The originality of this work is already in the title which focuses on the spirituality of mercy in the life and teachings of John Paul II ranging from his early years, to his priestly and episcopal ministry and throughout his pontificate. This book offers new insight in the area of spirituality by demonstrating how the spirituality of mercy develops as an important theme, which takes its root in the Cross of Christ, the Paschal Mystery and expresses itself as a response to mercy.

PART ONE

THE BEGINNING OF KAROL WOJTYLA'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE MYSTERY OF MERCY

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY BEGINNINGS OF WOJTYLA'S EXPERIENCE OF MERCY

One fact, which stands out clearly, is the conviction that there is no way to understand John Paul II's spirituality of mercy, unless one goes back to his origin. It will be helpful to bring in here briefly, the traditional notion of mystery to help us see beyond the simple narration of the events as Karol Wojtyla's encounter with the mystery of mercy unfolds. The concept of mystery centres on the experiential acknowledgment of the absolute transcendence of God whenever one encounters the divine salvific activity within human history. The Christian understanding of mystery, rooted in the Jewish biblical thought, flows from the belief that God has freely chosen to enter into a covenant relationship with the human family. The salvific nature of God's election is expressed through the historical unfolding of a gracious plan of salvation that seeks to liberate and divinise sinful humankind¹

¹: cf. T. D. MCGONIGLE, "Mystery", in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, M. Downey, ed., Liturgical Press Collegeville, Minnesota 1993, 681 (henceforth: *NDCSp*).

The Context

I feel it is important to review this theme of mercy in the context in which Karol Wojtyła was born. This context will assist in the development of a fuller understanding of all the external factors influencing his life.

O. Halecki advised that it is necessary to observe Poland right from the start, in order to understand the development this nation has experienced from its pre-history to history, that is to say from one isolated and legendary existence to a life in relation to the people of its neighbours. This development will be made clear through documentary testimonies.² Halecki's view is in line with the thinking of the English biographer, G. O' Connor, who said that in order to understand the character of twentieth-century Poland, it is important to appreciate the historic grandeur of its past,³ and this is exactly what I have determined to do here. I will briefly try to discover what Poland looked like before its decline, and before the birth of Karol Wojtyła.

The Polish Grandeur

The Polish nation, into which Karol Wojtyła was born, was once the greatest power in East-central Europe. Under their Duke Prince, Mieszko I, the founder of the Piast dynasty (960-1386), Poland spread to the East and became a great power. It was established as a Roman kingdom in the eleventh century.⁴

² Cf. O. HALECKI, *La Pologne de 963 à 1914: Essai de synthèse historique*, Boulevard, Paris 1933, 9: « Il faut observer tout d'abord vers quelle époque et dans quelles conditions la Pologne passa de la préhistoire, à l'histoire, c'est-à-dire d'une existence isolée et légendaire à une vie en relation avec la vie des peuples voisins, et éclairée par des témoignages documentaires ».

³ Cf. G. O' CONNOR, *Universal Father: A Life of John Paul II*, Bloombury, London 2005, 10.

⁴ Cf. B. STASIEWSKI, « Poland, the Catholic Church » in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. II, Gale Group, New York 2003, 438.

The first traces of Christianity are found in Poland in the area of Krakow during the second half of the ninth century and are connected with missionary activity of Methodius, the Apostle of the Slavs⁵ in Moravia. In reality, the arrival of Christianity in Poland is connected with Polish history generally taken to begin with the baptism of the Piast Prince Mieszko I in A. D. 966. Mieszko married the Czech Christian princess, Dobrava and was himself baptised the following year.⁶

The State in the Second Polish Republic (1918-1945)

The historical period in which Karol Wojtyła was born and brought up (1918-1945), was marked both by a period of peace and a period of political unrest. The second Polish Republic (1918-1939) in which Karol Wojtyła was born was created at the close of the First World War, in implementation of the decision of the Peace Conference, confirmed by the Treaty of Riga in 1921⁷. The period of Peace Treaty which reigned in Poland at the time, could be called a period of freedom. But it was also a time of great concern, because what gripped the Polish people in the 1920s was the rebirth of their nation. The fundamental problem facing the Republic was the problem of integration. The Peace, which the treaty brought, involved the reunion of the Poles with their countrymen who had been under the jurisdictions of foreign powers. The population, institutions, and traditions of the three partitions had to be weld into one entity.⁸

⁵ Karol Wojtyła would later remember, the apostles of the Slavs, Methodius and Cyril. He would recall their contributions in the specific area of missionary activity in the Encyclical on the two saints: cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Slavorum Apostoli*, n. 26, in *IAS* 77 (1985), 779-813.

⁶ Cf. N. DAVIES, *A History of Poland*, vol. II, Columbia University Press, New York 1982, 179. The Primate of Poland, Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński and the whole Polish episcopate had planned for years together for the celebration of the Millennium of Christianity in Poland, and it was celebrated on 16th April, 1966: cf. A. BONIECKI, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium: Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, Marian Press, Massachusetts 2000, 269.

⁷ Cf. N. DAVIES, *A History of Poland*, 399.

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 402.

The Period of Freedom (1918-1939)

Karol Wojtyła was born in a time of freedom. His birth came in the moment of his country's resurrection and Polish Catholicism is obvious. Between 1919 and 1939 there had been progress in many sectors of Catholic life. Religious orders and congregations flourished, priestly vocations were numerous, and theology was well taught in the seminaries and in the Catholic university faculties such as those of Kraków and Lublin. In fact, an exceptional Christian morale matured within the Polish Church so well structured.⁹

The Second World War (1939-1945) and the Polish State

The Second World War could be described as the period of political unrest in Poland. It was the period of occupation. The social effects of the Second World War overshadowed everything, which had happened in the century before.¹⁰ All classes of people without exception, in one way or the other, experienced the wind of the Second World War and that of the occupiers.¹¹ The Church and state situations at that time were unpleasant. This meant that the strong storm of the Second World War beat indiscriminately on both believers and unbelievers alike.¹²

After having a general view of what Poland looked like before and after the birth of Karol Wojtyła, it is appropriate to have an overview of his family background.

The Family Background of Karol Wojtyła and Initial Education

Karol Wojtyła, (the father of junior Karol), was born on 18th July 1879, to Maciej and Anna. Very little is known about his childhood, except that his formal education ended after three years in high school.¹³ Karol's senior began his apprenticeship as a tailor, following in his father's footsteps.

After 12 years of military service, the senior Karol Wojtyła applied for a transfer to civilian government service. The regimental authorities supported his application, and he was given the highest recommendation. But when Poland regained independence, he transferred to the Polish army with the rank of lieutenant.¹⁴ There, he continued his career as lieutenant in the Polish army until he was retired on pension with the rank of captain in 1927¹⁵ (henceforth: Captain).

The senior Karol Wojtyła, universally referred to in Wadowice as «the Captain»,¹⁶ was a gentle man; and a man whose army career, in the judgment of his superior officers, was based on a combination of intelligence, diligence, dependability, and, above all, honesty.¹⁷

The Captain's wife, Emilia Kaczorowska, was born on 26th March 1884. Emilia is thought to have completed eight grades at school. She was always of somewhat delicate health, but spent her life taking care of the household and the children. She was skilled in embroidery, a profession that she used to supplement the family's income. People in

⁹ Cf. M. O'CARROLL, *Poland and John Paul II*, Veritas Publications, Dublin 1979, 4.

¹⁰ Cf. N. DAVIES, *A History of Poland*, vol. II, 206.

¹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹² Cf. N. DAVIES, vol. II, 224.

¹³ From Wojtyła's written application filed in his regard, it appears that the senior Wojtyła completed elementary school and three years of secondary education. His plans for further studies of any kind were cancelled by the outbreak of the World War I; cf. also *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 38.

¹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 38, 62-63.

¹⁶ From now on, unless otherwise stated, the senior Karol Wojtyła will be referred to in our research as the Captain.

¹⁷ Cf. G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, Harper Collins, London 1999, 29.

Wadowice remember that she liked to chat with her neighbours.¹⁸ The Captain and his wife kept a deeply religious home.

The Wojtyła's had three children. The first son Edmund was born on 28th August 1906.¹⁹ Emilia gave birth to a daughter some years after Edmund, who was christened Olga, but she died at infancy.²⁰

Karol Józef Wojtyła, the third child and the second son of the Captain and Emilia Wojtyła, was born on 18th May 1920 in Wadowice (province of Kraków). Karol was baptized by a military chaplain, Fr. Franciszek Zak, at St. Mary's Church on 20th June 1920, and formally given the two names: along with Karol he received the name Józef,²¹ His family also called him "Lolek".²²

On 15th September 1926, Karol Wojtyła began the first grade at the local elementary school, in Wadowice.²³ Shortly before Karol's ninth birthday, while he was completing the third grade in the elementary school, his mother Emilia²⁴ died²⁵ on 13th April 1929.²⁶

¹⁸ Cf. A. BONECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 41-42; cf. G. WEIGEL, 27.

¹⁹ Edmund studied medicine at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, and in 1930, he was awarded the degree of doctor in medicine, cf. A. BONECKI, 39.

²⁰ Cf. A. BONECKI, *Kalendarium*, 39.

²¹ Cf. A. BONECKI, *Kalendarium*, 42.

²² Cf. L. ACCATOLI, *Man of the Millennium John Paul II: A Biography*, Pauline Books and Media, Boston 1998, 2; cf. G. WEIGEL, 27.

²³ Cf. A. BONECKI, *Kalendarium*, 43.

²⁴ Much has been written about the impact of Emilia's early death on Karol Wojtyła. Many have drawn a connection between Emilia's death and Karol Wojtyła's subsequent deep Marian piety. It is frequently suggested, for example, that Wojtyła's Marian piety is displaced maternal affection. G. Weigel, John Paul II's biographer, referred to these suggestions as speculations, which are frequently based on amateur psychoanalysis conducted from afar, and that such speculations are of no use for serious students of Karol Wojtyła's life: cf. G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope: The biography of Pope John Paul II*, 29. According to G. Weigel, Karol Wojtyła was virtually silent about his mother's death. Perhaps, one of the reasons for his silence could be attributed to his sense of privacy. It may also suggest that Karol Wojtyła, as an adult, retained few memories of his mother who died when he was nine years old: cf. *Ibid.* It was only ten years later, at nineteen years old that Karol Wojtyła would write for Emilia one of his first poems: (1) «Over your white grave the flowers of life in white-so many years without you. How many have passed out of sight?» (2) «Over

On 5th December 1932, three years after Emilia's death, Karol Wojtyła's elder brother Edmund, newly qualified as a medical doctor, died. He was struck down by scarlet fever contacted when he was caring for hospital patients during an epidemic.²⁷ After the death of Emilia and Edmund, Karol Wojtyła's father, the Captain, now had sole care of his son Karol.

In 1930, after completing his elementary education, Karol Wojtyła entered the Marcin Wadowita State Secondary School, an all-boys junior-senior high school in Wadowice.²⁸ Wadowice the Karol

this your grave covered for years, there is a stir in the air, something uplifting and, like death, beyond comprehension» (3) «Over this your white grave Oh, mother, can such loving cease? For all his filial adoration a Prayer: Give her eternal peace»: This piece is contained in the Karol Wojtyła's Poetry: cf. John Paul II, *The Place Within: The Poetry of Pope John Paul II*, Random House, New York 1979, IX. Karol Wojtyła did not speak much about his mother. Only once he did confide to the French Journalist André, how his mother's death had made a deep impression on his memory: cf. A. FROSSARD, *Non Abbiate Paura: André Frossard dialoga con Giovanni Paolo II*, Rusconi, Milano 1983, 12.

²⁵ Karol Wojtyła himself in a way would later confirm the fact that he retained only few memories of his mother who died so early, when he said: «I had not yet made my First Holy Communion when I lost my mother: I was barely nine years old. So I do not have a clear awareness of her contribution, which must have been great to my religious training»: cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Gift and Mystery*, Doubleday, New York 1996, 20 (henceforth: *GM*).

²⁶ Emilia's neighbour, Maria Janina Kaczorowa remembers Emilia's last years. In 1985, when she was eighty-four, Maria Janina spoke at length about Emilia to Roman Antoni Gajczak. She allowed her comments to be recorded, and the significant details she furnished were given to the Italian Catholic writer Luciano Bergonzoni for his book on Emilia: cf. R. ALLEGRI, *John Paul II: A Life of Grace*, St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati 2005, 32. Maria Janina said: «We lived on the same street, Emilia was a very peaceful, well-educated person [...] She lived on the same lived according to God's will even when she was sick [...] She bore her sufferings through faith. She never spoke about her problems, and she always had a sweet and peaceful smile, even at her times of greatest suffering [...]»: As quoted by R. Allegri, cf. R. ALLEGRI, *A Life of Grace*, 32.

²⁷ Cf. A. BONECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 46-47.

²⁸ At school, Wojtyła was an outstanding student as well as being keen on games, especially football. The school offered an excellent classical education. Latin and Greek were the staples of the curriculum, in addition to courses in Polish language

Wojtyła's birthplace had a reputation as a regional centre of literary culture, including amateur and civic theatre. During his years at secondary school Karol Wojtyła developed his interest in the theatre.²⁹ The eagerly entered into these local literary activities. There, he would see and practice plays after having read and studied them with his father at home.³⁰ It was customary in Wadowice for schools to have their own acting groups, which periodically would stage plays.

In 1925 the Marian Wadowice School, which Karol Wojtyła was attending collaborated with the Mieczysław Secondary School for Girls to stage *Alceste*, the ancient Greek play by Sophocles. Karol Wojtyła played the protagonist, showing great aptitudes as an actor and from that time on his stage commitments became significant.³¹ His performing roles were not only with his school's acting group but also with professionals like those at his Church, for the Parish also sponsored theatrical performances.³² Wojtyła's passion for the theatre grew beyond acting. He began to be involved in stage direction. He even became the director of his school theatre group.³³ During his

secondary school days as high school actor, Karol Wojtyła met Mieczysław Kozłarczyk,³⁴ who enormously influenced his thinking about the relationship of the proclaimed word to the unfolding of history.³⁵

Wadowice: The Hometown of Karol Wojtyła

Wadowice, Karol Wojtyła's birthplace and boyhood home, was an ancient town, founded in the mid-thirteenth century, as a rural village, which matured gradually into a regional trade and agricultural centre. The parish of Wadowice was established in 1325.³⁶ In 1819, Wadowice became the centre of an administrative district in Galicia. It was an important cultural and educational centre. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the town developed a reputation for literary and theatrical activity.³⁷ The people of Wadowice were small businessmen, lawyers, tradesmen, farmers, and personnel of the local provincial administrations. They also worked in the town's factories.³⁸

The second Polish Republic was a heterogeneous affair in which ethnic Poles were sixty-five percent of the total population.³⁹ In Wadowice, this pluralism was reflected in the town's large Jewish

and literature history and mathematics were included. Throughout his high school years, Karol Wojtyła continued to receive top grades, even as his extracurricular activities expanded. Cf. A. BOWNECKI 44-46; G. WEIGEL 12.

²⁹ The first exposure to Polish Romanticism was when his father would read to him entire works of poetry and fiction such as the great trilogy of Henryk Sienkiewicz. Therefore, this was the manner Karol Wojtyła had absorbed from his home, his education, and his town. Wadowice, where he had been saturated with Polish Romantic literature and drama. Cf. G. WEIGEL 33; cf. also A. BOWNECKI 45.

³⁰ Karol Wojtyła's favourite author at that time was Henryk Sienkiewicz, the Nobel Prize winner for literature in 1905. Sienkiewicz was a great storyteller, which his fictional account of the days of Poland's grandeur was written to awaken Polish spirits during the period when the future seemed hard. Cf. HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ, *The Deluge*, vol. 1, Copernicus Society of America, Hippocrene Books, New York 1991, 744-765; cf. also G. WEIGEL 33; R. ALLEGRA 55.

³¹ Cf. R. ALLEGRA 57.

³² Cf. *Ibid.*

³³ Cf. R. ALLEGRA 57; G. WEIGEL 36. All this made Karol Wojtyła's classroom teacher Krzyż, to relate, a bit of a special person. He was in the first place at school, in the theatre, and in everything. [...] Cf. G. SWIDERSKOŚC 311. *Lettera*

³⁴ *An Amico di Dio*, Mondadori, Milano 1993, 92, as quoted by L. ACCATTIOLI 4 Biography, 5.

³⁵ Mieczysław Kozłarczyk was both a deep Christian believer and a man of one idea, the theatre. For Kozłarczyk, the drama was the most important in life because it was a way of perfection, a means of transmitting the word of God, the truth about life. Cf. G. Weigel's interview with Danuta Muchowska, 22nd April 1997, cf. Notes, n. 87-889. Mieczysław Kozłarczyk studied at the Jagiellonian University, where he deepened his sense of the special qualities of Polish poetry, and did his doctoral dissertation on early nineteenth-century theatre criticism. Later, he moved back to Wadowice as a teacher. Cf. *Ibid.*, Notes, n. 86.

³⁶ Cf. G. WEIGEL 37.

³⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁹ Cf. T. KAROLAK, *John Paul II: The Pope from Poland*, Interpress Publishers, Warsaw 1979, 10.

⁴⁰ Cf. N. DAVIES, *Heart of Europe*, vol. 1, 118, 120.

population, about 2,000 strong. This is another way of saying that, although Wadowice was strongly Catholic, it had a large Jewish community, where Jews had lived for centuries. According to Jerzy Kluger, the Jews of Wadowice thought themselves quite naturally as Poles.⁴⁰ Wadowice was a place where many local Catholics took the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz's description of Jews as the "elder brothers of Christians" seriously as the Second Vatican Council later recommended.⁴¹ The Jews of Wadowice worked as lawyers, doctors, dentists and merchants, living without friction alongside Catholics, participating in the town's quiet affluence based on commerce and services.⁴² Benedict XVI expressed his joy on setting his foot on Wadowice, the homeland of Karol Wojtyła:

[...] I am filled with emotion in the birthplace of my Predecessor, [...] in this town of his childhood and young adult life. Indeed, I could not leave out Wadowice as I make this pilgrimage in Poland. I wish to stop

⁴⁰ G. Weigel's interview with Jerzy Kluger, on 15th March, 1997 cf. G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope*, 24; cf. Notes n. 23, 888; John Paul II, in his conversation with G. Weigel, remembers Kluger's father, a lawyer and the leader of the Wadowice Jewish community, as a «great Polish Patriot» cf. *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Karol Wojtyła reflecting on the recommendation of the Vatican II would later write: «[T]he words of the Council's Declaration reflect the experience of many people, both Jews and Christians. They reflect my personal experience as well, from the very first years of my life in my hometown. I remember, above all, the Wadowice elementary school, where at least a fourth of the pupils in my class were Jewish. I should mention my friendship at school with one of them, Jerzy Kluger—a friendship that has lasted from my school days to the present. I can vividly remember the Jews who gathered every Saturday at the synagogue behind our school. Both religious group Catholics and Jews, were united, I presume, by the awareness that they played to the same God»; cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, V. Messori, ed., Random House, London 1994, 96 (henceforth: *CTH*); cf. also VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Nosstra Aetate* Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions, n. 4, in *AAS* 58 (1966), 740-744 (henceforth: *NA*).

⁴² Cf. T. SZULC, *Pope John Paul II: The Biography*, Scribner, New York 1995, 61. The experience of living in harmony at Wadowice is also the recommendation of the Vatican Council II: cf. *NA*, n. 4; *GS*, n. 40.

precisely here, in this place where his faith began and matured, to pray together with all of you [...].⁴³

I will be providing further biographical information about Karol Wojtyła as we go along. Now that we have seen the environment in which Karol Wojtyła was born and brought up, and in which his experience of mercy commenced. What I will do next, is to turn our attention properly and directly to Karol Wojtyła's gradual contact with the mystery of mercy.

Contributors to Karol Wojtyła's Early Contact with Mercy

There are some events, experiences, and persons that were largely instrumental in giving Karol Wojtyła a taste of mercy⁴⁴ in his early

⁴³ BENEDICT XVI, «Pilgrims in the Footsteps of John Paul II: Wadowice, Rynek Square, May 27, 2006», in *John Paul II my Beloved Predecessor*, 97.

⁴⁴ Although we shall discuss mercy later in greater details, it will be helpful here to say a word about mercy to help us better understand Karol Wojtyła's experience of mercy. Mercy is a relief from great suffering or discomfort of mind and body (misery). It is a willingness to help those in need. Mercy is always connected with divine presence and power. It is God who shows mercy. God's mercy manifests itself in a faithful, loving kindness that reaches out to save those in need. The scriptural tradition says that people in need cry out to God's mercy (Mt 15, 22), and gives praise when they recognise the presence of that mercy (Lk 1,15,78). The ground for both understanding and expecting God's faithful mercy is the covenant. Because mercy is grounded in covenant relationship, it is an on-going activity. God is not just merciful once, and then forgetful of the people. No, fundamental to mercy is constancy. God saves, helps and continues to help (cf. Is 54, 10); cf. J. M. CASEY, «Mercy», in *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, M. Glazier & M. K. Hellwig, ed., Grill & Macmillan, Dublin 1994, 562 (henceforth: *MCE*). According to P. II. Towner, New Testament following Old Testament pattern, affirms that mercy is a divine characteristic (2 Co 1,3) expressed in abundance towards God's people (Eph 2,4). This mercy invites humble people to cry out to a God of compassion: a God who will intervene in time of need (2 Tim 1, 16, 18; Lk 18,13; Cf. Mt 15, 22, 17, 15); cf. P. II. TOWNER, «Mercy/compassion», in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, T. D. Alexander- al., ed., Intervarsity Press, Leicester 2000, 660-661 (henceforth: *NDBT*).

years. Some of these means will be traced within the Polish nation, Karol Wojtyła's family, and the Church.

Polish Nation: Traditional Marian Devotion and Pilgrimage

I join G. H. Williams in affirming that a distinctive feature of the Catholic Poland of Karol Wojtyła was the devotion⁴⁵ to the Virgin Mary.

⁴⁵ In order to understand Karol Wojtyła's initial journeys of encounter with mercy, which is largely connected with devotional practices, it is necessary to have a quick look at the term devotion and its practice. Devotion is a remarkable phenomenon, in Christian spirituality devotion, which in classical antiquity was the performance of a ritual act, is interiorised into fervent dedication of the heart: cf. J. CHARRILLON, «Devotion», in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. III, Beauchêne, Paris 1967, 710-116 (henceforth: *DSp*); cf. also K. WAJLIŃSKI, «Images and Imagelessness», in *Spirituality renewed: Studies on Significant Representatives of the Modern Devotion*, II, Blommeslajn, C. Caspers, ed., Peeters, Leuven 2003, 29. Devotion is a religious dedication of one's whole being to God. It is the desire to respond with gratitude for God's gift. R. J. Zawilla defines devotion as a «profound dedication, the ready will to serve God»; cf. R. J. ZAWILLA, «Devotion (s)», in *MDCSp*, 271.

The greatest impulse toward Marian devotion came from the proclamation of Mary as the *Theotokos*, (God-bearer), at the Council of Ephesus in A. D. 431. The Marian devotion was outstanding in medieval times; we only need to read the exposition of J. Charrillon in *DSp*, 702-716. The 17th Century, especially in France with the Ecole Française, was a period of particularly intense Marian devotion. Spiritual writers such as Pierre de Bérulle, Jean-Jacques Olier, John Eudes, and perhaps the best known in this regard, Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, developed a Mariology that remained influential into the 20th century. De Montfort suggested, in his popular *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, that devotion to Mary sweetens and makes easy the difficult road to union with God. In the contemporary developments of Marian devotion, the VIth apostolic exhortation *Marialis Culus* represents an important step in post-Vatican II theology of Mary, and guidelines for the renewal of popular devotion. Pope Paul VI recalls the Trinitarian, Christological, and ecclesial principles that should inform responsible Marian devotion: first, Marian devotion should be rooted in the biblical texts and reflect the fundamental themes of the Christian message. Second, Marian devotion should harmonise but not merge with or replace the liturgy. Third, Marian devotion should be ecumenically sensitive, avoiding mistaking exaggeration. In today's ecumenical atmosphere it should be possible to search together for images of Mary that unite Christians around the central truth of faith: cf. PAUL VI, *Marialis*

Mary. Marian piety and Marian Shrines are generally in Catholic Christendom globally, but there were special aspects of Polish Marian devotion. Among the Marian shrines of Poland, two of them that were pre-eminent in shaping the spirituality of Karol Wojtyła and had helped to introduce him to the idea of mercy were Czestochowa and Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. These two Shrines loomed very large in the life and piety of Karol Wojtyła.⁴⁶

Czestochowa Shrine, the icon of the Blessed Virgin at the Paulite Monastery of Jasna Gora (Bright Mountain) was the central Shrine of Polish Catholicism. In a sense it was like a national identity. The Polish nation's entrustment to Mary the Mother of God exemplified itself in the often and yearly pilgrimages⁴⁷, which all Catholics, including Karol Wojtyła's family made in large numbers to the Czestochowa Shrine.⁴⁸

Culus Exhortation, in *MIS* 66 (1974), 113-168; cf. M. I. HINES, «Mary», in *MDCSp*, 635-645.

⁴⁶ Cf. G. H. WILLIAMS, «Intense Marian devotion linked for centuries with Polish national destiny», in G. H. WILLIAMS, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of his Thought and Action*, Seabury Press, New York 1981, 26-41.

⁴⁷ It will be helpful without going very deep to say some words about the term pilgrimage: A pilgrimage in the sense of journeys to shrines or holy places is a journey to a sacred shrine or sanctuary for a religious purpose. Christians made pilgrimages to venerate places significant in the life of Jesus, e.g., the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, areas linked to the saints, and the martyrs, e.g., the tombs of Peter and Paul in Rome, and sites famous for their miracles. In modern times Marian apparitions have given rise to pilgrimages e.g., to Lourdes, France, and Fatima Portugal, etc.; cf. J. F. CRAIGIAN, «Pilgrimages», in *MCE*, 672; E. R. LABANDI, «Pilgrimages», in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, B. L. Marthaler, ed., vol. 11, Gale group, New York 2003, 346 (henceforth: *NCE*). On these pilgrimage occasions, pilgrims seek God's help, often from cures from illness and disease and frequently through the intercession of a particular saint. In other words, the purposes of pilgrimage include the following: for indulgences, for physical healing, as acts of penance for past sins, for seeking for protection, for thanking for the mercies already received: cf. *Ibid.* The intention of Wojtyła's family for making pilgrimages to the Shrine of the Mother of God was not very different from what have been mentioned.

⁴⁸ Cf. G. H. WILLIAMS, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of his Thought and Action*, 39-40.

Karol Wojtyła would eventually learn this legacy of making pilgrimages to Częstochowa.

Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (Zebrzydowski's Calvary) was another Shrine that would play a large role in instilling a sense of mercy in Karol Wojtyła. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska was a local Shrine, which was located in the foothills of the Bieszczady Mountains, about six miles from Wadowice along the way to Kraków.⁴⁹ Kalwaria was a place of pilgrimage for Catholics. It drew crowds of pilgrims, especially from the south of Poland and beyond.⁵⁰ Kalwaria, which also was one of the sources of the spiritual life of the people of Wadowice, was significant

⁴⁹ Kalwaria Zebrzydowska was a vast outdoor Shrine, which was modelled on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. This was so. When Zebrzydowski visited the Holy Land, he sensed a resemblance between the topography of the Holy Land and that of his property in Poland; he then decided to erect a whole series of Chapels on his land, similar to those he had seen in Jerusalem commemorating various scenes from the passion death and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; cf. G. WIEGEL, *Witness to Hope*, 25-26; G. H. WILLIAMS, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 38-41; R. ALLIEGRI, *A Life of Grace*, 36.

⁵⁰ Cf. G. H. WILLIAMS, 40-41; A. ALLIEGRI, 36-37. Karol Wojtyła from his boyhood years at nearby Wadowice used to join the thousands of people who participated yearly in the celebration of the sufferings of Christ, a great outdoor passion play, with the Stations of the Cross, performed each Holy Week. During this Passion Week celebration, the movement of the play from Shrine to Shrine and the emotional intensity of event were such that the pilgrims sometimes became practical participants in the drama of Christ's suffering. Pilgrims sometimes carry rocks as they follow Christ, and they leave these stones as offering before the various hilltop Chapels; cf. G. H. WILLIAMS, *The Mind of John Paul II, Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 41; A. BONIECKI, 253; A. ALLIEGRI, 36-37. Karol Wojtyła also participated in the Marian liturgical feast of the Assumption, called 'the Funeral of the Blessed Virgin', introduced by a mystery play commemorating the death and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven. This celebration of the Marian Funeral begins on the eve of the Assumption, 14th August. During the eve the assumption, many pilgrims, with crosses and banners accompany a life-size wooden statue of the Blessed Virgin in a massive procession that moves along the woodland trails, to the tomb, with the pilgrims listening to the sermons at the various Chapels. There, the pilgrims keep watch through the night, singing and praying, and the next day they celebrate Mary's triumph over death; cf. G. H. WILLIAMS, 41; A. BONIECKI, 253. This short history helps to make clear the role of pilgrimages in introducing Karol Wojtyła to mercy.

for Karol Wojtyła. He would imbibe the tradition of making pilgrimages to this Shrine of Zebrzydowska's Calvary.⁵¹

Addressing Mary's merciful role, the second Vatican Council says:

[...] motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues without interruption from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal consummation of all the elect. Taken up to heaven, she did not lay aside this saving office but her manifold intercession continues to procure for us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her motherly love she cares for her Son's sisters and brothers who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home. Therefore the Blessed Virgin Mary is invoked in the Church under the titles of advocate, helper, benefactress, and mediatrix.⁵²

Basing our thought on what we have already said about devotion and pilgrimage; and having heard the Council's word about Mary, it is evident that the Polish Nation's Marian devotions and pilgrimages were among the means, which would give Karol Wojtyła a taste of mercy. They would be among the early means of Karol Wojtyła's contact with the Mystery of Mercy.

Karol's Family as an Environment of His Earliest Contact with Mercy

It is not a mistake to say that Karol Wojtyła's experience of mercy began in his family. Although he was very young, he was able as a child to observe his father's ardent prayer:

My father was admirable, and almost all the memories of my childhood and adolescence are connected with him. The violence of blows which had

⁵¹ Karol Wojtyła would later share his experience of this Shrine and its significance. According to him this local Shrine of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, was one of those places that drew crowds of pilgrims from all over Poland.

⁵² Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Lumen Gentium* Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, n. 62, in *AAS* 56 (1965), 5-67 (henceforth: *LG*); cf. also *LG*, nn. 66-68.

struck him had opened up immense spiritual depths in him; his grief found its outlet in prayer. The mere fact of seeing him on his knees had a decisive influence on my early years [...].⁵³

Karol Wojtyła would later acknowledge that it was his father who taught him piety and devotion:

[...] After [my mother's] death and, later, the death of my older brother, I was left alone with my father, a deeply religious man. Day after day I was able to observe the austere way in which he lived. By profession he was a soldier and, after my mother's death, his life became one of constant prayer. Sometimes I would wake up during the night and find my father on his knees, just as I would see him kneeling in the parish Church. [...].⁵⁴

The pre-mature death of Ęmilia and Edmund made Captain, Karol Wojtyła's father, dedicate himself to his son; he needed to focus his energies on his son, Karol. To do this, he had to contain his great sorrow over his wife, Ęmilia's death, and made a plan. For twelve years, from 1929-1941, the Captain was a father, mother, friend, teacher, role model and playmate for his son, Karol.⁵⁵ As a religious educator by example as much as by admonition and instruction, the Captain and his son read the Bible together and prayed the Rosary regularly.⁵⁶ He first sought help through prayer, with the hope and realisation that God's love and mercy would enable him to face and master the situation in which he found himself, and on which he might found himself later. Of course, he wished the same for his son, Karol.⁵⁷

⁵³ A. FROSSARD, *«Non Abitare Patrie»: Andre' Frossard, dialogo con Giovanni Paolo II*, Rusconi, Milano 1982, 13.

⁵⁴ *GM*, 20.

⁵⁵ Cf. R. ALLEGRI, *A life of Grace*, 39.

⁵⁶ Cf. G. WEGEL, *The Biography of Pope John Paul*, 30.

⁵⁷ To say that the Captain first sought help through prayer leads us to say a word about the meaning of prayer and its power. Etymologically, the English word *prayer* means literally a petition or request. It comes from the Latin verb *precari*, which means to entreat or beg. Although the word may be used to mean a petition made to anyone at all, yet its customary use is more particular as a petition made to God or to some holy person. The more comprehensive use of the term points to the fact that human beings always stand in need before God: cf. J. H. WRIGHT, *«Prayer»*, in

The Captain's trust in the power of prayer for obtaining mercy and comfort made him decide to make a pilgrimage with his son to the Marian Shrine at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska after his wife's death.⁵⁸ As we have already said, the Wojtyła family had gone to Kalwaria's Shrine on many occasions, and most sorrowfully after the death of Ęmilia in 1929. It was there that the grieving husband and his son, Karol, made their pilgrimage after Ęmilia's interment.⁵⁹ The captain wanted to bring his son to this holy place, Kalwaria, so that they could

NDCS, 764. Paul indicates that our poverty and our abundance belong together in our prayers: «I have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God» (Ph 4,6). Prayer is first of all praise and thanksgiving, since God addresses people mostly as creating and sustaining. Psalms of praise bear witness to the greatness and goodness of God (Psalm 53). E. Farrell sees prayer as the expression of personal relationship with God. It is a demonstration of loving consciousness of God and purposeful opening of oneself to life shared in him. Recognising the existence of God is the prerequisite to prayer in itself. According to Farrell, petition is the oldest and most common movement behind prayer. Human dependence on God provokes pleas for courage, assistance and bountiful life: cf. E. FARRELL, «Prayer», in *NCE*, 685-686. Seeking God's intervention is itself an act of confidence venerating God's benevolence and power as the source of all that is good. Personal needs and desires bring requests of God for good health, security, and comfort for self, family, relatives, friends and others. In times of pain or loneliness, God's aid is sought. Petition in prayer strengthens kinship with God; it recognises that one is not alone. In this type of prayer, human dependence on God is accepted. As such, people concede their own smallness, shortcoming, and weakness; and come to God for grace, strength, forgiveness and mercy: cf. *Ibid.*, 686. We feel that it is appropriate to say with E. Farrell that the Lord's Prayer - the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples - contains all that God's people ask in prayer: cf. E. FARRELL, 688-689. The Captain's intention for recourse to prayer is not far from what we have been describing about prayer.

⁵⁸ It was Karol's father who first took him to pilgrimage at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska after his mother's death: cf. G. Wegel's conversation with John Paul II, September 10th 1996: G. WEGEL, 31. Notes, n. 54, 889. Karol Wojtyła himself would later describe the local shrine of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: «This local shrine is remarkable because it is not only Marian but also profoundly focused on Christ. During their stay at the shrine of Kalwaria, the first thing the pilgrims do is to make their way along a Via Crucis (Way of the Cross) in which, through Mary, humanity finds its rightful place along Christ [...]» (C7H, 214).

⁵⁹ Cf. G. H. WILLIAMS, 75.

mediate and reflect and find strength to deal with their great sorrow,⁶⁶ G. Weigel states that the Captain also thought that praying in this holy place, Kalwaria, would help to transmit to his son the truth he believed but whose fullness he had difficulty communicating to his son, Karol Wojtyła.⁶⁷ Karol Wojtyła would later testify to his frequent pilgrimages to the Shrine of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska:

I don't know how I can thank the divine Providence that I am once again visiting this place, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, the sanctuary of the Mother of God. I have visited this sanctuary many times, beginning from my childhood and adolescence. I visited it especially as Archbishop of Kraków and as Cardinal. I came here with the priests and celebrated Mass before the Mother of God.⁶⁸

Benedict XVI while reviewing his visit to Poland with the faithful acknowledged the importance of the Kalwaria Zebrzydowska shrine in the development of the spiritual life of Karol Wojtyła:

The program could not but include a visit to one of the shrines that marked the life of Karol Wojtyła. [...] Visiting the wonderful shrine of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, not far from Kraków, I ask the Sorrowful Virgin to sustain the faith of the Ecclesial Community in times of hardship and trial.⁶⁹

The Church: The Parish of Wadowice

The focal point toward the deepening and expressing of the spiritual life of the people of Wadowice was St. Mary's parish Church (formally

⁶⁶ Cf. R. MULLIGR, *A Life of Grace*, 37.

⁶⁷ By the testimony of Karol Wojtyła, it was his father's way of life that first planted in him the idea of what the life of faith involved, that faith has first to do with interior conversion. In addition to the formulas of prayer, the Captain taught his son that the Church is more than the visible institution. The mystery of the Church, its invisible dimension, is larger than the structure and the organisation of the Church, which are at the service of mystery: cf. G. WEIGEL, *The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, 30; cf. also CTH, 142-143.

⁶⁸ JOHN PAUL II, *Pilgrim to Poland*, Pauline Books & Media, Boston 1979, 197.

⁶⁹ BENEDICT XVI, «Address at the General Audience», 31st May, *L'Osservatore Romano* (13), 7th June, (2006), 11.

known as the Church of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary). The parish of Wadowice had been part of the town's life for more than 650 years.⁶⁴ My interest here is to discover how the parish Church of Wadowice had been one of the environments that played a major role in introducing Karol Wojtyła to mercy. The five key areas of devotional and liturgical actions in the parish Church through which Karol's had an early contact with mercy were: Baptism, Eucharist, confession, Marian devotion, and Scapular devotion.

Baptism

Baptism was one of the means, (but of a remote means)⁶⁵ through which mercy reached Karol Wojtyła. This is because mercy is celebrated in the sacraments.⁶⁶ Karol Wojtyła was baptised as an infant on June 20th 1920, in the parish Church of Wadowice.⁶⁷ Therefore, it was not an adult baptism. This means that he could only understand baptism as a means of receiving mercy through the catechism classes and religion classes at school. But baptism is a sacrament of mercy.⁶⁸

Another reason for discussing baptism is that the teaching of the Church holds that baptism is the foundation of authentic spiritual life of a Christian:

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianuā*),⁶⁹ and the door, which gives access to other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God [...].⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Cf. G. WEIGEL, 25.

⁶⁵ We refer to baptism as a remote means because Karol Wojtyła who received baptism as an infant could not understand it as an immediate means of experiencing mercy.

⁶⁶ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Sacramentum Concilium* Constitution on the Sacred

Liturgy, n. 6, (henceforth: SC).

⁶⁷ Cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium*, 42.

⁶⁸ Cf. CCC, nn. 1214-1216.

⁶⁹ Cf. COUNCIL OF FLORENCE, DS, 1314.

⁷⁰ CCC, n. 1213.

Benedict XVI affirmed that an authentically Christian life equals indebtedness to the promises of holy Baptism. He recalled Karol Wojtyła's reference to his beginnings where he remembered Wadowice and Karol Wojtyła's baptism:

[...] He himself confessed that here, in Wadowice, "everything began [...] the himself confessed that here, in Wadowice, "everything began [...] the himself confessed that here, in Wadowice, "everything began [...] the himself confessed that here, in Wadowice, "everything began [...] the himself confessed that here, in Wadowice, "everything began [...]"

Eucharist

Karol Wojtyła as a child and as a boy joined in the parish Mass at Wadowice. He joined in the Eucharistic celebrations every Sunday and participated fully in it, with his first Holy Communion made in May 1929 in the same Wadowice Church.⁷² When he became a Mass server⁷³ he often attended the early morning Mass.

In the Liturgy, the Church, under the guidance of the Spirit which prays in her «in groaning that cannot be put into words» (Rm 8, 26), knows how to create rich and numerous expressions of prayer, in which the accents vibrate towards mercy. In the Eucharistic Liturgy the Church celebrates the greatness of the mercy of God, which begins,

⁷² BENEDICT XVI, *John Paul II my Beloved Predecessor*, 97-98.
⁷³ Cf. G. WIEGEL, *Biography*, 16.

⁷⁴ Since Emilia's death, the Captain and his son Karol established a rigorous daily routine. With school beginning at 8 A.M., they rose early and prayed together. Then after Karol became an altar boy, they attended the early morning Mass together: cf. G. WIEGEL, 31. Karol Wojtyła himself remembered later that he was not just an altar server, that he also organised the group of altar servers: cf. *GM*, 25.

with the introductory rites of the Mass⁷⁴. In the preface of the IV Eucharistic prayer, mercy is also celebrated; the prayer says: «[...] When through his disobedience man lost your friendship you did not abandon him to the power of death, but in your mercy help all men to seek and find you [...]».⁷⁵ During the communion rite the same content of mercy in the Lord's Prayer is called to mind: «Deliver us, O Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety [...]».⁷⁶ Also there are innumerable readings during the Eucharistic celebrations, which address the presence of mercy.

I have recalled some of these themes occurring at Mass in order to help us understand how the celebration of the Eucharist had been one of the means through which the idea of mercy was introduced to the young Karol Wojtyła.⁷⁷ The CCC helps to describe what we are trying to discover when it says that Holy Mass is a celebration in which the mystery of salvation is accomplished.⁷⁸ Benedict XVI also affirmed on the feast of *Corpus Christi* of 2006 that the Christian community

⁷⁴ The Vatican II's document on the Liturgy, describes the Liturgical celebrations as the place where mercy is present: cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, SC n. 7; CCC, nn. 1373-1377; COUNCIL OF TRENT, in H. DENZINGER, *Enchiridion Symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, Bolognia 2001, 1642 (henceforth: DS).

⁷⁵ *Daily Roman Missal*, J. Socias, ed., Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Indiana 1993, 722.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 735.

⁷⁷ Although in the Pre-Vatican II Liturgy in which the young Karol Wojtyła lived the explanation we have given about the Liturgy may not be as clear then as it is now, yet the central theme of the Eucharist as memorial of mercy was not lacking.

⁷⁸ Cf. CCC, n. 1332. The Liturgy, then, is the chief channel through which God's people receive mercy and grace: «From the liturgy, therefore, grace is channelled into us; and the sanctification of men and women in Christ and the glorification of God, to which all other activities of the Church are directed as toward their goal, are most powerfully achieved»: SC, n. 10. It is in the Liturgy then that God feeds his people with his words, his forgiveness, mercy and his life: cf. F. ARINZE, «The Sacred Liturgy Sings the Divine Mercy», in *World Apostolic Congress on Mercy* 1 (2008), n. 2; Roma, Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano: <http://www.worldapostoliccongressonmercy.org>.

proclaims that «the Eucharist is its all, its very life, [...] From communion flows the charity that transforms our life and supports us all on our journey towards the heavenly homeland».⁷⁹

Confession

The sacrament of confession was one of the channels of the contact of mercy for Karol Wojtyła. The Carmelite monks in the Carmelite monastery Church in Wadowice provided the opportunity for this confession: «People went to the Carmelites for confession».⁸⁰ The sacrament of confession⁸¹ is founded on the call for repentance, and forgiveness of sinners. Confession involved a confession of sin, forgiveness to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament of penance.⁸² The CCC explains further in these words:

When Christ's faithful strive to confess all the sins that they can remember, they undoubtedly place all of them before the divine mercy for pardon. But those who fail to do so and knowingly withhold some, place nothing before the divine goodness for remission through the mediation of the priest, "for if the sick person is too ashamed to show his wound to the doctor, the medicine cannot heal what it does not know."⁸³

According to the Church's command, "after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation to confess [...] at least once a year." [...] Children must go to the sacrament of penance before receiving Holy Communion for the first time.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ BENEDICT XVI, «Angelus Address», *OR* (E), 21st June, (2006), 1.
⁸⁰ *GM*, 28.

⁸¹ In contemporary theology the sacrament of confession has been called by various names to indicate its particular reference to the action of the penitent and the supernatural effects of divine grace connected with this sacrament, for example sacrament of conversion, sacrament of penance, sacrament of confession, sacrament of forgiveness, sacrament of reconciliation: cf. CCC, nn. 1423-1424.

⁸² Cf. CCC, n. 1456.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, n. 1456; COUNCIL OF TRENT, *DS*, n. 1680.

⁸⁴ CCC, n. 1457 *DS*, n. 1683; cf. also *CIC*, can. 989, 914.

Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church. Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit. By receiving more frequently through the sacrament the gift of the Father's mercy, we are spurred to be merciful as he is merciful (cf. Lk 6, 36).⁸⁵

Aquinas, discussing the effect of the sacrament of Confession affirmed that the divine grace, which springs from the sacrament of penance, has a special grace from this sacrament, which corresponds to a particular need of the Christian, the healing from infirmity both corporal and spiritual.⁸⁶

What has been discussed so far about the sacrament of Confession helps to put us in a better position to see why and how we affirm that the sacrament of confession was one of the means that put Karol Wojtyła in touch with mercy.⁸⁷ As young as he was at that time, he was already aware of the necessity of having a confessor to whom he would confess and obtain mercy. Later, Karol Wojtyła would recall this: «In those years, my confessor and spiritual director was Father Kazimierz. I

⁸⁵ CCC, n. 1458; cf. also *DS*, n. 1680; *CIC*, can. 988.

⁸⁶ «Et hoc quidem sufficeret homini si haberet et corporaliter et spiritualiter impassibilem vitam: sed quia homo incurrit interdum et corporalem infirmitatem et spiritalem, scilicet peccatum, ideo necessaria est homini curatio ab infirmitate. Quae quidem est duplex. Una quidem est sanatio, quae sanitatem restituit. Et loco huius in spirituali vita est poenitentia: secundum illud Psalmi [40,5]: *Sana animam meam, quia peccavi tibi*»; AQUINAS, *STH*, III, III, q. 65, a. 1.

⁸⁷ Karol Wojtyła's secretary would later acknowledge that Karol Wojtyła placed a lot of emphasis on confession. The secretary would also affirm that for Karol Wojtyła the most important thing about the sacrament of Confession was not the revelation of one's sins, but God's forgiveness and remission of those sins (mercy). In other words, for Karol Wojtyła, the main thing was the grace Confession offers, the strength it gives to a person to lead «an upright and virtuous life». The secretary would further acknowledge that Karol Wojtyła himself would go to Confession once a week, and would also confess before major feast days and special liturgical seasons: cf. S. DIZWISZ, *A Life with Karol*, 11.

had first met him while I was in my first year of secondary school in Wadowice.⁸⁸

Marian Devotion

Karol Wojtyła's Marian devotion, which brought him to early contact with mercy, took shape from his early childhood, adolescence and up through the secondary school. He would later affirm that one of the means through which he learned the traditional Marian devotion was his parish at Wadowice. The setting of the parish Church also helped in the devotion. Inside the same Church, there was a side chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Perpetual help.⁸⁹

As a secondary school student Karol would go to this Marian Shrine before and after school to pray and entrust himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Karol Wojtyła would later remember this gesture of devotion:

I learned the traditional devotions to the Mother of God in my family and in my parish at Wadowice. I remember, in the parish Church, a side Chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. In the mornings, the secondary school students would make a visit to it before classes began. After classes, in the afternoon, many students would go there to pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ GM, 25; cf. also A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 44. That Karol Wojtyła did in choosing a spiritual director was in line with what Francis de Sales says about true devotion. Francis de Sales is sure that the first sign of seriousness to devout life from *Philothéa* is to choose a spiritual director. He is also sure that the choice of a spiritual director is not an easy task, because a good spiritual director is hard to find, and Francis recommends the choice to be one out of ten thousand. The spiritual director, Francis says, must be a person of great charity, knowledge, and prudence. *Philothéa* herself has to trust her director, confide in him with a daughter's respect for her father: cf. ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Doubleday, New York 1950, pt. 1, ch. 4, 34-35.

⁸⁹ Cf. GM, 27.

⁹⁰ GM, 27.

The Scapular Devotion at the Carmelite Monastery

In the Carmelite monastery on a hilltop in Wadowice there was a devotion to the scapular promise.⁹¹ The devotion to the scapular promise of our Lady of Mount Carmel played a prominent part in Karol Wojtyła's early introduction to mercy.⁹² It would be important here to give some explanation about the origin and devotional use of the scapular.⁹³

The Scapular that is used today for devotional purposes originally began with a «night» Scapular worn by members of religious orders, in order to be in their habit, even during the night. In the late Middle Ages, when a religious habit began to be considered as a special means of salvation, layman who wanted to save his soul had to join one form or another of a religious Order. In this context, the Scapular ended up as the usual way of giving a habit to lay people and making them members of a religious family, with all the juridical and spiritual consequences.⁹⁴

⁹¹ It is beyond the scope of this overview to go into the detailed history concerning the scapular promise and devotion. What we will do is to give an overview of the use of the Scapular.

⁹² Apart from different studies which have been published during the last 30 years on Scapular and its devotional use, the study of G. Grosso has provided a great helpful insights into Scapular devotion: G. GROSSO, «Scapolare del Carmine», in *Dizionario Carmelitano*, E. Boaga-L. Borriello, ed., Città Nuova, Roma 2008, 778-782 (henceforth: DC).

⁹³ A Scapular consists fundamentally of two pieces of cloth, bound together by small strings, and placed, part on the shoulders and part on the chest: cf. G. GROSSO, «Scapolare del Carmine», 778. The Scapular that was used in early Christian times as part of a religious habit: monks used it during manual labour, so that their tunic would be closer to them and so avoid soiling it: cf. *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ It was in this context, that stories arose about a habit being given miraculously by Jesus and the Blessed Mother to founders and saints of different Orders. Furthermore, according to G. Grosso, in the late Middle Ages people were more and more convinced that the religious state is far more perfect than any other state of Christian life, especially that of lay people, because only members of religious orders were certain to obtain the joys of eternal salvation. With this conviction, the layman who wanted to save his or her soul had no other means of doing so than becoming holy or,

There are many types of Scapulars in different colours and with different pictures, because as time went on, different religious families used them to a great extent as sign of consecration in keeping with different forms of spirituality. But the brown Carmelite Scapular was and still is the most known and widely disseminated because it is used by Carmelites all over the world, to spread their own Marian spirituality, and thus, to evangelise.⁹⁵ Karol Wojtyła was introduced was introduced to this Carmelite scapular.

In the medieval context, it was very easy to think that putting on a religious habit was a concrete sign of joining an Order. But later there arose some problems: for example, until the 15th Century, Canon Law foresaw that anyone who would have worn a religious habit for a whole year, would be publicly considered as a member of a religious Order with solemn vows and all the juridical consequences involved. With this legislation, people then reverted to different artificial means to avoid being bound by such juridical chains. For example, they kept a «sign» of the habit, which could be by wearing part of it and evidently not the main one, (a white mantle for Carmelites, a belt for Augustinians, a cord for Franciscans, etc).⁹⁶

When this law and practice fell in the 15th century, Carmelites began to give to lay people a Scapular, considered as the habit of the Order. This led to the confraternity of the Scapular, which ended up by practically taking the place and substituting the preceding forms of membership.

The diffusion of the devotional use of religious habit among lay people consists in two supernatural interventions related to the habit itself, to its being entrusted to the religious by Our Lord or by the Mother of God, and thereby given privileges to those who would wear

they could join one form or another of a religious Order, and thus take part in its spiritual benefits; cf. G. GROSSO, «Scapolare del Carmine», 778.

⁹⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*
⁹⁶ Different methods were used for membership: one of them, at least in the Carmelite Order, was the «letter of affiliation», which qualifies a person to participate in the spiritual benefits of the Order; cf. G. GROSSO, «Scapolare del Carmine», 778-779.

them. In other words, the popularity of the Scapular is mainly due to «privileges» added to it.⁹⁷

For the Carmelites, there are two visions and two «privileges» related to the Scapular and the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared in both of them: In the first vision, Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin, appeared to entrust the Scapular to St. Simon Stock, and then promised final perseverance to those who would wear the «holy habit» regularly and in a dignified manner.⁹⁸ The second apparition of the blessed Virgin is called «bolla sabatina» (Saturday Bull), in it, the Mother of God is said to have promised final perseverance to those religious who had observed three vows, and therefore lived according to the prescriptions of the Carmelites rule. Furthermore, she assured lay people that one third of their pain due to sin would be forgiven, if they devotedly wore the *stigma Ordinis*, that is, the white mantle, and kept chastity according to their own state of life.⁹⁹

Commenting on the above visions, G. Grosso pointed to the fact that although the historicity of the visions is not very clear, yet the text contains theological and spiritual values. He said:

Final perseverance is nothing more than an explanation of what Revelation already asserts: whoever tries to live according to Gospel principles obtains eternal salvation. St. Simon Stock's vision finally does not add much to this doctrine, except for the fact of linking final salvation to the observance of religious life as taught by the Carmelite Rule, and to a

⁹⁷ The popularity of the Scapular continued, even when Pope Pius X permitted the substitution of the cloth Scapular with a medal, portraying on one side of the medal the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, on the other, the image of the Blessed Virgin; cf. G. GROSSO, 778; cf. also AAS 3 (1911), 22-23; cf. also P.N. ZAMMITTIDS, «Scapolare», in *NCFE*, vol. 12, 721-723.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 779.

⁹⁹ Finally, Our Lady promised what would be later called the «sabatine privilege», stating that she would go down to Purgatory on Saturdays, to free the deceased Carmelites (religious and lay), from their pains and bring them with her to paradise; cf. *Ibid.*, 779.

visible form, that of the habit. This is not unusual, for it concerns one form or another of an evangelical way of life. [...]'¹⁰⁰

The insights we have now about the Marian Scapular devotion would help us to understand Karol Wojtyła's strong devotion to the Carmelite Marian Scapular as one of the means of his contact with mercy. Karol Wojtyła would recall his devotion to the Carmelite Scapular:

Also, on a hilltop in Wadowice, there was a Carmelite monastery, which dated back to the time of Saint Raphael Kalinowski. People from Wadowice go there in great numbers, and this was reflected in the widespread use of the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. I too received the scapular, I think at the age of ten, and I still wear it. And so, both in the parish Church and in the Carmelite monastery Church, my devotion to Mary took shape from the years of my early childhood and adolescence up through the secondary school.¹⁰¹

Karol Wojtyła also would later share with some Carmelite group his devotion to the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Scapular:

I am glad that I may share with you my devotion to the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Scapular. I always wear the Scapular I received from the hands of Fr. Sylwester on the day of my First Holy Communion and, although I lived in the shadow of the parish Church, your Church "na Gorce"¹⁰² has always been very dear to me. Among the many services which enchanted my soul as a child, I attended most eagerly the novena preceding the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. This was during

¹⁰⁰ «La perseveranza finale nient'altro è che un' esplicitazione di quanto già la Rivelazione ci assicura: chi si sforza di vivere secondo i dettami evangelici ottiene la salvezza eterna. La visione di S. Simone in fondo non aggiunge molto a questa dottrina, se non il fatto di legare la salvezza finale anche all'osservanza della vita religiosa nella forma insegnata dalla Regola carmelitana, visualizzata dall'abito. D'altra parte ciò non è strano, trattandosi di una forma come un'altra di vita evangelica. [...]»: G. GROSSO, 780.

¹⁰¹ GM, 28.

¹⁰² On the Hill.

summer vacation in the month of July. In those days one did not go away for vacation, like now. I spent the holidays in Wadowice, thus I never missed the afternoon services during the novena until the time of my departure from Wadowice. Sometimes it was difficult to leave friends, leave the refreshing waves of the beloved Skawa (river), but the mellifluous sound of the Carmelite bells was so strong, so penetrating into the depths of the soul, that I went. [...]'¹⁰³

This Karol Wojtyła's affirmation had totally helped to confirm our understanding that his parish Church and the Carmelite monastery Church on the hill, gave him a taste of mercy.

Having developed mercy's influence on the early developmental years in Karol's life, in the next chapter we shall examine and discuss how mercy materialised and how the understanding of mercy developed in the future Pope's young adult life.

¹⁰³ This information is from the chronicle of the Convent written by Fr. Konstanty Patecki who was director of the Private Secondary School of the Carmelite Fathers from 1957 to 1960. cf. A. BOJTECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 177.

CHAPTER II

KAROL WOJTYŁA'S EXPERIENCE OF MERCY AS A YOUNG ADULT

The parents of Karol Wojtyła's and other spiritual mentors like Father Kazimierz Figlewicz¹ helped to direct his steps as a child towards spiritual life and experience. But as adulthood is a time for making decisions and pursuing one's destiny, Karol Wojtyła as a young adult made his own spiritual journey, which brought him still closer to the experience of mercy.

Life in Krakow and Exploration of Mercy

In the summer of 1938, after Karol had graduated from high school, he and his father, the Captain, left Wadowice and moved to Krakow, where Karol would begin his studies at the Jagiellonian University.²

¹ Fr. Kazimierz was a young catechist and assistant pastor at St. Mary's Wadowice, the home parish of Karol Wojtyła, who became Karol Wojtyła's confessor when Karol was just ten. This action of the young Karol Wojtyła corresponds to the recommendations of M. Szentmároni, who, when stressing in his book about the importance of spiritual direction, sees spiritual direction in terms of opening to others which is an attitude peculiar to human beings. The «I» develops in relation to a «you». According to him, peoples' journey toward God also involves a relationship of dialogue: cf. M. SZENTMÁRONI, *Camminare Insieme: Psicologia Pastorale*, Edizione San Paolo, Milano 2001, 79.

² Jagiellonian University was founded in 1364, and after Prague, the oldest university in East-central Europe. It was one of Europe's most distinguished centres of learning. Among the ex-students of Jagiellonian University was Nicolas Copernicus, the early sixteen-century astronomer and author of *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*. For six centuries, Jagiellonian University was a crossroads of Christian and humanistic culture: cf. P. JOHNSON, *Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Restoration*, 5. Karol Wojtyła in his tribute to the great tradition of Jagiellonian university, said that it was difficult for anyone to study at such a

They lived in the Debniki parish.³ Karol brought with him his devotional practices.

In August 1938, Karol Wojtyła entered University; he commenced studies in the faculty of philosophy at the Jagiellonian University, taking courses in Polish language and letters (Polish philology).⁴ Unfortunately, Karol was able to complete only the first year, since the Second World War broke out the following year. The war interrupted everything in Poland.⁵ Karol Wojtyła's university studies

university «without due piety». KAROL WOJTYŁA, *Person and Community*, Selected Essays, San Francisco, New York 1993, 264.

³ Cf. I. SZULC, *The Biographer*, 84-86.

⁴ In addition to commitment to his studies, Wojtyła began to make contact with some young intellectuals, especially young poets and young actors. He became a member of the scholars of Polish studies. He was involved in the every evening meeting of poets, artists and musicians, where they discussed literature, philosophy and arts and performed concerts and recited poetry. R. ALLEGRI, *A Life of Grace*, 68.

⁵ Cf. N. DAVIES, *A history of Poland*, Vol. II, 435-436. The Second World War broke out in 1939, and this radically changed Karol Wojtyła's life, as changed everyone else's. The war carried with it its own nightmares. This also meant an immediate suspension of any opportunity for cultural and theatrical activities, but Karol Wojtyła and his literary group, were determined to discover a way out of the situation by undertaking on clandestine theatrical activities. To make this materialised, these young actors and dramatists immediately organised themselves into an informal drama group. In October 1939, Karol Wojtyła and his Jagiellonian University classmates, Juliusz Kiedrzyński, Tadeusz Kwiśkowski joined by Danuta Michalowska met at the house of Kiedrzyński's to revise classical Polish literature, each of them taking different parts. Within two months, precisely in December 1939, at nineteen years of age, Karol Wojtyła wrote his first play *David*, the text of this first play has not been preserved, but we know of it from Karol Wojtyła's letter to Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, dated 28th December 1939, which mentioned the play *David* as already written and described briefly as a dramatic poem or drama, partly biblical, and partly rooted in Polish history. Karol Wojtyła added that he had revealed in this play *David*, many things dormant in his soul. Cf. B. TABORSKI, «Introduction», in Karol Wojtyła, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, 3-4. «Dear Mieczysław, [...] taking advantage of an unusual circumstances, I want to tell you of some details of my life over the past two months or so. First and foremost, I must tell you that I am keeping very busy. Some people are currently dying of boredom, but not I. I have surrounded myself with books, dug in with Arts and sciences. I am working. Would

inclusive. Apart from the interruption of everything by the Second World War, the whole situation of the War brought with it fear and danger. There was distress that people needed to be delivered from. Karol Wojtyła experienced mercy during the short period of his university studies and throughout the period of distress (war) through the following: Devotion to the Sacred Heart, Polish language and Theatre of the Living Word, labourer at the Solway plant, prayer and the holy Mass at the Redemptorist Church, devotion to Sr. Faustina, intensification of entrustment to Mary, and The Living Rosary.

you believe that I am virtually running out of time! I read, I write, I study, I think, I pray, I struggle with myself [...]. I wrote a drama or, more precisely, a dramatic poem, entitled *David*, in which he wears biblical robes and a linen shirt from the time of the Second World War. In the play *Job*, the narrative line followed the biblical story, with *Job*'s circumstance representing the suffering in the world. Karol Wojtyła's country Poland inclusive. Karol Wojtyła, before writing his play *Job*, made some observations about suffering in his letter to Mieczysław Kotlarczyk. On 2nd November 1939, the nineteen-year-old, Karol Wojtyła wrote to Mieczysław Kotlarczyk: «I have lately given much thought to the liberating force of suffering. It is on suffering that Christ's system rests, beginning with the Cross and ending with the smallest human torment». B. TABORSKI, «Introduction to *Job*», in KAROL WOJTYŁA, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, 24. Karol Wojtyła in his play, *Jeremiah*, parallel Piotr Skarga's fierce sermons on national reform with prophet Jeremiah's biblical prophecies, where he was calling the kingdom of Judah to repentance. During the reign of king Jehoiakim, Jeremiah was outspoken in condemning hypocritical worship and infidelity to God. He was persecuted for his preaching, his warnings, but he was proved accurate when Jehoiakim's policies led to the first capture of Jerusalem. From the further explanation of B. Taborski, based on the hints of Karol Wojtyła's letter to Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, the play *Jeremiah* is not strictly speaking, a historical play. It is not concerned with external events and facts, though it alludes to them, but ideas and attitudes and with a vision of Polish history. Cf. *Ibid.*, 76. Like the other two plays, *David* and *Job*, *Jeremiah*, also thematically, continued Karol Wojtyła's exploration of suffering and why of it, this journey of exploration became a means of his getting in touch with the Mystery of Mercy.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart

Devotion to the Sacred Heart was a way through which Karol Wojtyła experienced mercy. As we know, Karol Wojtyła had been immersed in devotional practices from his early childhood. As he moved to Kraków the devotion did not become less.⁶ Rather it was intensified given the unrest from the war. Living in Kraków, he contacted Fr. Kazimierz Figlewicz, his religion teacher, confessor, and spiritual director in Wadowice, who was later, transferred to the cathedral of Kraków. He found him at Mawel where Figlewicz oversaw the cathedral, and began to visit him regularly and continued his spiritual needs and sharing with him.⁷ Karol Wojtyła was involved in the devotion to the Sacred Heart,⁸ which he fulfilled and celebrated

⁶ The move to Kraków, a demanding academic workload in the university, the war and other preoccupations did not affect Karol Wojtyła's devotional practices. Instead these things deepened them.

⁷ Cf. G.M. 25-26, cf. also R. ALLIBONE, 70.

⁸ The devotion gained popularity in the seventeenth century through the efforts of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. This was a devotion that developed following the experience of the mystic, St. Margaret Mary, where Jesus, before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, showed her his Heart full of ingratitude from people. He demanded reparation from Margaret Mary. Margaret herself shared her experiences. Un fois que le saint Sacrement était exposé: «Après m'être sentie toute retirée au dedans de moi, par un recueillement extraordinaire de tous mes sens et puissances, Jésus-Christ, mon bon Maître, se présenta à moi tout éclatant de gloire avec ses cinq plaies, brillantes comme autant de soleils. De sa sacrée humanité, il sortait des flammes de toutes parts, surtout de son adorable poitrine, qui ressemblait à une fontaine. L'ayant ouverte, il me découvrit son Cœur divin, vive source de ces flammes. Ce fut alors qu'il me découvrit les merveilles inexplicables de son pur amour, et jusqu'à quel excès il l'avait porté à aimer les hommes, dont il ne recevait que de l'ingratitude. [...] Du moins, donne moi ce plaisir de supplier à leur ingratitude, autant que tu en peux être capable! Premièrement, tu me recevas dans le saint Sacrement autant que l'obéissance voudra le permettre, quelques mortifications et humiliations qu'il en puisse arriver, [...] Tu communieras tous les premiers vendredis de chaque mois. Et, toutes les nuits du Jeudi au Vendredi, je te ferai participer à cette mortelle tristesse que j'ai bien voulu souffrir au jardin des Oliviers. [...] Et pour m'accompagner dans cette humble prière que je présentais alors à mon Père, tu te leveras entre onze heures et minuit, [...] Pendant cette heure, tu feras ce

every first Friday of the month. He had gone for the same purpose on 1st September 1939, when the Second World War broke out. It was the first Friday of the month and, according to Catholic custom and personal habit, Karol was going to make his confession to his confessor, Father Kazimierz and to serve Mass.

First Friday is a devotional practice honouring the Sacred Heart of Jesus in which members of the Church observe the first Friday of each month by making confession and by receiving Holy Communion. According to promises, which Jesus made to St. Margaret Mary

que je t'envoierais: «Une day, as I knelt before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, after feeling totally withdrawn within me, by an extraordinary recollection of all my senses and faculties, Jesus Christ, my sweet Master, presented himself to me: all resplendent of glory, with his five wounds shining like so many suns. From his Sacred Humanity there issued flames especially from his adorable Heart, which was like a furnace. Having opened it, he showed me his divine Heart as the living source of those flames. Then he revealed to me all the unspeakable marvels of his pure love, and excess of love he had conceived for all men from whom nothing but ingratitude and contempt [...] You, at least, can give me happiness of supplying for their ingratitude, as much as you can: of first, you are to receive me the Blessed Sacrament as often as obedience will permit, no matter what mortification or humiliation it may entail. You are to receive Holy Communion on all first Friday of every month. And, every Thursday night to Friday I will make you share of the sorrow unto death, which I then offered to my father heavenly Father in agony you are to arise at midnight between eleven and twelve o'clock. [...] During that hour you are to do what I teach you: MARGUERITE-MARIE: ALACOQUE, *Vie et Oeuvres de Sainte Marguerite-Marie Alacoque*, Éditions Saint-Paul, Paris-Fribourg 1990, 224-225. Jesus had asked St. Margaret Mary that the believers go to Mass and confession on the first Friday of the month in honour of his Sacred Heart. In 1765, the Pope proclaimed the feast of the Sacred Heart. Later, Karol Wojtyła would assert that the canonisation of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque by Benedict XV in 1920 recalls the memory of one, who, from 1673 to 1675, was favoured with appearances of Jesus and was entrusted with a message whose widespread influence in the Church has been tremendous: cf. C. MOHL, *Holy Father, Sacred Heart*, The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York 2004, 209. Leo XIII dedicated the world to the Sacred Heart: cf. I. SANDIEKS, «Devotions», in MCF, 240; P. BURNS, *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, Burns and Oates, London 2003, 483.

Alacoque,⁹ those who follow this practice for nine consecutive months will be granted special graces such as final perseverance in faith and consolation of Christ's love in the final hours.¹⁰ Later, Wojtyła re-lived the memory:

[...], when my father and I moved to Cracow, I grew closer to Father Figlewicz; he was curate at the Cathedral. I would go to him for confession [...]. I will never forget the day of September 1, 1939: it was the First Friday of the month. I had gone to Wawel for confession; the Cathedral was completely empty.¹¹

Fr. Kazimierz Figlewicz recounted his experience in the great Polish Catholic publication, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, in which he wrote:

The war broke out. The day of September 1, 1939 is also associated in my memory with Karol Wojtyła. The morning air raids on Krakow caused a panic among the workers of the Cathedral, so I had no one to serve Mass for me. Karol came along just then, having walked from Debniki to Wawel to go to confession and communion, because this was the first Friday of the month. This religious custom was scrupulously observed by this young student. [...].¹²

⁹ Pius XII, in his Encyclical on devotion to the Sacred Heart, *Haurietis Aquas*, mentioned the names of those who achieved special distinction in establishing and promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart. These included: «St. Bonaventure, St. Albert the Great, St. Gertrude, St. Catherine of Siena, Blessed Henry Suso, St. Peter Canisius, St. Francis de Sales and St. John Eudes, author of the first liturgical office to be celebrated in honour of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus»; PIUS XII, *Haurietis Aquas* Encyclical Letter, n. 4, in *AAS* 68 (1956), 339. But Pius XII acknowledged that among those who have promoted the Sacred Heart devotion, St. Margaret Mary occupies the chief place of honour. Pius XII explained that with her great zeal with the help of her spiritual director, Blessed Claude de la Colombière, St. Margaret Mary succeeded in her efforts to have this devotion, «rich in spiritual blessings, established and clearly distinguished from other forms of Christian piety by the special nature of its acts of love and reparation»: *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Cf. J. QUINN, «First Fridays», in *MCE*, 321.

¹¹ *GM*, 26.

¹² Published in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, vol. 44, 1978, in *Kalendarium*, 62.

Polish Language and the Theatre of the Living Word¹³

In May 1938 Karol Wojtyła passed his secondary school examination.¹⁴ He decided without hesitation what he would do next. Theatre had been his passion and would now become his profession. Karol Wojtyła's study of the Polish language and his deeper involvement in the theatre were among the avenues that brought him into contact with mercy.

Karol Wojtyła began his studies in the Faculty of philosophy at the Jagiellonian University taking courses in the Polish language and letters.¹⁵ In the course of his preliminary studies, Karol Wojtyła began

¹³ *Rhapsodic Theatre of the Living Word* was a wartime clandestine theatre in which scenery, costumes, decoration and make-up were kept to a minimum; putting emphasis instead on the spoken word. The Rhapsodic theatre group discovered that the fundamental element of the dramatic art is the living human word. It is also the nucleus of drama, a heaven through which human deeds pass and from which they derive their proper dynamics. It was a drama of Word and Gesture: cf. *GM*, 10-11; B. TABORSKI, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theatre*, 6, 4.

¹⁴ It was in this month, precisely on the 3rd of May 1938 that Karol Wojtyła received the sacrament of Confirmation. That time the practice was that the final year of the secondary school also included preparations for the sacrament of Confirmation: cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 53; G. WEIGEL, 32. Shygniew Silkowski, Karol Wojtyła's secondary school classmate described how those who knew Karol Wojtyła remembered him: «I was his friend throughout our secondary school years. He was far ahead of us in his way of thinking and in his interests. Although he gladly participated in school outings and in intramural soccer games, these were but small digressions for him, whereas for us such activities were the focus of our free time. He was greatly liked, admitted and respected. He had a way of making us understand that it was a shame to waste our time on trifles [...]:» cf. *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 43/1978; A. BONIECKI, 52. Karol Wojtyła's secondary school teacher, Kazimierz Forys remembered him thus: «He was very reliable and possessed an undeniable literary talent. He could inspire his friends to work in the theatre, which formed a large part of his own life. [...] He was very religious, very pious. Every day before and after school he would step into the Church. He was the president of the Marian Solidarity in secondary schools»: cf. *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 44/1978; A. BONIECKI, 53.

¹⁵ Cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 55-58; G. WEIGEL, 40.

to realise fully what language was, and as we already know, he had long been «passionate about *belles lettres* and above all Polish literature».¹⁶ With the exposure and his immersion into these studies, early he began to grasp something of the mystery of the language itself, he understood that without language there would be no literature. He discovered that the human capacity for language made the world of literature possible.¹⁷ In other words, Karol Wojtyła was affirming the fact that his study and the analysis of historical evolution of the language opened up new horizons for him. It introduced him to the mystery of the language, thereby made clear to him that the word before it is spoken on the stage was already present in the history as the fundamental dimension of spiritual experience of human person. That is to say that the mystery of language brings the human person closer to the mystery of God - the mystery of the Word, the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1, 14). In this way, Karol Wojtyła was brought closer to mercy. He later remembered the experience:

As for my studies, I would like to point out that my choice of the Polish language and letters was determined by a clear inclination towards literature. Right from the beginning of the first year, I found myself attracted to the study of the language itself. We studied the descriptive grammar of modern Polish as well as the historical evolution of language [...]. This opened up completely new horizons for me; it introduced me to the mystery of the language itself. The word, before it is ever spoken on the stage, is already present in human history as a fundamental dimension of man's spiritual experience. Ultimately, the mystery of language brings us back to the inscrutable mystery of God himself. As I came to appreciate the power of the word in my literary and linguistic studies, I inevitably drew closer to the mystery of the Word - that Word of which we speak every day in the *Angelus*: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14).¹⁸

¹⁶ K. WOJTYŁA, *Curriculum Philosophicum*, unpublished autobiographical memorandum provided to G. Weigel: cf. G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, 40; cf. Notes, n. 101, 890.

¹⁷ Cf. G. WEIGEL, 40.
¹⁸ *GM*, 6.

Kotlarczyk's influence on Wojtyła did not end with his career as a high school actor and occasional director. Both of them continued to be in conversations with each other about the theatre.¹⁹ Mieczysław Kotlarczyk movement to Kraków intensified Karol Wojtyła's involvement in dramatic activity.²⁰

Mieczysław Kotlarczyk founded the *Theatre of the Living Word* in which plot, costumes, the dramatics of performance, and other accoutrements usually associated with theatre were reduced to the barest minimum.²¹ What happens to the consciousness is more emphasised than the events themselves; in other words, what happened in the consciousness of the audience, which was made possible by the actors was what countered. What is important is the way in which the objective reality is revealed.²² For Mieczysław Kotlarczyk the task of

¹⁹ This continued conversations about the theatre which showed itself in several letters which, Karol Wojtyła wrote to Mieczysław Kotlarczyk about the theatre during that period: cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 62-80. One of such letters of Karol Wojtyła to Mieczysław Kotlarczyk read: «I hear you have some theater projects. Count on me and on my enthusiasm. [...] Let theater be a Church where the national spirit will flourish»: cf. B. TABORSKI, *The Collected Plays and Writings on the Theatre*, 5.

²⁰ When life in Wadowice had become too dangerous for so seable an intellectual as Kotlarczyk, because of some happenings during the Second World War, he and his wife, Zofia, moved to Kraków into the Karol Wojtyła's apartment in Dębinki in June 1941; in fact Karol Wojtyła gave them his own lodgings after the death of his father in February of that year: cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium*, 81; B. TABORSKI, 5; G. WEIGEL, 63. Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, then founded *Rhapsodic Theatre* while living in Dębinki, as Karol Wojtyła would eventually testify: «what came to be known as the Rhapsodic Theater "was born in that room"»: This was revealed during G. Weigel's conversation with John Paul II on 30th September, 1997: cf. G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope*, 64; Notes, n. 80, 892.

²¹ Cf. MIECZYSLAW KOTLARCZYK, «Rhapsodic Theatre», in A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 81-82. Kotlarczyk himself said that he and his group created an improvised theatre and resigned themselves to a lack of scenery: cf. *Ibid.*, 82. According to Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, the Rhapsodic Theatre he founded acted from 1941-1945: cf. MIECZYSLAW KOTLARCZYK, «Rhapsodic Theatre», in A. BONIECKI, 82.

²² Cf. R. BUTTIGLIONE, *Karol Wojtyła: The Thought of the Man who became Pope Paul II*, 21.

the actor was to introduce the listener to the intimacy where the truth of the spoken word could reach and touch the listener.²³ Mieczysław Kotlarczyk thought of theatre as an ascetic, mystical exercise, which its purpose was to communicate the Word of God. The key thing in Kotlarczyk's concept of theatre «was the Word», therefore texts were important.²⁴ In Mieczysław Kotlarczyk's conviction the power of the drama lay in the spoken and received word, not in theatricals. According to G. Weigel, this Christian subtext to the Rhapsodic Theatre reflected the New Testament image of the world created through the Word, the Word who was with God and who was God (Jn 1, 1-3). It also found expression in Kotlarczyk's understanding of theatre as ritual.²⁵

In Mieczysław Kotlarczyk's understanding, an actor was supposed to become a perfect, and at the same time humble instrument to communicate the Word and to be a kind of lay priest serving the Word.²⁶

According to Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, in the world, one did not just go to the theatre to be entertained. Rather, Kotlarczyk deliberately made the dramatic method of the *Rhapsodic Theatre* to evoke sentiments of transcendence in a quasi-liturgical atmosphere.²⁷ This ritual setting of Mieczysław Kotlarczyk's *Theatre of the Living Word* helped to give the taste of mercy to Karol Wojtyła. Karol Wojtyła

²³ Cf. *ibid.*; cf. also G. WEIGEL, 37.

²⁴ Cf. G. WEIGEL, 37; R. ALLEGRI, *John Paul II: A Life of Grace*, 67. R. Buttiglione also likens Kotlarczyk's theatre to a priestly function, he says: «It is certain that Kotlarczyk understood the liturgical character of theatrical action, the way in which it revives the presence of a universal value which renews the mundane existence, judging its falsity but at the same time offering the possibility of entering into a new dimension and an unexpected authenticity. If one radicalized this perspective, there is little distance between the profession of the actor and that of the priest». R. BUTTIGLIONE, 22.

²⁵ Cf. G. WEIGEL, 65.

²⁶ Cf. R. ALLEGRI, 67.

²⁷ Cf. G. WEIGEL, 66. This *Rhapsodic Theatre* group liturgical-like atmosphere performance also evoked Patriotism. There would be talk and plan on how Poland would be freed from the distress of the Second World War.

himself would later share his impression about the theatre of the living word:

During that time I stayed in contact with the *theater of the living word* which Mieczysław Kotlarczyk had founded and continued to direct [...]. At the beginning my involvement in the theatre was helped by having Kotlarczyk and his wife Sofia as guests in my home; they had managed to move from Wadowice to Cracow. [...] Sharing the same house, we were able not only to continue our conversations about the theatre, but also to attempt some actual performances. These took the form, precisely, of a theater of the word. It was all quite simple. The scenery and decoration were kept to a minimum; our efforts were concentrated essentially on the delivery of the poetic text. The recitations took place before a small group of people whom we knew, and before guests who, because they had particular interest in literature, belonged in a sense to the «initiated». [...] I must admit that that whole experience of the theater left a deep impression on me.²⁸

Labourer at the Solvay Plant

In order to understand Karol Wojtyła's mercy experience as a labourer I have reviewed the working process at the plant. In 1940, there was a regulation that every healthy male between the ages of fourteen and sixty had to have a work-card, unless they were already engaged in regular work.²⁹ Karol Wojtyła was Twenty years old; hence, in the winter of that year, he had to find himself a job in a stone quarry at Zakrzówek. Wojtyła began work in a stone quarry at Zakrzówek. The Quarry was attached to the Solvay chemical plant about half an hour's walk from his home in Dębiki.

After a year, in 1941, Karol was transferred from the stone quarry³⁰ to the Solvay chemical factory in Borek Falecki. At Borek Falecki, he

²⁸ *GM*, 10.

²⁹ Cf. P. JOHNSON, 8.

³⁰ Even if Karol Wojtyła would later mine his experience of the quarry for his literary, philosophical, and theological purposes, the fact remains that this was hard

worked in the plant's water purification unit, often taking the night shift.³¹ He worked for four years as a manual labourer for the Solway quarry chemical company.³² Karol's work place became a milieu for his mercy experience; his experience of a relief from the heaviness at the Solway Plant could be regarded as part of an answer to his constant midnight prayer during the night shift. One of the fellow workers remembers Karol Wojtyła praying on his knees at the Borek Fałceki:

Karol Wojtyła, [...] we call him simply "the student" [...]. We worked on the same shift. [...] He was very religious. On the night shift, about 12 o'clock he would keel in the middle of purification room and pray. On many occasions I would come up to him and, in a soft voice, so as not to interrupt his prayer, I would tell him that the liquor was thickening. After a while he would finish his prayer and go back to work.³³

The sympathy of the workers towards Karol was practical.³⁴ The sympathetic management made things lighter for Karol. Karol Wojtyła

and dangerous work. G. Weigel described the working process: «Everyday, each worker had to fill one of the small tanneries with limestone. The new-students, Karol Wojtyła and others could not meet this quota, but the sympathetic quarry management

could only reduce the quotas. The limestone still had to be broken and shovelled, hour after hour. The workday at Zakrzówek lasted from early morning until 3 P.M.» G. WEIGEL, *Biography*, 56.

³¹ Cf. G. WEIGEL, 56; A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium*, 63.

³² Cf. G. WEIGEL, 55-56. According to Wojtyła's biographer, Weigel, at this point it was Karol's quarryman's salary, meagre as it was, that was the only family income since the war had stopped the Captain's pension: cf. G. WEIGEL, 56.

³³ Account of Władysław Ciełuch: cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 84.

³⁴ G. F. Svidercosch, describing the stone quarry said: «The quarry was a huge well with walls that were sixty to ninety feet high, and when you stood down inside it, you could see nothing else, only the rock, unless you bent back and looked towards the sky». G. F. SVIDERCOSCH, *Stories of Karol: The Unknown Life of John Paul II*, Liguori, Missouri 2003, 31-32; A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium*, 75. Yet in some way Karol Wojtyła found the Quarry experience rewarding. He became interested in stone as a material and as an image, which provided the theme of his longest and most striking poem, «The Quarry».

remembered the workers' kindness: «The managers of the quarry tried to spare us students from the heaviest work. In my case, they made me the assistant to the rock-blaster [...].»³⁵ The workmen at the water purification plant intuitively understood Karol Wojtyła's hard situation and came to his aid; they even took part of his factory work so that he could study.³⁶ Karol Wojtyła would regard all this as providential, and for our research, this experience will serve as one of the means of his being gradually introduced to mercy. Karol Wojtyła would later remember this kindness: «I cannot forget the kindnesses shown to me in that difficult period by people whom the Lord placed on my path, [...].»³⁷

Prayer and the Holy Mass at the Redemptorist Church

Karol Wojtyła did not only experience mercy as a labourer at the Solway plant factory, he also came into its contact on his way back from work. On his way home to Debniki, Karol Wojtyła, often stopped at the parish in Podgórze run by the Redemptorists, to pray or to attend early morning Mass after completing the night shift. Later, on the occasion of the dedication of a polychrony in the Redemptorist Church, Karol Wojtyła would make the following assertion:

I must make a special confession in front of these walls and in front of you. This Church is tied with my life in an unusual way. You know well that during the occupation, I was a physical laborer working for four years in the Solway factory in Borek Fałceki. Many times, returning home from Solway to Krakow I would step into this Church, especially after the night shift, in the early morning hours to be at the Holy Mass, to receive Communion. From here I drew great strength to last through the difficult times of the years of occupation. [...].³⁸

³⁵ GM, 10.

³⁶ Cf. M. O'CARROLL, *Poland and John Paul II*, 15; cf. also G. WEIGEL, 57.

³⁷ GM, 36.

³⁸ KAROL WOJTYŁA, as quoted in *Kalendarium*: cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 85.

Karol Wojtyła's affirmation of the strength he had drawn from the Eucharist corresponded to what the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* said about the efficacy of participation in the Eucharist, where the Vatican Council II affirmed that the participation in the celebration of the Eucharist "filled the mind with grace and nourished at the table of the Lord's Body."³⁹ From this source also, Karol Wojtyła experienced mercy and strength to cope with the distress of the difficult period of the Second World War.

Devotion to St. Faustina: Visit to the Grave of St. Faustina

During the Second World War, Andrew Deskur⁴⁰ introduced Karol Wojtyła to the message of mercy, as revealed to the mystic nun St. Faustina. When Karol Wojtyła was working as a labourer in the Solway factory, he used to go often to Łagiewniki to pray at the grave of St. Faustina.⁴¹ Wojtyła himself would recall the experience thus:

During the Second World War, I worked as a labourer in the Solway factory, near the monastery of Łagiewniki. I often visited the grave of sister Faustina, who at that time was not yet beatified. [...]⁴²

Karol Wojtyła's visit and prayer at the tomb of St. Faustina deepened a particular trust in her intercession even before she was beatified.⁴³

³⁹ VATICAN CONCIL II, SC, n. 47-48.

⁴⁰ Andrew Deskur was then a retired Cardinal at the Vatican.

⁴¹ St. Faustina was the mystic nun who, a few years before the Second World War

had a vision of the merciful Jesus, who called her to be the apostle of the devotion to The Divine Mercy of R. P. PRYTYŁ, *of course*, in C. W. K. J. M. K. L. *John Paul II The Great Mercy Pope, Marian Preter, Millennium 2001*, 15-16.

⁴² R. P. 194.

⁴³ We shall return to this theme later when discussing Faustina's influence on Karol Wojtyła.

Intensification of Entrustment to Mary

It is not easy to see immediately how an intensification of devotion could be a means of mercy encounter, perhaps a further explanation could be helpful in making what we mean clearer. Karol Wojtyła, at a stage in his spiritual life, felt that his devotion to Mary was becoming too much, probably taking a place solely due to Christ. He did not want to compromise the worship due, above all, to Christ and so he began to question his devotion to Mary lest it become too great. This is another way of saying that at that point Karol Wojtyła thought he ought to distance himself a bit from the kinds of devotion to Mary he had encountered as a boy in order to focus more on Christ.⁴⁴

In his further search, Karol Wojtyła made a discovery. During his long nights at Borok Falceki, while tending the water purification machinery at the Solway plant he read the works of St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort⁴⁵, and he found the works helpful. He later wrote:

During the Second World War, while I was employed as a factory worker, I came to be attracted to Marian devotion. At first, it had seemed to me that I should distance myself a bit from the Marian devotion of my childhood, in order to focus more on Christ. Thanks to Saint Louis of Montfort, I came to understand that true devotion to the Mother of God is actually Christocentric, indeed, it is very profoundly rooted in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. [...] And so, I rediscovered Marian piety, this time with a deeper understanding. This mature form of devotion to the Mother of God has stayed with me [...].⁴⁶

From the readings of the de Montfort work, Karol Wojtyła found the answers to his questions and he came to a new appreciation of his

⁴⁴ Cf. A. DALLIES, *Maritology*, in *The Splendour of Faith. The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II*, 38.

⁴⁵ Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort was an eighteenth-century French preacher and Mariologist, who taught Karol Wojtyła that true devotion to Mary was always focused on Christ cf. *GM*, 29.

⁴⁶ *CTH*, 212-213.

Marian piety.⁴⁷ Wojtyła's discoveries and findings led him to intensify his Marian devotion, which was expressed in the entrustment prayer, which ran thus: 'I am totally yours, and all that I have is yours, O most loving Jesus, through Mary, your holy Mother.'⁴⁸ Karol Wojtyła after his fresh findings entrusted himself anew to Mary's merciful protection and intercession.

The Living Rosary: Devotion to Mary Help of Christians

The parish of St. Stanisław Koszka in Dobniki, in Kraków, ran by the Salesians, was Karol Wojtyła's home parish. There in the parish, the Salesians' Fathers, who had courageously, in those war-torn times, begun anew their work among youth, had given Jan Tyranowski the task of creating a network of contacts with young people through what was called *The Living Rosary*. *The Living Rosary* as created by Jan Tyranowski, was a society, which had at its aim a devotion to Mary.

⁴⁷ I am not, Wojtyła would be grateful to de Montfort, whose writings had enabled him to discover the immense riches of Marian devotion from new perspectives. He would acknowledge that Montfort can be difficult to read because of his rather florid and baroque style, but he would found that the work contained the essential theological truths, and that the author was an outstanding theologian, and his Mariological thought was rooted in the mystery of the Trinity and Incarnation: cf. *GM*, 29.

⁴⁸ *«Tuus totus ego sum, et omnia mea tui sunt. Te solo vult a vobis, et tunc ce que j'ai vu sans apartenir. O mon adorable Jésus, par Marie, votre sainte Mère»*. LCI 115, 5A/115. *«MONTFORT, DE MONTFORT, à l'usage de la vraie dévotion»*, in *Œuvres complètes de Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, Editions du Saint, Paris 1976*, n. 1233. 644. Karol Wojtyła adopted the Latin version of the entrustment in these words: *«Tuus Totus ego sum et omnia mea tui sunt. Accipio Te in mea omnia. Proinde mihi cor Tuum, Mariam, et omnia tota tua sunt. Accipio Te in mea omnia. Recipere (welcomes) you in all that is mine. Give (offer) me your heart, O Mary»*. *GM* 29. According to the information in the de Montfort's work, Latin formula of entrustment to Virgin Mary was extracted from the work of St. Bonaventure: cf. footnotes' information: LCI 115, 5A/115. *DE MONTFORT, à l'usage de la vraie dévotion*, n. 1233, footnotes, n. 2, 644.

help of Christians, and inculcation of devout self-discipline.⁴⁹ During Karol Wojtyła's second year in Kraków, he joined this *Living Rosary* society.⁵⁰

*The Living Rosary*⁵¹, an association of young men consisted of a group of fifteen young men that form *«a living chapter»* of devotion.

⁴⁹ Cf. *GM*, 23; G. W. WILLIAMS, *The Mind of John Paul II: origins of his Thought and Action*, 79.

⁵⁰ Cf. *GM*, 28.

⁵¹ For an understanding of the *Living Rosary*, it will be necessary to say a word about the Rosary and the Rosary beads. The Rosary is the best known private devotion in the Catholic Church and the Christian's most used method of meditation: cf. B. BYRAN, *«Rosary»*, in *MC* 11, 156; S. MARYKIAN, *«Rosary»*, in *NJC* 50, 813. The traditional and used for the recitation of the Rosary is the set of beads. The beads marked the succession of devotion. The use of key prayers: Our Father, Hail Mary, and the Trinitarian doxology, which are repeated with the aid of a string of beads, focus the person who meditates, opening him or her to the Word of God. The meditation, further, keeps in mind fifteen scenes (mostly biblically based) called mysteries, all illustrative of the principles of Rosary meditation: cf. *Ibid.* The fifteen mysteries of the Rosary fall into three divisions, called contemplation, of five mysteries each. Each mystery accompanies the recitation of one Our Father, ten Hail Marys, and the doxology. Later, the luminous mysteries would be added to the Rosary, making the mystery twenty: cf. John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* Apostolic Letter, n. 21. According to Paul VI, Rosary is one of the traditional paths of Christian prayer directed to the contemplation of Christ's face. He described it in these words: *«As a Christ prayer, centred on the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is a prayer with a clearly Christological orientation. Its most characteristic elements, in fact, the Mary-like succession of Hail Marys, becomes in itself an increasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object both of the Angel's announcement and of the greeting of the Mother of John the Baptist: "Blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Lk 1:42). We would go further and say that the succession of Hail Marys constitutes the warp on which is woven the contemplation of the mysteries. The Jesus that each Hail Mary recalls is the same Jesus whom the succession of mysteries proposes to us now as the Son of God, now as the Son of Virgin»*. PAUL VI, *Munus Cuius Apostolic* Exhortation, n. 6, in *AAS* 66 (1974), 155. According to Paul VI, without the contemplative dimension, the Rosary would lose its meaning: *«Without contemplation, the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation runs the risk of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas...»*. By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord...» PAUL VI, *Munus Cuius*, n. 47, in *AAS* 66 (1974), 156.

and self-discipline.⁵² Each chapellet was led by a more mature member who received personal spiritual direction and instruction from Jan Tyranowski,⁵³ and Karol Wojtyła was one of the leaders. *The Living Rosary* was a society of young men in which praying the rosary was central. This chapellet of devotion to Mary help of Christians involved the recitation of Marian devotional salutation⁵⁴ and petition: official

⁵² As the group grew, new chapellets of fifteen young men were formed and a leader chosen from outstanding members of an existing group. The chapellets met weekly. The members of each chapellet met regularly with Tyranowski for an hour a week. In these weekly one-hour meetings, Tyranowski taught his group leaders both the fundamentals of spiritual life and methods for examining and improving their daily lives. Jan insisted that a daily record be kept by each on what a member of the living Rosary did each day. The goal of the discipline of keeping a spiritual journal was to foster an inward and outward practice of living the prayer. Also, Jan met with any member of a living Rosary who needed to talk to him. Jan Tyranowski's instructions were adapted to the several aptitudes and levels of growth in spirituality in the Rosary: cf. G. H. WIELLEMAN, 'The Formation of the Polish Pope', in *The Mind of John Paul II. Origins of his Thought and Action*, 79-80; G. WEGGEL, 60; R. ALLECOM, *A Life of Grace*, 80-81; A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium*, 90.

Jan Tyranowski was a remarkable layman, an accountant who chose to work as a tailor. According to him, working as a tailor made it easier for him to develop his interior life: cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 232. In the fragments of his article in *Tygodnik Powszechny* about Jan Tyranowski, Karol Wojtyła himself described how the young people regarded Jan Tyranowski and his spirituality: '... Our impressions of Jan Tyranowski grew from regarding him as an aging pious gentleman to a personal conviction that we were dealing with someone who was indeed a saint. So our internal experience of Jan encompassed all our resistance and reservations, and his personality became indelibly imprinted in us. Our mind to that was totally foreign to us. We wanted to draw his instructions to this new life. He was the apostle and teacher of this new concept. This is the essence of the matter: he was an apostle. With his very being he gave witness to the truth he was proclaiming. He showed us God much more immediately than any sermons or books he provided to us that God could not only be studied, but also lived. K. WOJTYLA, 'Apostolic', in *Tygodnik Powszechny* 35 (1949), fragments of an article about Jan Tyranowski, as quoted in A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 66-70.

⁵³ The salutation of the *Kalendarium* continued with the greeting of Elizabeth to the Blessed Virgin Mary (cf. I, 28, 42) and the added petition of the Church.

Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.⁵⁵

The members of *The Living Rosary* committed themselves to the life of intensive prayer, which expressed itself in a special devotion to Mary, Help of Christians. Karol Wojtyła would remember the league:

When I was in Cracow, in Debniki, I joined the "Living Rosary" group in the Sakisian parish. There was a special devotion there to Mary, Help of Christians.⁵⁶

A. Dulles simply described *The Living Rosary* as an organisation 'of young men who turned in prayer to the Blessed Virgin'.⁵⁷ As we have tried to explain earlier, Rosary is both meditation and supplication.

In praying the Rosary, the Trinitarian doxology is followed by a brief concluding prayer, which better expresses the connection of the Rosary with Christian life. One such prayer which comes at the end of the recitation of the last Rosary beads invites those praying to pray that, by meditation on the mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, they may come to 'imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise'. The CCC and LG also affirmed that the Blessed Virgin Mary sustains the prayers of the believers, and she is the sign of

⁵⁵ Cf. CCC, no. 2676-2677.

⁵⁶ Cf. 28. As a Marian initiative that aimed at making faith concrete, the members of the organisation also committed themselves daily to the teachings that came from prayer. Scripture and other spiritual books. The commitment of the group showed that they were intent to put into practice what they had learned. Tyranowski's approach to the interior life of prayer embodied an apostolic dimension. The practice of interior life of prayer was also meant to lead to an intensified life of service to others. Therefore, the members of the *Living Rosary* pledged themselves to a life of intensive prayer as brothers in Christ who would help one another in all the circumstances of their lives as workers, as students etc.: cf. G. WEGGEL, 60; R. ALLECOM, 81.

⁵⁷ A. DULLES, 'Theological Formation', in A. DULLES, *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II*, 3.

true hope and comfort.⁵⁸ In this sense, it was clear that the devotional prayer to Mary, Help of Christians in *The Living Rosary* was one of the means through which Karol Wojtyła experienced mercy.⁵⁹ Karol Wojtyła would later assert that Rosary was his best personal prayer:

[...] From my youthful years this prayer has held an important place in my spiritual life. [...] The Rosary has accompanied me in moments of joy and in moments of difficulty. To it I have entrusted any number of concerns; in it I have always found comfort. [...] I frankly admitted: "Rosary is my favourite prayer. [...]"⁶⁰

Articulation of Mercy Experience and Discovery of True Vocation

Karol Wojtyła had passed through the war years essentially unharmed, but greatly changed spiritually.⁶¹ He acknowledged that Jan

⁵⁸ Cf. CCC, nn. 2679, 971; LG, nn. 68-69.

⁵⁹ There was also a patriotic fervour within the group, a hope for a day of relief of Poland from the devastating effects of the Second World War: cf. G. H. WILLIAMS, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of his Thought and Action*, 79.

⁶⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* Apostolic Letter, n. 2, in *AAS*, 95 (2003), 6.

⁶¹ Karol Wojtyła's with meeting with Jan Tyranowski, a man of deep spirituality, led him to learn certain habits of self-control and discipline in the spiritual life. It was, in fact, Tyranowski who encouraged young Karol Wojtyła to become acquainted with Spanish mysticism and with the works of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila. Later Wojtyła himself would emphasise this in his memoir: «In carrying out his work, Jan Tyranowski did not limit himself to the organizational aspects alone; he also concerned himself with the spiritual formation of the young people whom he met. Thus I learned the basic methods of self-formation which would later be confirmed and developed [...] Tyranowski, whose own spiritual formation was based on the writings of Saint John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila, helped me to read their works, something uncommon for a person of my age»; *GM*, 24. The most enduring contribution which Jan Tyranowski made to Karol Wojtyła's spiritual life and thinking was introducing him to the Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross. According to A. Dulles, Jan Tyranowski gave Karol Wojtyła a lasting respect for Carmelite spirituality, cf. DULLES, 3. Jan must have sensed that John of the Cross' poetry would appeal to young Wojtyła, and the reading of that first literary fruits of

Tyranowski⁶² «had opened for him the richness of his interior life and mystical life». Karol Wojtyła had also deepened his life of prayer, nourished by membership in «*The Living Rosary*» and by his reading of the great Spanish mystics. To these classics he added the reading of *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary* by St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort. More over, within his river of life he made a recollection of his mercy experience during the wartime which helped him to find his true vocation.

Wojtyła's Experience during the War

At this stage, Karol Wojtyła made a general recollection of his life, especially during the most ravaging Second World War. He expressed his gratitude to Providence for his shepherding hands in passing the war years unharmed. He reflected on the war and the dangers he faced. He wondered why he had not ended up like so many of his friends. Later, he would express his reflection in these words:

Carmelite mysticism soon led to Karol's reading of St. John's major theological works, such as: *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *The Dark Night*, *The Spiritual Canticle*, and *The Living Flame of Love*. Later, Karol Wojtyła recalling the years of his early youth said: «[...] There were to be many more steps in my journey. [...] I met a layman named Jan Tyranowski, who was a true mystic. This man, whom I consider a saint, introduced me to the great Spanish mystics and in particular to Saint John of the Cross. [...] I read the works of that mystic, especially his poetry. In order to read it in the original, I studied Spanish. That was a very important stage in my life». *CTH*, 142; cf. also R. BUTTIGLIONE, «The Influence of Tyranowski», in *Karol Wojtyła: The thought of man who became Pope John Paul II*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan 1997, 28.

⁶² In a written remembrance of Jan Tyranowski, Karol Wojtyła stated that Jan Tyranowski «was one of those unknown saints, hidden amid the others like a marvellous light at the bottom of life, at a depth where night usually reigns: «[...] Fra quest'ultimo, penso a un uomo molto semplice, e che era uno di quei santi sconosciuti, nascosti in mezzo agli altri come una luce meravigliosa nel fondo della vita, a una profondità dove di solito regna il buio». A. FROSSARD, «Non Abbiate Paura», 18.

⁶³ «Egli mi ha aperto le ricchezze della sua vita interiore, della sua vita mistica». A. FROSSARD, 18.

I was spared much of the immense and horrible drama of the Second World War. I could have been arrested any day, at home, in the stone quarry, in the plant, [...]. Sometimes I would ask myself: so many young people of my own age are losing their lives, *why not me?* [...]. I cannot forget the kindnesses shown to me in that difficult period by people whom the Lord placed on my path, [...].⁶⁴

Wojtyła further reflecting on the suffering and sacrifice most experienced during the Second World War and exclaimed: «Providence spared me the most difficult experiences; and so my sense of indebtedness is all the greater, [...].»⁶⁵

Wojtyła's Discovery of His True Vocation

The Second World War was the period in which he experienced great losses in his immediate family. But according to him, the effect was not all negative, because something significant emerged. Later, he would declare his feeling and thinking thus:

The outbreak of the war took me away from my studies and from the university. In that period I also lost my father, the last remaining member of my immediate family. All this brought with it, objectively, a *progressive detachment* from my earlier plans; in a way it was like being uprooted from the soil in which, up till that moment, my humanity had grown. But the process was not all negative. At the same time a light was beginning to shine ever more brightly in the back of my mind: *The Lord wants me to become a priest*. One day I saw this with great clarity: it was like an interior illumination which brought with it the joy and certainty of a new vocation. And this awareness filled me with great inner peace [...].

Karol Wojtyła affirmed that the death of his father and the effect of the war were not all negative, because there was what G. Weigel called

⁶⁴ *GM*, 36.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

an evolutionary process of gradual clarification⁶⁷ or «an interior illumination». Karol Wojtyła began to sense in himself «a progressive detachment from his earlier plans». ⁶⁸ As we know, Karol Wojtyła had planned to study the Polish language and letters, but with the detachment from his earlier plans, the priesthood began to loom larger in his mind. The two traumatic events, which lay at the core of Karol Wojtyła's decision to become a priest, were: The death of his father and the war.

Karol Wojtyła heard his call to the priesthood after suffering a traumatic blow. He had said that he began to think seriously about the priesthood after his father's death. On 18 February 1941, he came home from work and found his father dead. ⁶⁹ The death of Karol Wojtyła's father had brought up some significant issues. The Captain, with his enlightened wisdom, had been a shining example and a solid reference point for Karol in his infancy and in his adolescence. ⁷⁰ To lose him at such a critical time in the history of the world made Karol Wojtyła feel as if all is over. He took the loss hard.

The outbreak of the war was one of the traumas that shaped Karol Wojtyła's vocation to the priesthood. Karol Wojtyła moved by the hard experiences of the war and by the heroism he had witnessed in the face of it, began to sense in himself a detachment from his earlier plans. Later, Wojtyła would express the experience:

[...] my priestly vocation took definitive shape at the time of the Second World War. Was this a mere coincidence or was there a more profound connection between what was developing within me and the external historical events? It is hard to answer such question. Certainly, in God's

⁶⁷ G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope: Biography*, 69.

⁶⁸ As we know Karol Wojtyła had planned to study Polish language and letters. His earlier inclination was towards literature, especially the dramatic literature, and the theatre. He was completely committed to the theatre and planned to be a great actor, cf. *GM*, 5.

⁶⁹ *GM*, 40; cf. also A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 77.

⁷⁰ The Captain and his son, Karol Wojtyła had never discussed a possible vocation to the priesthood, but Karol Wojtyła later would recall that his father's exemplary life was his first seminary. It was for him, like «a kind of domestic seminary»: *GM*, 20.

plan nothing happens by chance. All I can say is that the tragedy of the war had its effect on my gradual choice of a vocation. It helped me to understand in a new way the value and importance of a vocation. In the face of the spread of evil and the atrocities of the war, the meaning of the priesthood and its mission in the world became much clearer to me.⁷¹

The pressure of these events in Karol Wojtyła's life and experience brought with them a detachment from his earlier plans. This meant that his vocation to the priesthood began to form. According to him, his sense of vocation to the priesthood took final shape over the summer of 1942. Looking back later at his younger self, Karol Wojtyła posed the question of whether it was «mere coincidence» that his vocation was formed during the occupation. He answered, recognising that in God's plan nothing happens by chance. It was clear to him that the tragedy of the war helped him to understand in a new way the «value and importance of a vocation», and the meaning of the priesthood and its mission in the world became much clearer to him.⁷² This might mean that the ideal of priesthood offered a means for making sense of what he was seeing around him.

There were also persons and events that provided spiritual support to Wojtyła's choice of the vocation to the priesthood. Although it is not possible to discuss all of them here again in full⁷³, yet special mention has to be made of the influences of Jan Tyranowski and Brother Albert. We have already discussed at length about Jan Tyranowski and his spiritual influence on Karol Wojtyła. This included his influence on Wojtyła's vocation to the priesthood. Karol Wojtyła himself summarised in *Tygodnik Powszechny* his indebtedness to Tyranowski for his influence on his vocation in his article of tribute to Jan Tyranowski where he affirmed: «With regards to my vocation to the

priesthood. I owe very much to the late Jan Tyranowski, about whom I once wrote in *Tygodnik Powszechny*».⁷⁴

In addition to the already mentioned major events and persons, one more important factor in Wojtyła's progression toward the priesthood was his encounter with the historic personality, called Brother Albert (Adam Chmielowski was his real name), whom he came to know at that time from reading his biography.⁷⁵ This Brother Albert studied and became an accomplished artist.

After settling in Krakow in 1884, Chmielowski continued to achieve success, but his life was not completely fulfilling. He grew increasingly dissatisfied with his life as an artist. Then, at a certain point, he abandoned his artistic pursuits when he realised that God was calling him to much more important tasks.⁷⁶ When he became aware of the distressing situation of the poor of Krakow, he decided to become one of them, not as an almsgiver coming to distribute gifts, but as one completely devoted to the service of the underprivileged.⁷⁷ Later, Karol Wojtyła would express Brother Albert's influence on him:

Brother Albert has a special place in the history of Polish spirituality. For me he was particularly important, because I found in him a real spiritual

⁷⁴ K. WOJTYŁA, «The Apostle», in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 5 (1949), as quoted in A. BONIECH, *Kalendarium*, 65, 66, 66-70.

⁷⁵ Adam Chmielowski was born on 20th August 1845 in Igołomia in Southern Poland. After elementary school he attended an agrarian school for two years. In 1880 he decided to enter Jesuit Congregation but because of serious illness, he left the novitiate after six months. He eventually became a lay Franciscan missionary. In August 1887, he put on a simple habit and took the name «Brother Albert». A year later he made vows before the Bishop of Krakow, Cardinal Albin Dunajewski. He would later be beatified and canonised. He founded two religious congregations the Albertine Brothers and Sisters: cf. B. TABORSKI, «Introduction to Our God's Brother», in KAROL WOJTYŁA, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, 147-148. ALLEGRI, 96, cf. also GM, 33. Karol Wojtyła was also devoted to Brother Albert even before his beatification and canonisation: cf. RLW, 194.

⁷⁶ GM, 34.

⁷⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ In this sense, we recall the contributions of Karol Wojtyła's father and that of Fr. Figlewicz, Karol Wojtyła's confessor and spiritual director: cf. GM, 20, 25.

*support and example in leaving behind the world of art, literature and the theater, and in making the radical choice of a vocation to the priesthood.*⁷⁸

Brother Albert-Adam Chmielowski- occupies a special place in my memory, or rather in my heart. [...] He was an outstanding figure for me, and I was spiritually very close to him. I wrote a play about him entitled *Our God's Brother*.⁷⁹ His personality fascinated me, and he became a model for me: he gave up art in order to become a servant of the poor, of the "gentlemen of the road." His example helped me to abandon the arts and the theatre in order to enter the seminary. [...].⁸⁰

Wojtyla felt that Brother Albert gave him inner spiritual support to make the decision himself and to pursue the priesthood. In 1942 the conviction grew in Karol Wojtyla that he had been chosen.⁸¹ He then gave a response that filled him with joy and inner peace.⁸² In October 1942, a year and a half after his father's death, Karol Wojtyla made his final decision and entered the underground seminary and registered at the priesthood in Krakow's Jagiellonian University, while he continued Faculty of Theology of the Jagiellonian University.⁸⁴ After completing the prescribed course of study, he was ordained a priest on 1st November 1946.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷⁹ This play was an attempt to communicate Brother Albert's struggle to identify and live out his vocation: cf. B. TABORSKI, «Introduction to *Our God's Brother*», in KAROL WOJTYLA, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, with introduction by B. Taborski, University of California Press, Berkeley 1987, 147-148, 150-155.

⁸⁰ *RLW*, 194-195.

⁸¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸² *GM*, 35.

⁸³ At this point the seminary was operating only clandestinely.

⁸⁴ The seminarians continued to live outwardly ordinary lives; most of Karol's academic work was done alone, much of it at night in the boiler of the purification plant of the Solvay Chemical Company: cf. *GM*, 12; A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium*, 87.

I have made this quick trace of Karol Wojtyla's vocation to the priesthood in order to help us connect priesthood as a means through which mercy reached Karol Wojtyla.

PART TWO

KAROL WOJTYLA'S CONTACT WITH MERCY AS PRIEST AND BISHOP

CHAPTER III

ITINERARY OF MERCY EXPERIENCE IN THE PRIESTHOOD OF KAROL WOJTYLA

The task of this chapter is to seek out and pinpoint the ways through which priesthood opened up mercy experience for Wojtyla. A quick look at the nature of the priesthood would be important. In this sense, I do not intend to go directly into a detailed analysis of all that is involved in the theology of the priesthood. This means that I will briefly touch on the concept of the priesthood, and then move on to our trace on mercy.

An Overview of the Catholic Priesthood

There are two essentially different types of priesthood as described by the Vatican Council II: the common priesthood of all the faithful and the ministerial priesthood; both of them participations in the priestly office of Christ.¹ My attention will be focused only on the ministerial priesthood.

Priesthood is a ministry in the Church, which the Second Vatican Council described as the «divinely instituted ecclesiastical ministry».²

¹ Cf. *LG*, n. 10; cf. also PIUS XII, *Mediator Dei* Encyclical Letter, n., *AAS* 39 (1947), 555.

² *Ibid.*, n. 28; cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Doctrina et canones de sacramento ordinis*, session 23, Ch. 2, *DS*, 1765, can. 6: *DS*, 1776, P. Hünermann, ed., Edizioni Dohoniane, Bologna 2001 (henceforth: *DS*).

The traditional doctrine has maintained that priesthood is a ministry instituted by Christ.³ It is found in the Church with a role of imparting God's grace of salvation to mankind.⁴ Galot asserts that it is only in Christ himself that we must try to discern the traits of the new and definitive priesthood.⁵ It is only Christ that can throw full light on the priesthood. This is so for two reasons: he instituted the priesthood, and he realised in his own self the model of the priesthood.⁶ It is also firm Catholic teaching, that the ministerial priesthood is transmitted through ordination.⁷ «Ordination is rather the means by which the priesthood, once brought into existence, is perpetuated by being conferred on new members, who are co-opted into the ministerial body by a rite that is itself a sacrament».⁸

³ The Council of Trent stated that the sacrament of priesthood was instituted at the Last Supper when Jesus uttered the words, «Do this in commemoration of me» (quoting Lk 22, 19, 1Cor 11, 24), session 22, can. 2, DS, 1752.

⁴ J. GALOT, *Theology of the Priesthood*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1984, 17-

18. In this sense he affirms that the definition of priesthood should not start with merely a general notion of the priesthood, whether derived from sociology or furnished by the history of religions. The identity of the priesthood as instituted by the Christ, he says, cannot be found outside the Church. He acknowledged that the information coming from other fields and disciplines could increase our understanding of the priesthood but they can never count as the criteria: cf. *Ibid.*

⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁶ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, n. 1 (henceforth: PO). This explains the affirmation of the *Instrumentum Laboris* of 1990 Synod on the identity and mission of the priest in the Church when it says that a consideration of the image of Christ as Priest and Good Shepherd leads to the discovery of the priesthood of the whole Church as the people of God, and the special participation of priests in the ministerial priesthood of Christ through the sacrament of Orders. It follows then, that the person, the manner of life and the mission of the ordained priest are a unique participation in the person, the manner of life and the mission of Christ, the Priest: SYNODUS EPISCOPORUM VIII COELETUS GENERALIS ORDINARIUS VIII, *The Formation of Priests in circumstances of the Present Day, Instrumentum Laboris*, E. Civitate Vaticana 1990, n. 13.

⁸ A. DULLES, *The Priestly Office: A Theological Reflection*, Paulist Press, New York 1997, 34.

The Threefold Functions of the Priest

The Document of the Second Vatican Council, gave a detailed treatment of the presbyteral office in the *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, whose second chapter surveys the functions of priests under the three headings of prophetic, priestly and pastoral.⁹ The Council describing the nature of the priesthood says:

The Lord Jesus whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world (Jn 10, 36) gave the whole mystical body a share in the anointing of the Spirit with which he was anointed (cf. Mt 3, 16; Lk 4, 18; Acts 4, 27; 10, 38). In that body all the faithful are made a holy and kingly priesthood, they offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ, and they proclaim the mighty acts of him who has called them out of darkness into his admirable light (cf. 1 Pet 2, 5, 9). Therefore there is no such thing as a member who does not have a share in the mission of the whole body. [...] However, the Lord also appointed certain men as ministers, in order that they might be united in one body in which «all the members have not the same function» (Rom 12, 4). These men held in the community of the faithful the sacred power of order, that of offering sacrifice and forgiving sins, and exercised the priestly office publicly on behalf of men and women in the name of Christ.¹⁰

The Council also teaches that ordained ministers are signs and living instruments of the mission of Christ in the world. They are sacramental ministers called to act *in persona Christi* in celebrating the Eucharistic

⁹ Cf. PO, n. 4.

¹⁰ PO, n. 2. The PO says further that the office of priests shares in the authority by which Christ himself builds up and sanctifies and rules his body. Therefore the priest himself while presupposing the sacraments of initiation is conferred by its own particular sacrament. Through that sacrament priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ, the Head: cf. PO, n. 2; CCC, n. 1563.

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sacrifice and in *persona Ecclesiae* as representatives of the Church.¹¹ With their ordination, priests are configured to Christ the priest as ministers of the Head, and raised to be living instruments of Christ the eternal Priest in order to continue his work of salvation.¹²

The Congregation for the Clergy further specifies priestly identity when it says that the priestly identity has to be seen in the context of the divine salvific will since it is a fruit of the sacramental action of the Holy Spirit, a sharing in the Church. The Congregation stated that the priestly identity is three-dimensional: Pneumatological, Christological and Ecclesiological. It affirms that this primordial theological structure of the mystery of the priest, who is a minister of salvation «can never be overlooked if he is adequately to understand the meaning of his pastoral ministry in the concrete circumstances of the parish».¹³

Priesthood as Mediation

«Through the sacred ordination and mission [...], priests are promoted to the service of Christ the teacher, priest and king; they are given a share in his ministry, through which the Church on earth is being unceasingly built up into the people of God [...]».¹⁴ The fruit of the 1990 Synod of Bishops, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV) says that the priest finds the full truth of his identity in being a derivative, a specific participation in, and continuation of Christ the one high priest of the new and eternal covenant.¹⁵ A. Dulles explains that priesthood involves

¹¹ Cf. SC, n. 33; LG, n. 10.

¹² Cf. PO, n. 12.

¹³ CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*, INSTRUMENT, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2002, n. 5.

¹⁴ The Congregation affirms that the priest, *alter Christus*, is the minister of the essential actions. Acting in *persona Christi Capitis*, he is the fount of life and vitality in the Church, and in his parish by virtue of his sacrificial power to confect the Body and Blood of the Redeemer, his authority to proclaim the Gospel, and his power to conquer the evil of sin through sacramental forgiveness: *Ibid.*, n. 8.

¹⁵ PO, n. 1.

¹⁶ PDV, n. 12.

a public commissioning of a priest to offer worship on behalf of a whole people, and thereby to gain God's benevolence and favour on their behalf.¹⁶ This led him to recall the affirmation in the *Letter to the Hebrews*¹⁷, where the concept of priesthood is magnificently encapsulated in the following statements:

Every high priest is taken from human beings and is appointed to act on their behalf in relationships with God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins; he can sympathise with those who are ignorant or who have gone astray, because he too is subject to the limitations of weakness. That is why he has to make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. No one takes this honour on himself; it needs a call from God, as in Aaron's case [...] (Heb 5, 1-4).

The same chapter goes on to refer to Christ, the high priest *par excellence* when it says: «And so it was not Christ who gave himself the glory of becoming high priest, but the one who said to him: [...] *You are a priest for ever, of the order of Melchizedek*» (Heb 5, 6). The Letter pointed out how Christ offered up prayers and supplications, «with loud cries and with tears, [...] and winning a hearing by his reference, [...] he became for all who obey him [...] the source of eternal salvation [...]» (Heb 5, 7-9). This seems to touch on the understanding that the priestly action of Jesus is one of mediation between God and sinful humanity.¹⁸ Priesthood involves a mediating role. It is commonly heard that «the priest is a mediator between God and the people», a «mediator between Jesus Christ and the people», or a «mediator between the Church and the world».¹⁹

The Council of Trent set forth the principle that «sacrifice and priesthood are by divine ordinance united». The same Council in its

¹⁶ Cf. A. DULLES, *The Priestly Office*, 30.

¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁹ «On dit et écrit couramment: "Le prêtre est médiateur entre Dieu et les hommes.", on dit parfois aussi: "comme si c'était équivalent, "médiateur entre Jésus-Christ et les hommes", ou encore "entre l'Eglise et le monde"»: R. SALAÜN-É. MARCUS, *Qui est-ce qui l'un Prêtre?*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1965, 59.

decree on the sacrament of Orders defined the Catholic priesthood in terms of powers to offer holy Mass and to forgive sins. The priesthood of the New Testament is defined by Trent as «Power of consecrating and offering the true body and blood of the Lord and of forgiving and retaining sins». Priesthood was instituted by Christ who gave «to the apostles and their successors in the priesthood [...] the power of consecrating, offering and administering his body and blood [...] as shown by the sacred Scriptures and as has always been taught by the Tradition of the Catholic Church».²⁰ The Letter to the Hebrews is the biblical foundation of a proper perspective on priestly mediation. The priest is taken from the people and he acts for the people in things that concern God. They do all these in their capacity as *alter Christus* acting in *persona Christi*.²¹ This role is especially pertinent to the celebration of the Eucharist in *persona Christi*.²²

This role of mediation received great emphasis by theologians. Aquinas, for example, held that it is proper that «the priests of the New Law be called mediators between God and people, inasmuch as they are ministers of the true Mediator by administering, in his stead, the saving sacraments to the people».²³ Likewise, L.-J. Suñens held that «by function, the priest is the mediator between heaven and earth; he is the bridge, which links the two edges calling each other [...]». The priest, of necessity, must be in communion with both sides. He should be formed in such a way that he learns how to be close to men and women with an apostolic duty proper to every baptised».²⁴

²⁰ DS, 1764, can. 1; DS, 1771.

²¹ SC, n. 33.

²² *Ibid.*, n. 10.

²³ «Sacerdotes vero novae legis possunt dici mediatores Dei et hominum inquantum sunt ministri veri mediatoris, vice ipsius salutaria sacramenta hominibus exhibentes». ST THOMAS AQUINAS, STII, III, Q. 26, a.1.

²⁴ «[...] le Prêtre par fonction il est médiateur entre le ciel et la terre; il est le point de pontifex – qui relie les deux rives qui s'appellent [...] Il faut que le prêtre soit formé à ce double rôle: qu'il apprenne, pour lui-même, comment s'approcher des hommes par contact religieux direct, et qu'il sache comment former les fidèles au devoir apostolique propre à tout baptisé». L.-J. SUËNENS, *L'Église en état de mission*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1955, 94-95.

Mercy Experience During Wojtyła's Further Theological Studies

Having traced the nature and function of the ministerial priesthood, I will now discuss the theological formation of Karol Wojtyła and his taste of mercy during his studies. As I discuss Karol Wojtyła's mercy encounter during his further studies in theology, I will also touch on other mercy experiences that occurred within this his scholarly work outside Poland.

The great concern of the Church for pre- and post-ordination intellectual formation of priests is evident in many Church documents. This is particularly true in recent years, with the inspiration of the Vatican Council II, when it said:

This holy council is fully aware that the desired renewal of the whole Church depends to a great extent on a priestly ministry animated by the spirit of Christ. It proclaims the supreme importance of priestly formation and affirms some of its primary principles [...]. Priestly formation, by reason of the very unity of the Catholic priesthood, is necessary for all priests, diocesan and religious, of whatever rite.²⁵

The Council affirms the importance of intellectual formation for priests before and after ordination. Karol Wojtyła was sent to study theology. The nature of the priestly call needs theology as an instrument and above all as an integral part of his contemplative spirituality.²⁶ Theology, as the study of God, is the science, which characterises the priest, as a man of God.²⁷ Although not every priest is called to be a specialist in theology, there exists an affinity between pastoral ministry and theological competence. Priests are expected to

²⁵ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Optatum Totius* Decree on the training of priests, Introduction (henceforth: OT).

²⁶ Cf. R. SPIAZZI, *Decreto sul ministero e la vita sacerdotale*, Elle Di Ci, Torino-Leumann 1966, 650.

²⁷ Cf. M. MACIEL, *Integral Formation of Catholic Priests*, Alba House, New York 1992, 129.

exercise a true theological ministry in the Christian community,³⁸ without it being necessary for them to be professional theologians.³⁹ But the priest should be a theologian at least to a certain measure.²⁹ Later, Karol Wojtyła himself would acknowledge the usefulness of further studies when he repeated the teaching of Aquinas, where St. Thomas affirmed that «infused knowledge», which is the fruit of a special intervention by the Holy Spirit, does not free anyone from the duty of gaining «acquired knowledge».³⁰ I will now turn to Karol Wojtyła and his further studies in theology hoping to discover how this scholarly work brought him closer to the mystery of mercy.

Scholarly Work at the Angelicum as a Means of Contact with Mercy

I think it will be important to state from the outset that the treatment of Karol Wojtyła's further knowledge and contact with mercy during his theological further studies in Rome at the Angelicum would not be immediately evident. It will involve a deep search within the study itself in order to discover it. My search will be in form of a process, which will eventually make Karol Wojtyła's experience of mercy in his studies clearer. I will begin by recalling the primary sources of theology. The primary sources of spiritual theology, and of theology in general are Sacred Scripture and tradition. The Vatican Council II has stated: «Sacred theology relies in the written word of God, taken together with sacred tradition, as its permanent foundation. [...]»

therefore, the study of the sacred page should be the very soul of sacred theology».³¹

The primary witness of Scripture is that God has intervened in the human history to fulfil in humankind the designs of his providence. We recall that St. Anselm of Canterbury defined theology as «faith seeking understanding» (*fides quaerens intellectum*).³² The task of theology then begins with the faith experience of committed believers in the community in relation to God, and seeks to articulate it explicitly by understanding everything this relationship signifies, means, and implies.³³ Therefore, theology involves the study of divine mysteries revealed by God.³⁴

On 26th November 1946, Karol Wojtyła enrolled in the two years doctoral programme at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (known then as the Angelicum). He began his studies in theology. This meant that lectures also began. His primary task amid the lectures was to work on his thesis, beginning with the licentiate, which he passed in July, 1947.³⁵

Karol Wojtyła surely must have heard lectures on mercy developed in lectures and even in conversation. He began work on his dissertation, and the director of the thesis was the Thomists, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange.³⁶ He chose as the topic for his thesis: *The Doctrine of Faith*

³¹VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum* Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, n. 24, in *MAS* 58 (1966), 817-830; cf. also J. AUMANN, *Spiritual Theology*, Sheed and Ward, London 1980, 26-27.

³²This definition acknowledges that faith, the lived relation between God and humanity, grounds the starting of theological reflection: cf. J. J. MUELLER, «Theology», in *MCE*, 860.

³³Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁴Cf. J. AUMANN, 27.

³⁵Among his professors were Michael Browne, Maximilien de Fursenberg, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange and the future Cardinals Paul Philippe and Luigi Ciappi. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange was the leading figure on the Angelicum faculty during Wojtyła's doctoral studies: cf. G.H. WILLIAMS, *The Mind of John II*, 93.

³⁶Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange was a master of spiritual theology. His scholarly competence in this regard is immense. He was a specialist in the mystical theology of St. John of the Cross. His major work on him was *L' amour et la Croix de Jésus*, in

²⁹ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *The Theological Formation of future priests*, 22nd February, 1976, published by the NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Norms for priestly Formation*, vol. 1, 1993, n. 8.

³⁰ Cf. R. SPIAZZI, 663.

³¹ *GM*, 93.

in *St. John of the Cross*.³⁷ In it, Wojtyła focused his studies directly on the meaning and lived experience of faith in St. John of the Cross. The thesis was a profound reflection on the theology of faith, as it was presented by the great mystic, St. John of the Cross.

It will be helpful to recall here St. John of the Cross' foundation testimony as described by Karol Wojtyła.³⁸ The mystical doctor, John of the Cross, relied on a varied theological preparation in composing his works. His study of scholastic theology provided the foundation. It was a study, which made a lasting impression on him, as he testified in his prologue to *The Spiritual Canticle*.³⁹ St. John of the Cross did not only learn a sound theological method,⁴⁰ from his theological studies

which he compared love and passive purifications according to the principles of St. Thomas and the teachings of John of the Cross; cf. G. H. WILLIAMS, 103.

³⁷ The thesis was originally written in Latin with the title: *Doctrina de fide apud S. Joannem a Cruce*. The English edition of this Latin text was translated by J. Annam, as: K. WOJTYŁA, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1981. The thesis was a profound reflection on the theology of faith, as presented by one of the greatest mystics in the history of Church, St. John of the Cross; cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, 237-268; cf. also G. A. MCCOOL, 'The theology of John Paul II', in *The Thought of John Paul II*, 33-35. On 14th June 1948 Karol Wojtyła passed his doctoral examinations with high grades. Despite these achievements, he did not receive the doctoral degree from the Angelicum, since the rule required that the dissertation be published before the degree could be conferred. At that time the process with regard to printing was not easy, so on his return to Poland he presented the same dissertation to the Faculty of Theology of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, which, after appropriate review, conferred on Karol Wojtyła the degree of doctor of theology in December 1948; Karol Wojtyła himself provided this information in his autobiography submitted at the Jagiellonian University; cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 128.

³⁸ Karol Wojtyła affirmed that his study of St. John of the Cross' doctrine was the study of a testimony of experience and a witness to personal experience: 'We have already seen that the doctrine we shall study is a testimony of experience. It is expressed in scholastic-mystical language, using words and concepts well known in Scholastic theology, but its primary value and significance is as a witness of personal experience'; K. WOJTYŁA, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, 23.

³⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁰ Cf. B. DE JÉSUS-MARIE, *Saint Jean de la Croix*, Plon, Paris 1929, 42.

but he was also laying the foundation for the mystical doctrine that he would later develop from sound theological principles.⁴¹

In addition to the study of scholastic theology, St. John of the Cross prepared himself through the reading of experience of others as described in the mystical literature, from whom he took many expressions and concepts.⁴² Apart from these two sources, there were others that contributed to the elaboration of John of the Cross' theological system. The first was the study of the Gospel and of the Sacred Scripture in general, with which St. John of the Cross was so well acquainted. The second was experience. We have already spoken of the experience of others in the mystical literature that St. John of the Cross read.

Now I will now turn attention to referring to his own personal experience, whether the one drawn from his contact with other souls in spiritual direction or the one drawn from his own interior life.⁴³ In like manner, Karol Wojtyła's further studies had helped to provide a deep foundation for his further knowledge and understanding of mercy. His choice of St. John of the Cross' theme of faith for his dissertation had brought him to a continued awareness of mercy, which expressed itself in the created human person's being God, by participation (*Deus per participationem*) despite the infinite distance⁴⁴ described by St. John of the Cross. This opportunity of the created human person being God by participation was only made possible through mercy.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, 19.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 19-21.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁴ 'Although it is true, as theologians say that all creatures have a certain relation to God and a trace of God (some more and others less, according to the greater or lesser perfection of their being), yet there is no essential likeness or connection between them and God. On the contrary, the distance between their being and his divine being is infinite'; ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Bk. II, Ch. 8, n. 3; K. WOJTYŁA, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, 39.

⁴⁵ 'The soul become illumined and transformed in God, and God communicates his supernatural being to it in such a way that it appears to be God himself, and possesses all that God himself has. And this union is effected when God grants the soul this supernatural favor, that all the things of God and the soul are one in

Mercy as Experienced at John Mary Vianney's *Curé d'Ars*⁴⁶

When Karol Wojtyła was coming back to Rome after his Western Europe experience,⁴⁷ he stopped at *Ars*, the home of St. John Mary Vianney.⁴⁸ He visited the little old Church where St. John Mary Vianney heard confessions and exercised other pastoral needs. In other words, Karol Wojtyła had a first hand experience of the place where thousands of people who passed through *Ars* and knelt at the confessional received mercy. As Pope he would write:

With great emotion I visited the little old Church where Saint John Vianney heard confessions, taught catechism, and gave homilies. It was an unforgettable experience for me. [...] It was his *heroic service in the confessional* which particularly struck me. That humble priest, who would hear confessions more than ten hours a day, eating little and sleeping only a few hours, [...] Thousands of people passed through *Ars* and knelt at his confessional. My encounter with this saintly figure confirmed me in the

participant transformation, and the soul seems to be God rather than a soul. It is indeed God by participation [...].⁴⁹ ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS, *The Ascent of the Mount Carmel*, Bk II, Ch. 5, n. 7; K. WOJTYŁA, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, 51.

⁴⁶ *Curé* is the French word for parish priest: in the sense here, it means the parish priest of *Ars*.

⁴⁷ Karol Wojtyła's theological preparation and formation also involved European context. Of the two years of his further studies in Rome, the summer of 1947 was dedicated to travel around some parts of Western Europe. During this time, with the consent of his bishop, Wojtyła was able to spend that summer visiting France, Belgium, and Holland, where he came to appreciate the broader European context. Wojtyła experienced the vigour of the Church and the pastoral ministry in those countries, with its active organisations and lively ecclesial communities engaging in the missions in the outskirts of some of the countries. He undertook these visits in France and Belgium with a view to learning about the new pastoral methods being worked out there: cf. *GM*, 55; cf. also A. BONECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 113.

⁴⁸ John Mary Vianney was a nineteenth century *curé*. He was ordained despite his deficiencies as a Latinist and a scholar. The *Curé d'Ars*, John Vianney, eventually became the most sought-after confessor of his time.

conviction that a priest fulfils an essential part of his mission through the *confessional*—by “making himself a prisoner of the confessional.” Many times, as I heard confessions in my first parish at Niegowie and then in Cracow, my thoughts would turn to this unforgettable experience.⁴⁹

Karol Wojtyła's experience during his visit in *Ars* had a great impact in connection with our trace of his knowledge and awareness of mercy as a priest. Even though Karol Wojtyła was not among those who directly experienced mercy in the environment of *Ars* and through the instrumentality of John Vianney, his visit to *Ars* brought him closer to the idea of mercy.

Wojtyła's Experience of Mercy as an Associate Pastor

When Karol Wojtyła came back from his Rome further studies in 1948, he was assigned as an assistant parish priest to a country parish, at the Church of the Assumption of our Lady in Niegowie, near Krakow.⁵⁰ This will show how Karol Wojtyła experienced mercy, and at the same time became the instrument of mercy through his mediator role.

Niegowie Parish

The Church teaches that the sacraments confer the grace that they signify.⁵¹ This conforms to the term of the Council of Trent *ex opere operato*, which means, that the efficacy of the sacraments does not

⁴⁹ *GM*, 57–58.

⁵⁰ Karol Wojtyła himself would later recall his joy on receiving the appointment and recounting his journey to the parish. When he got there, he knelt and kissed the ground, a gesture of reverence he learnt from *Curé d'Ars*, St. John Vianney, and after praying before the Blessed Sacrament he went to greet and introduced himself to the pastor: cf. *GM*, 61–62; R. Allegri reflecting on Karol Wojtyła's gesture, said that Karol Wojtyła, before meeting the parish priest, took time to acknowledge Jesus, his real superior, his true comp. and the person with whom he wanted to live in constant communion: R. ALLEGRI, *A Life of Grace*, 116. Also, we would add that Karol Wojtyła's gesture was also a way of seeking and receiving mercy.

⁵¹ Cf. DS, n. 1605, can. 5; CCC, n. 1127.

depend on the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but depends on the power of God.⁵² The two sample sacraments, which we are to use in our trace of Karol Wojtyła's mercy experience as pastor, are Eucharist and Penance (Reconciliation). I have chosen these two sacraments because their celebrations will make clearer Wojtyła's priestly mediator role and bring out both his experience of mercy and his being the instrument in the impacting of it.

As the associate pastor in the parish of Niegowic, it was obvious that Karol Wojtyła had the task of celebrating the Eucharist for the parishioners. His touch on mercy and his being the instrument stood out when he, the ministerial priest, in the person of Christ, would bring about the Eucharistic sacrifice offered to God in the name of all the people, and the reception of God's mercy by the faithful.⁵³ This leads me to articulate with the Church that the Eucharist is a sacrament, which makes present the sacrifice that is propitiatory. In other words, «through it the faithful receive mercy and grace to help them when they are in need of help».⁵⁴

Another sacrament that helps to bring out the mediator role of Karol Wojtyła and his encounter of mercy both as an experience and as an instrument is the sacrament of penance (reconciliation). The sacrament of penance (confession) involves the mediator role of the confessor. It is the teaching of the Church that priests, by divine institution, carry out in the Church the ministry of reconciliation, having by the virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders the power to pardon all sins «in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit».⁵⁵

In this sense, Karol Wojtyła, through his mediator role, experienced mercy and became the instrument of the same mercy. This means that apart from celebrating the Eucharist for and with the parishioners,

⁵² Cf. DS, n. 1608, can. 8; CCC, n. 1128.

⁵³ Cf. LG, n. 10.

⁵⁴ DS, n. 1743; cf. CCC, n. 1367.

⁵⁵ CCC, n. 1461. Therefore, the sacrament of penance (confession) brings people the pardon and mercy of God for offences committed against him. Sinners are at the same time reconciled with the Church they have wounded by their sins, and which by charity, example and by prayer labours for their conversion: cf. LG, n. 11.

Wojtyła began to put into practice the promise he made during his visit to *Mrs* at St. John Mary Vianney's, where Wojtyła describe Vianney as someone who voluntarily made himself «a prisoner of the confessional».⁵⁶ Karol Wojtyła began to spend many hours at the confessional⁵⁷ hearing confessions, thereby experiencing and dispensing mercy to the penitents. This also helps to describe confession as the sacrament by which the penitents obtain God's mercy for the offence committed against him.⁵⁸ Karol Wojtyła touched mercy in his first parish of Niegowic by being the instrument of this mercy.

Mercy Encounter as University Chaplain: St. Florian's Parish

Another forum for Karol Wojtyła's experience and instrument of mercy was at the student chaplaincy. After a year in Niegowic parish, Wojtyła was transferred to another parish, where he joined a parish staff that included the parish priest and three other assistants. The Prince Cardinal Sapieha assigned Karol Wojtyła to St. Florian parish, where a second centre of ministry to the students at the Jagiellonian, and other institutions of higher learning were to be created.⁵⁹ Wojtyła then determined to face the challenge. He began by teaching the young people the right way to pray. He asked them to participate in the sacraments especially Mass. He gave them lessons in theological and philosophical anthropology, and how to live in community and how to

⁵⁶ GM, 58. Wojtyła, too, began to enfold out what he described as an «unforgettable experience», the fact that Vianney would hear confessions more than ten hours a day. He also promised to maintain the same link to the confessional: cf. GM, 57-58.

⁵⁷ Karol Wojtyła in order to express how dear the ministry of confession was to him told a visiting priest, M. Malinski, that the confessional was where priests encountered their people in the depths of their humanity, helping the penitents to enter deeply into the Christian drama of his or her life: cf. M. MALINSKI, *Pope John Paul II, Life of Karol Wojtyła*, Seabury, New York 1979, 96; cf. also G. WEIGEL, 92.

⁵⁸ Cf. CCC, n. 1422; LG, n. 11.
⁵⁹ Cf. G. WEIGEL, *Biography*, 94-95.

the work⁶⁶ of the German philosopher, Max Scheler,⁶⁷ to see whether Christian ethics could be built on Max Scheler's new philosophy, called phenomenology.⁶⁸ To take the task further, Karol Wojtyła asked in his thesis, the possibility of creating a solid philosophical foundation for moral life on the basis of Max Scheler's phenomenology of ethics, and particularly his ethics of value.⁶⁹ To achieve his aim, Karol Wojtyła brought certain intellectual convictions to his assignment: According to his assessment of himself, he recognised that his German language was not so good at the time. He therefore, decided to translate Max Scheler's work into his native language for better comprehension and easy work. He would however, express the extent of work involved

⁶⁶ MAX SCHELER, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik. Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus*, in *Wahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, Bd. I, 1913 u. II 1916, Freiburg i. B. Edited as book: *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik. Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus*, in a preface, Halle 1916, Halle 1921, III ed.

⁶⁷ Max Scheler was a German philosopher, a Catholic layman, born in 1874 and, after a turbulent career, died in 1928. He was the disciple of Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. Max Scheler is remembered primarily as a major figure in the early development of phenomenology: cf. G. H. WILLIAMS, 'Max Scheler', in G. H. WILLIAMS, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of his Thought and Action*, 115.

⁶⁸ Phenomenology is a philosophical method that claims to be descriptive and presuppositionless. It adopts a reflective attitude towards one's experience of the world. It seeks to describe concrete phenomena. According to J. Howarth, phenomenological description aims to make explicit the essential features implicit in the lived-world. That is, the world as we act in it prior to any theorizing about it: cf. J. HOWARTH, 'Epistemic Issues in', in *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Routledge, London 2000, 670-671 (henceforth: *CEP*). M. Novak, says that phenomenology simply put, 'is a sustained effort to bring back into philosophy everyday things, concrete wholes, the basic experiences of life as they come to us.'...: M. NOVAK, 'John Paul II: Christian Philosopher', *America*, 177(October 25, 1997), 12.

⁶⁹ Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *Valutazioni sulla possibilità di costruire l'Etica Cristiana sulle Basi del Sistema di Max Scheler*, in KAROL WOJTYŁA, *Metafisica della Persona. Tutte le opere filosofiche e saggi integrativi*, G. Reale, ed., Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2003, 298 (henceforth: *Valutazioni*).

when he made this statement: 'I had to translate a lot of Scheler so that I could work on him and do a philosophical analysis of his mind'.⁷⁰ He also later shared his struggle with M. Malinski:

Look at what I've got to cope with. [...] I can hardly make it all out, my German is poor, and there are a lot of technical terms I don't know how to translate. Do you know what I'm doing? I've started to make a translation of the whole book- there's nothing else for it.⁷¹

After Karol Wojtyła had made this preliminary preparation for his work, he began work in earnest. In his dissertation entitled: *An Evaluation of the Possibility of constructing a Christian ethics on the basis of the system of Max Scheler*,⁷² Karol Wojtyła presented an analysis of Max Scheler's work.⁷³ Max Scheler had set in his *Formalismus* an ethical system that was all-embracing, in the sense that his method is open to all forms of ethical system. R. Buttigione helps to make clearer Max Scheler's new method of philosophy. According to R. Buttigione, for Max Scheler, the experience of reality is always charged with affectivity. In other words, the experience of reality is never neutral. The experience of an object, which is something in itself, is always connected with a value and a disvalue. For Max Scheler phenomenology allows people to isolate the values connected with experiences. This meant that phenomenology is, for Scheler, a method of analysing experience, which permits one to grasp values. In the understanding of Max Scheler, 'The subject recognises value in the experience of objects. For Scheler, it is only in the person that value

⁷⁰ Karol Wojtyła reveal this during his conversation with his biographer, G. Weigel: cf. G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope*, 128, cf. Notes, n. 17, 898.

⁷¹ Cf. M. MALINSKI, *Pope John Paul II: The Life of Karol Wojtyła*, Seabury, New York 1979, 110.

⁷² *Valutazioni sulla possibilità di costruire l'Etica Cristiana sulle basi del sistema di Max Scheler*, in KAROL WOJTYŁA, 263.

⁷³ The scope of our dissertation does not allow the presentation of the analysis in detail.

manifests itself. The person is the place in which value is experienced.⁷⁴

Wojtyla's Findings

Karol Wojtyla, then, set himself the task of ascertaining whether the values of Christian ethics could be situated into Schelerian context.⁷⁵ After his thorough study of Max Scheler's *Formalismus*, he summarized his findings. I will quickly touch on a few of the findings.

In his research, Karol Wojtyla discovered the fact that Max Scheler's method is used for all ethical system:

We ascertain that Scheler's philosophical system, constructed on the bases of phenomenology and axiology, is used to receive and to explain all of moral facts and all ethical contents, and not only used to build and for the explanation of Christian ethics. [...].⁷⁶

The content of the above quotation proves that in Karol Wojtyla's understanding, Max Scheler's interests in his philosophical method were wide. Max Scheler tried to do justice to all aspects of experience-ethical, religious, person, social, scientific, historical «without doing away with the specific nature of each». He described his ethics as personalist, and he makes personal values supreme.⁷⁷ According to Karol Wojtyla, the specific objective of his research was to define the adequate grade level of Max Scheler's system in the interpretation of Christian ethics. Following Max Scheler's focus in his new ethics, Karol Wojtyla felt that he needed to define what is meant in his

⁷⁴ Cf. R. BUTTIGLIONE, *Karol Wojtyla: The Thought of the Man who became Pope John Paul II*, 54-55.

⁷⁵ Cf. K. WOJTYLA, *Valutazioni*, 300.

⁷⁶ «Constatiamo infatti che quello di Scheler è un sistema filosofico, costruito secondo le premesse della fenomenologia e dell'assiologia, che deve servire a cogliere e a spiegare tutti i fatti morali e tutti i contenuti etici, e non solo a costituire una elaborazione dell'etica cristiana. [...]» KAROL WOJTYLA, *Valutazioni*, 297.

⁷⁷ F. DUNLOP, «Scheler, Max Ferdinand», in *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 797.

research as Christian ethics: «In this present work, by Christian ethics, we mean the ethical truth that have been revealed and given through the Church as the principles of moral behaviour».⁷⁸

Karol Wojtyla recognised that the Christian Revelation teaches above all that moral value as intended remains in real relationship with God. In this sense, he stated that the connection of the ethical values with the whole supernatural order has to be interpreted with the help of theological system.⁷⁹

Karol Wojtyla, therefore, came to the conclusion in his habilitation dissertation that the ethical system constructed by Max Scheler is not suitable as a means of formulating a scientific Christian ethics. The new system does not recognise the normative character of ethical acts. Phenomenological method of Max Scheler does not in principle adapt itself to an orderly interpretation of Christian ethics. According to Karol Wojtyla, Max Scheler's ethical system was unable to demonstrate fully the objective ethical validity of Revelation. In other words, Max Scheler's phenomenology is incapable of interpreting revealed data satisfactorily. Taking the point further, Karol Wojtyla argued that the person in Max Scheler is revolved into the unity of his varied acts, and not grounded in any metaphysics of the person. Karol Wojtyla appreciated Max Scheler's attempt to ground morals in an analysis of the realities of moral choosing. But he also was aware that the moral act is a real act with real consequences, and for Karol Wojtyla, Max Scheler's system failed to get a grip on how moral choices actually shape a person.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ «Nel presente lavoro per etica cristiana intendiamo le verità etiche che sono state rivelate da Dio e dalla Chiesa date come principi di comportamento morale». K. WOJTYLA, *Valutazioni*, 298.

⁷⁹ «La Rivelazione cristiana ci insegna inoltre che il valore morale così inteso rimane in reale rapporto con Dio. [...] Il legame dei valori etici con tutto l'ordine soprannaturale deve essere interpretato con l'aiuto di un sistema teologico». *Ibid.*, 445.

⁸⁰ Cf. K. WOJTYLA, *Valutazioni*, 339-446; cf. also G. H. WILLIAMS, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 136-140. «La persona per Scheler-fenomenologo si reduce all'unità svariati atti. Però sia questi atti come anche la persona sono dati per lui non in forma metafisica, ma appunto nella forma empirica dell'esperienza, e la persona come unità di esperienze». K. WOJTYLA, *Valutazioni*, 440. Although Karol Wojtyla

Mercy Experience as Priest-Professor: Jagiellonian and Lublin⁸¹

Karol Wojtyla's habilitation dissertation for second doctorate was completed in 1953 with the thesis on the ethics of a German phenomenologist, Max Scheler.⁸² With his successful completion of the thesis, Karol Wojtyla was now qualified to teach as a university professor.

Professor: Faculty of Theology at Jagiellonian University

Karol Wojtyla's university teaching career began in 1953 at the theology faculty of Jagiellonian University. This took effect after he had brilliantly delivered his admission lecture entitled: *Analysis of the Act of Faith in view of the philosophy of Values*.⁸³ He lectured on Catholic social ethics. When this theology faculty was discontinued in early 1954, Karol Wojtyla continued to teach the social ethics course in

the school of theology that was quickly organised for the Krakow seminarians, who at that moment had no university-based theology courses to attend. His lectures were conducted according to the same system as at the faculty of theology of the Jagiellonian.⁸⁴

Priest-Professor: Catholic University of Lublin

In 1954 the KUL philosophy faculty invited Karol Wojtyla to teach philosophical ethics. After the appointment had been approved by the Archbishop Baziak, Karol Wojtyla became a professor at KUL's faculty of philosophy. In November 1956, at the beginning of Karol Wojtyla's third year on the KUL staff, Karol Wojtyla succeeded Feliks Bednarski in the Chair of Ethics in the KUL Faculty of philosophy.⁸⁵ Every week, during the academic year, Karol Wojtyla would travel to KUL to deliver his lectures.⁸⁶ In addition to his other teaching responsibilities, he led a doctoral seminar on philosophical ethics in which his most advanced students began to prepare their dissertations.⁸⁷ Above all, he was a confessor. A ministry he would later recall thus:

«[...] A priest fulfils an essential part of his mission through the confessional- by voluntarily "making himself a prisoner of the confessional." Many times, as I heard confessions in my first parish at Niegowic and then in Cracow, my thoughts would turn to this

affirmed that it was impossible to construct Christian ethics on the bases of phenomenological system, yet he said that Max Scheler's ethical system, can assist Christian ethicist in scientific work of Christian ethics. It can facilitate the analysis of ethical facts on phenomenological experiential level. «Benché il sistema etico creato da Scheler non si adatti fondamentalmente ad interpretare l'etica cristiana, però ci può essere collateralmente d'aiuto in un lavoro scientifico sull'etica cristiana. Ci facilita cioè l'analisi dei fatti etici sul piano fenomenologico "sperimentale"». K. WOJTYLA, *Valutazioni*, 446.

⁸¹ We mean Jagiellonian University and Catholic University of Lublin (Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski or KUL).

⁸² K. WOJTYLA, *Evaluation of the possibility of constructing a Christian Ethics on the basis of the system of Max Scheler*.

⁸³ Cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyla*, 137. The admission lecture was unanimously approved. Then, the whole process of approval was voted on (all voted for acceptance) and Karol Wojtyla was presented for approval by the ministry of higher Education as a professor in ethics and moral theology. This information was from the minutes of the meeting at which the decision was made: cf. *Ibid.*, 137.

⁸⁴ Cf. A. BONIECKI, 154.

⁸⁵ Karol Wojtyla would hold this position for twenty-two years. We shall say more on this point later.

⁸⁶ S. DZIWIŃSKI, Karol Wojtyla's secretary would later recall Karol Wojtyla as a Priest-Professor: «I remember that in the third year he taught us the principia- that is, the fundamental philosophical principles of moral theology. Although those lectures were hard for us, he prepared them extremely carefully. In fact, I'd have to say perfectly». S. DZIWIŃSKI, *A Life with Karol*, 6.

⁸⁷ Karol Wojtyla continued to prepare doctoral candidates even when his pastoral responsibilities increased: cf. G. WEIGEL, 138.

unforgettable experience. I have always tried to maintain this link to the confessional.⁸⁸

While commuting weekly to KUL for lectures, and for other activities mentioned above, Karol Wojtyła, continued his student chaplaincy in Kraków. He then added a ministry to health-care professionals, and continued to teach social ethics in the Krakow seminary.⁸⁹

The core reason for our quick view of Karol Wojtyła's involvement in philosophy and philosophical activities is to help us see the contribution of this discipline in planting the mercy theme deep in the mind of Karol Wojtyła. Karol Wojtyła's philosophy's lecture plans would contain the systematic exposition of the ethics, its beginnings, and so on. Ethics is the philosophical study of morality that treats a question about the components of a good life and a question about what sorts of things are good in themselves; and what end we ought to pursue.⁹⁰

To talk about ethics in philosophy is to talk about human well-being, right action, and value. This in turn leads to the understanding of the Mystery behind the Christian ethical life (the Mystery of Mercy). According to S. Swieżawski, for Karol Wojtyła, philosophical reflection was a way of exploring the awesome mystery of the human person.⁹¹ S. Swieżawski explaining further Karol Wojtyła's affirmation said that for Wojtyła, metaphysical reflection has primacy in developing Christian ethics.⁹² This focus of philosophical reflection on exploration

⁸⁸ *GM*, 58. Here, Karol Wojtyła, while recalling his ministry of being a confessor he remembered his experience of John Mary Vianney during his visit to John Mary Vianney's where he heard confessions. The experience of this saintly figure confirmed Karol Wojtyła in his conviction of the ministry of confession.

⁸⁹ Cf. G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope*, 135-136; cf. ID, «John Paul II. Pope», in *NCE*, 994.

⁹⁰ Cf. J. DEIGH, «Ethics», in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, R. Audi, ed., Cambridge University Press, UK 1999, 284 (henceforth: *CDP*).

⁹¹ Cf. S. SWIEZAWSKI, «Introduction», in KAROL WOJTYŁA, *Person and Community*, selected Essays, Peter Lang, New York 1993, XIII.

⁹² Cf. *Ibid.*, XV.

of the awesome mystery of the human person presupposes some metaphysical theses about the Mystery of Mercy, which explains the *awesome mystery of the human person*. This helped to broaden Karol Wojtyła's awareness of mercy.

The philosophical and theological analysis of Max Scheler's new ethical system by Karol Wojtyła, and Karol Wojtyła's own reflection on Christian ethics and its source during the preparation of his lectures and in delivering them helped to create further awareness of mercy on Karol Wojtyła. Karol Wojtyła himself would later recall the contribution of philosophy in generating the truth and his opinion that philosophy was among an array of resources at the disposal of men and women for generating greater knowledge of truth.⁹³ My brief trace through the pastoral ministry of Karol Wojtyła as a priest has allowed us to see the character of his contact with mercy both as an experience and in his mediator role.

⁹³ Cf. *FeR*, n. 3.

CHAPTER IV

WOJTYLA'S MERCY ENCOUNTER AS BISHOP¹ OF KRAKOW

This chapter will focus on those means through which Karol Wojtyla's awareness of mercy continued to develop and broadened. The chapter will also include Karol Wojtyla ascendancy to Papacy with an overview of his pontificate and eventual death.

Wojtyla's Mercy Experience as an Auxiliary Bishop

First Pilgrimage to Czestochowa Shrine as a Bishop

Karol Wojtyla was consecrated bishop on 28 September 1958, and he continued to carry with him his Marian devotion. His trust in the merciful protection and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary made

¹It is worthwhile to give a summary of Karol Wojtyla's ecclesiastical elevations and services during which the knowledge and development of mercy in him occurred. Wojtyla was named Auxiliary Bishop of Krakow on 4th July 1958 by Pope Pius XII. He was ordained on 28 September 1958, in Wavel Cathedral, Poland. When the archbishop of Krakow, Eugeniusz Baziak died in 1962, the metropolitan chapter, a group of senior priests, elected bishop Wojtyla «vicar capitular» (this means temporal, administrator, of archdiocese of Krakow until a successor to Baziak could be appointed, consecrated and installed). On 30th December 1963, Paul VI confirmed bishop Wojtyla as the successor of Baziak. On 13th January 1964, he was installed as archbishop of Krakow. Eventually, Paul VI announced the next consistory on 29th May 1967. Among the names of the new cardinals was that of Karol Wojtyla. So, Karol Wojtyla was created a cardinal on 28th June, 1967, by Paul VI, in the Sistine Chapel: cf. A. BONIECKI. *Kalendarium of Life of Karol Wojtyla*, 228, 291.

him to leave for a pilgrimage to the Marian Shrine of Czestochowa immediately after his Episcopal ordination on 28th September 1958. Karol Wojtyła himself would later describe this gesture: «After Mass I went directly to where the reception was held [...], but that same evening I went to Czestochowa [...]. There, on the following morning I celebrated Mass in the chapel of Our Lady». ² Wojtyła asserted that this pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin was the practice he knew from his earliest days: «All Polish Catholics make the pilgrimage to Czestochowa. I used to go on pilgrimage there from my youngest days. [...]. I often visited the shrine with various pilgrimages, [...].» ³

Karol Wojtyła's pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa was a clear indication of the trust he had on protection and intercession of the Mother of God. ⁴ K. Wojtyła had a new task of leadership, and in line with his devotion and trust in Mary's Motherhood, he felt he would need her intercession in order to cope with the demands of being a Bishop. Therefore, it was obvious that he had gone to Czestochowa to present himself to the Blessed Virgin and to ask for mercy and strength through her intercession. ⁵ Benedict XVI, after visiting this remarkable Shrine of Jasna Góra during his trip to Poland, shared his joys with the faithful:

² *RLW*, 51.

³ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴ Karol Wojtyła himself explained that his Marian devotion should not be understood as a devotion that addressed only a need of the heart, a sentimental inclination, but that it was a devotion that also corresponded to the objective truth about the Mother of God: cf. *CTH*, 213; The whole of chapter eight of *LG*

⁵ Cf. *LG*, n. 62. With this gesture of visiting the Marian Shrine immediately after his episcopal consecration, Karol Wojtyła was also holding on to his new understanding of Marian piety, which had stayed with him over the years. We recall that at a stage in his life, Karol Wojtyła began to question his Marian devotion; it had seemed to him that he should distance himself a bit from the Marian devotion of his childhood, in order to focus more on Christ. But St Louis de Montfort's book helped him to understand that true devotion is Christocentric. He therefore asserted his new discovery in these words: «I discovered Marian piety, this time with a deeper understanding. This mature form of devotion to the Mother of God has stayed with me over the years, [...]»: *CTH*, 213; *GM*, 28-30.

The program could not but include a visit to the shrines that marked the life of Karol Wojtyła as priest and bishop. [...] I will not be able to forget the visit to the famous Marian Shrine of Jasna Góra. On that clear Mountain, heart of the Polish nation, [...], very many faithful, gathered around the Successor of Peter to listen with me, to Mary. ⁶

Karol Wojtyła showed the strength of his trust in the Blessed Virgin's intercession and comforting hands by adopting the words «*Totus Tuus*» for his episcopal motto. ⁷ Wojtyła would later explain that his choice of *Totus Tuus* was a sign of his «total abandonment to Mary» - his *Totus Tuus*. ⁸ And in expressing the value of his devotion and gesture of entrustment to Mary, the Mother of God, said:

These spiritual experiences were fundamental in shaping *that journey of prayer and contemplation* [...], which would later continue to guide me in all the events of my life. [...], and still more as a priest and Bishop, it would lead me to make frequent Marian pilgrimages to Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Kalwaria is the principal Marian shrine of the Archdiocese of Cracow. I would go there often, walking along its paths in solitude and presenting to the Lord in prayer the various problems of the Church, especially in the difficult times [...]. ⁹

Karol Wojtyła's description of how he used to present his worries to God trusting in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin during his services as a priest and bishop was a clear evidence that he had the taste of mercy through the medium of his Marian devotion.

⁶ BENEDICT XVI, «Address at the General Audience», *OR* (E), 7th June, (2006), 11; cf. also *IB*, *Insegnamenti* III/1, (2006), 744.

⁷ Cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium*, 174. The fragment from which the motto *Totus Tuus* was borrowed says: At least once a year, on the anniversary of one's dedication, one is to renew the pledge by fulfilling the same exercises for three weeks.

The person may also renew the pledge every month or even every week by means of these words: «I am all yours and everything that is mine is yours, O my dearest Jesus, through Mary, your most beloved Mother». ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNON DE MONTFORT, *Treatise*, n. 233.

⁸ *CTH*, 215.

⁹ *GM*, 31.

Mercy Experience through Visiting Homes of the Sick People

When the young bishop, Karol Wojtyła returned from his first pilgrimage to the Shrine of Częstochowa, as a bishop, he began work in the archdiocesan Curia, and he was immediately named Vicar General of the Archdiocese.¹⁰

Episcopal ordination brought responsibilities. Already in Kraków, Karol Wojtyła's work as a philosopher had been carried out in conjunction with the exercise of his ministry as a Bishop.¹¹ He assumed a host of new pastoral responsibilities after his consecration. He was always in demand as a guest preacher and retreat director. He travelled extensively throughout the archdiocese, celebrating Mass, blessing buildings, ordaining subdeacons, and deacons, confirming deaf-mute children, preaching days of recollection, including celebrating Masses for various groups of professional, supervising meetings of various deaneries for Archbishop Baziak.¹² Pastoral visitations of Karol Wojtyła as a bishop were rather long. He worked out a particular pattern. But the detail of the pattern is beyond our scope here.¹³ My only interest now is to discover how the pastoral context of home

¹⁰ Cf. *RLW*, 59.

¹¹ The appointment of Karol Wojtyła an Auxiliary Bishop of Kraków added a new load of Episcopal duties to his academic work at KUL and his pastoral activities. Because of this new duties resulting from his consecration as bishop, Karol Wojtyła was able to undertake responsibilities at the KUL on a smaller scale than in the past years. His courses were taken over by several people, and in 1963 T. Szycański received his doctorate and took over the basic responsibilities of the chair of ethics. Bishop Wojtyła then was employed part-time, during which he conducted a monographic lecture of one hour a week on selected issues from ethics for the students of 3rd and 4th year theoretical specialisation, and the students of 4th and 5th year in practical specialisation. In practice, Karol Wojtyła arrived a few times a year. But as time went by—less frequently, and by the time he entered his sixth year as a Bishop, he stopped teaching completely, because he no longer had the time, to lecture in the seminary: cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 178, S. DZIWIŃSKI, *A Life with Karol*, 6.

¹² Cf. A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 174-208.

¹³ For further information on the pattern: cf. *RLW*, 74-76.

visitation, especially the home of the sick was a means of his contact with mercy.

Apart from mercy Karol Wojtyła experienced at the confessional, at the celebration of the Eucharist, as the instrument of dispensing mercy to the faithful, and other means we have already mentioned, Karol Wojtyła experienced mercy during his visitation of the homes of the sick people.

Initially it was not easy for Karol Wojtyła to stand before a sick person, «I needed a lot of courage to stand before a sick person and enter, so to speak into his physical pain, [...]».¹⁴ Gradually he began to grasp the profound meaning of the mystery of suffering. What Wojtyła discovered about the sick person was like what the CCC says about the sick person before God. According CCC the man of the Old Testament lives his sickness before God. It is in the presence of God that he presents and laments his illness, and it is from God that he implors mercy and healing.¹⁵ In the same way, K. Wojtyła discovered that in the weakness of the sick person, there was a growing new strength, the strength of mercy. This means that in a sense, the sick provokes mercy.

The sick people Karol Wojtyła visited, amid their ill health and weakness, exhibited extraordinary strength in them, a strength that indicated mercy received. By their illness and suffering, and through their prayers and sacrifices they ask for mercy. Karol Wojtyła experienced this mercy through visiting the homes of these sick people and ministering to them. Although it was not his direct experience, he witnessed the people who had the direct contact of that mercy.¹⁶ Wojtyła himself expressed his mercy encounter in the sick:

In the weakness of the sick, I saw emerging ever more clearly a new strength—the strength of mercy. In a sense, the sick provoke mercy. Through their prayers and sacrifices, they not only ask for mercy but create a "space for mercy", or better, open up spaces for mercy. By their

¹⁴ *RLW*, 75.

¹⁵ CCC, n. 1502; Ps 6,3; 38; Is 38.

¹⁶ Karol Wojtyła even used to recommend the needs of the Church to the prayers of the sick and it really worked: cf. *RLW*, 75-76.

illness and suffering they call forth acts of mercy and create the possibility for accomplishing them. I used to entrust the needs of the Church to the prayers of the sick, and the results were always positive.¹⁷

Karol Wojtyla's Awareness of Mercy as Vicar General

I will discuss here Karol Wojtyla's mercy experience as a substitute during the definitive absence of the Archbishop Baziak. This mercy experience occurred on two occasions. First, when the bishop of Krakow, Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak died on the night of 14th/15th June 1962, on the 15th June 1962, Karol Wojtyla substituted for the deceased Archbishop at the ordination he had planned before his death.

The priestly ordination rites and their significance further broadened Karol Wojtyla's understanding of mercy as he would later testified—recalling St. Paul's presentation of priest as a steward of the mystery of God: «People should think of us as Christ's stewards, stewards entrusted with the mystery of God» (1 Co 4,1-2).¹⁸ Therefore, the involvement of Karol Wojtyla in the ordination of priests, the instruments of mercy was a clear means of driving home for Karol Wojtyla, the Mystery of Mercy.

Second, Karol Wojtyla's mercy experience as Vicar General began during his preparation of a richly biblical homily he delivered during the funeral Mass celebrated for the Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak on day of his burial, 19th of June 1962. During the homily, Karol Wojtyla drew out a gentle aspect of the Archbishop Baziak's character. For Karol Wojtyla, the Archbishop Baziak was like the Gospel figure of the good Shepherd, who not only watches, guards, and defends, but at the same time searches for the lost sheep, and having found it brings it back to the flock, and rejoices at the discovery of the lost sheep:

In order for us to look upon the Archbishop's life with deepest respect, even as we stand at his coffin, we must start from the Gospel parable of the shepherd. In the Gospel, this shepherd has a double representation. First

¹⁷ *RLW*, 76.

¹⁸ *Cf. GM*, 71.

we see him as he strides before his flock, as he watches, as he guards, as he searches [...] for the lost sheep, and having found it returns it to the flock and rejoices, is glad [...].¹⁹

The funeral homily prepared, reflected on, and delivered by Karol Wojtyla became a clear means that helped to broaden his mercy awareness. It brought him close to the Good Shepherd of the Gospel, the Mystery of Mercy.

Mercy Encounter as Vicar Capitular and Archbishop: Vatican II

Following the death of the former bishop of Krakow, Archbishop Baziak in 1962, the Metropolitan Chapter, a group of senior priests elected Bishop Karol Wojtyla Vicar Capitular on 16th July 1962. It was in this capacity that Karol Wojtyla attended the first session and second sessions of the Second Vatican Council. Then, when he was named the Metropolitan Archbishop of Krakow on January 13th 1964, and was installed on the 8th of March 1964 as the Archbishop of Krakow, he attended the third session and subsequent sessions of the Council as an Archbishop.²⁰

K. L. Schmitz says: «It is sometimes said that Karol Wojtyla is a man made by the council. I take this to mean that he came to the notice of the larger world during the council and that he developed an approach already underway».²¹ Building on K. L. Schmitz's affirmation, we shall follow Wojtyla to the Second Vatican Council to see how his participation at the Council had been a means of his contact with mercy. It shall also be my task to discover how the Vatican Council II was the forum in which Karol Wojtyla's experience of

¹⁹ A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyla*, 208.

²⁰ *Cf. RLW*, 151, 154; A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyla*, 230-231.

²¹ K. L. SCHMITZ, *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyla*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 1993, 121.

mercy developed and broadened. It is clear that my focus is not on Karol Wojtyła's involvement and eventual contribution to the Council, which was great, but attention will be focused on the theme, that is, his mercy experience at the Council.

On 25th January 1959, a mere three months after his election as Pope, John XXIII announced his decision to convoke the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), of which the theme was to be the *aggiornamento* of the whole life of the Church.²² During the preparation of the Council, which lasted almost four years, from the initial announcement in January 1959 to the start of the Council in October 1962, two important processes took place, namely the establishment of the commissions: ante-preparatory and preparatory.

Prior to the opening of the first period of Second Vatican Council, John XXIII sought to determine the widest possible agenda for its deliberations through consultation with the whole Church. The ante-preparatory commission whose task was to organise this consultation, wrote to all the world's Catholic bishops, superiors of men's religious orders, as well as various other individuals and some institutions, such as Catholic Universities, and theological faculties, inviting them to send to Rome their suggestions for the forthcoming Council's agenda.

Karol Wojtyła, like other Catholic bishops²³ received a letter from the Cardinal Secretary of state calling for suggestions. As a young bishop, Karol Wojtyła had his own expectations from the Council. What did Karol Wojtyła expect from the Council? Already as a young bishop he submitted numerous suggestions to the ante-preparation commission for the agenda of the Council.²⁴ Among the nine points he

²² Cf. JOHN XXIII, *Allocutio Quarta Festiva*, 25th January 1959, in *IAS* 1 (1959), 65-69.

²³ Following the death of the Archbishop of Kraków, Eugeniusz Baziak, Karol Wojtyła attended the Second Vatican Council in his capacity as the vicar capitular of the archdiocese of Kraków: cf. A. BONECKI, *Kalendarium*, 208, *RIW*, 151.

²⁴ For these suggestions, cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *Letter to the President of the ante-preparatory commissions*, 30th December, 1959, in *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando, series I antepreparatoria*, 112; *Consilia et Toti Episcoporum ac Prælatorum, Europa, Typis Polyglottis, Vatican City 1960*, 741-748. As at the moment of this writing, there is no official English language translation

suggested to the Council to consider, Karol Wojtyła singled out, in the first place, the contemporary problem of growing materialism in its various forms, and he saw this as an ill the Church could not ignore. He felt and suggested that the adequate answer to this challenge would consist of a doctrinal clarification and affirmation of a Christian personalism.²⁵

Karol Wojtyła's demand for a doctrinal clarification of the fact that human person has a beginning, called to mind a request for a discourse on the Mystery of Mercy. In other words, Karol Wojtyła expected the Council Fathers to articulate in a clear language the *«ad extra»* of God. We would say that the doctrinal clarification requested by Karol Wojtyła was answered judging from the contents of Council's Documents, especially the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*²⁶ and the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church *Lumen Gentium*.²⁷ The *Dei Verbum*, especially nn. 1-7 and *Lumen Gentium*, especially nn. 1-17 contain the doctrinal clarification of the providential actions of the Mystery of Mercy.

The fact that Karol Wojtyła was present during the discourse, which led to the production of these two great Documents made it clear that the Vatican Council II brought Wojtyła into closer contact with the mercy. The Council drove home for him the Mystery of Mercy. This corresponds to the affirmation of G. A. McCool who said that Karol

of Wojtyła's suggestions for the Vatican II, so, I refer to the suggestions in their original language in the footnote, and give my translation in the text. Also, in my English translation, I follow closely the translations of A. Dulles and R. Hermínio: cf. A. DULLES, 5; R. HERMÍNIO, 104.

²⁵ R. Hermínio commenting on this affirmation explained that in Wojtyła's perception, the world seemed to be drifting away from God, threatened by ideologies that seemed to move toward questioning the spiritual dimension of man. Therefore it is only with supernatural resources that this tendency could be revoked: cf. R. HERMÍNIO, *John Paul II and the Legacy of Dignitatis Humanae*, George Town University Press, Washington DC 2002, 104.

²⁶ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, nn. 1-7, in *IAS* 58 (1966), 817-830.

²⁷ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 1-17, in *IAS* 57 (1965), 5-71.

Wojtyła's involvement in Vatican II notably expanded his theological horizon. According to him, Vatican II was the great source of John Paul II's later theology.²⁸

Recalling the statement of K. L. Schmitz which I presented at the initial stage and G. A. McCool's findings, I conclude that Vatican II brought Karol Wojtyła to a further awareness of mercy, and broadened his view about the eternal Mystery, the Mystery of mercy. Karol Wojtyła himself would later express this when he said:

I had the particular fortune of being able to take part in the Council from the first day to the last. [...] The Council was a unique occasion for listening to others, but also for creative thinking. Naturally, the older and more expert bishops contributed the most to the development of the Council's thought. At first, since I was young, I learned more than I contributed. Gradually, however, I came to participate in the Council in a more mature and creative manner. Thus, by the third session I found myself a member of the group preparing the so-called Thirteenth Schema, the document that would become the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* [...]. The Council was a great experience of the Church; it was – as we said at the time – the “seminary of the Holy Spirit”. At the Council, the Holy Spirit spoke to the Church in all its universality. [...] The words of Holy Spirit always represent a deeper insight into the eternal mystery, and points out the paths to be walked by those entrusted with the task of bringing this mystery to the contemporary world.²⁹

Sources of Renewal and Krakow Synod

Karol Wojtyła attended the Second Vatican Council and wrote down his insights. He followed the insights further in a Synod. Our task now is to discover how these two activities helped in broadening Karol Wojtyła's understanding of mercy.

Karol Wojtyła after attending the Second Vatican Council found himself compelled³⁰ to implement the Council's teachings, in his own Archdiocese. He began the implementation by writing a book known as *Sources of Renewal*.³¹ In other words, *Sources of Renewal* was a theological work, the exposition and interpretation of the Vatican Council's teaching, which Karol Wojtyła wrote for his Archdiocese after his return from the Council.³² In Karol Wojtyła's explanation,³³ it would be a mistake not to consider the implementation of Vatican II as the response to the word of God as it proceeded from the Council.³⁴

According to Karol Wojtyła, the *Sources of Renewal* was intended as a study of «initiation». He described the *Sources of Renewal* as a work meant to introduce the reader to documents of the Vatican II, but from the point of view of translating them into life.³⁴ Karol Wojtyła described the *Sources of Renewal* as a working study or a *vide-mecum*

³⁰ The word compelled indicates Karol Wojtyła's indebtedness which he and each of the Fathers of the Council owe to God for the great experience of the Second Vatican Council. Karol Wojtyła said: «A bishop who took part in the Second Vatican Council feels the need to acquit himself of a debt. Apart from other meanings that have been or will be read into the Council, it has a unique and unrepeatable meaning for all who took part, and most particularly for the bishops who were Fathers of the Council. These men took active part for four years in the proceedings of the Council, and in drafting its documents, and at the same time derived great spiritual enrichment from it [...]. The history of the Council, which will be written in full one day, was present in 1962-1965 as an extraordinary event in the minds of all the bishops concerned: it absorbed all their thoughts and stimulated their sense of responsibility, as an exceptional and deeply felt experience. [...] When we ask ourselves to whom the debt is owed, we realized that we owe it to the Invisible One who without ceasing fulfils the promise made long ago. [...]» K. WOJTYŁA, *Sources of Renewal*, 9.

³¹ K. WOJTYŁA, *Sources of Renewal: The Implementation of the Second Vatican Council*, Collins, London 1980. According to Karol Wojtyła himself, this work, was originally published in Krakow in 1972 by the Polish Theological Association (PTT): cf. RLW, 177; cf. also A. BONECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 492-493.

³² Cf. A. MCCOOL, «The Theology of John Paul II» in *The Thought of Pope John Paul II*, 30.

³³ K. WOJTYŁA, *Sources of Renewal*, 11.

³⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

²⁸ Cf. G. A. MCCOOL, «The theology of John Paul II», in *The Thought of Pope John Paul II*, 31.

²⁹ CTH, 157-160.

118 to the Council, introducing the reader to the relevant documents of the

Vatican II.³⁵ Karol Wojtyła's later acknowledgments it became further

from Karol Wojtyła's later acknowledgments it became further clear that the Vatican Council II was a means of awareness of mercy for Karol Wojtyła:

The Council was a wonderful event, and for me it was an unforgettable experience. I returned greatly enriched. When I got back to Poland, I wrote a book in which I presented the insights that had emerged in the course of the Conciliar sessions. I tried to capture, so to speak, the juice of the Council's teaching. [...] The book was intended as a kind of *ex-voto* of thanksgiving for what God's grace had given to me personally, as a bishop, through the Conciliar experience.³⁶

From findings, it could be adduced that the *Sources of Renewal*, the exposition and interpretation of the Second Vatican Council's teaching, which Karol Wojtyła wrote, showed that his involvement in the Council broadened his theological horizons. The teaching of the Vatican Council, which was rooted in Scripture and tradition, and which was at the same time the expression of a deep and understanding of the deposit of faith, told Karol Wojtyła very much about mercy.

When Karol Wojtyła finished writing his *Sources of Renewal* in the later part of 1970, he understood that the best way to deepen the Vatican Council II's implementation in Krakow was for the Archdiocese as a whole to relive the experience of the Council by celebrating an Archdiocesan Synod, a kind of mini-Council on the local level.³⁷

30th April – 2nd May 1971 carried a report entitled: *The Matter of the 900th Anniversary of St. Stanisław and the provincial Synod*, in which

³⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁶ *RLW*, 177.

³⁷ This explains the statement of A. Kubis, when he said that the *Sources of Renewal* was written by Karol Wojtyła for the guidance of the pastoral Synod of the Archdiocese of Krakow which was at the time planning to begin its work: cf. A. KUBIS, «Preface», in K. WOJTYŁA, *Sources of Renewal*, IV.

Karol Wojtyła formulated the proposal of calling the first Synod of Krakow province. In this proposal, he made reference to the historical anniversary of the pastoral work of St. Stanisław, a Polish St., bishop and martyr (1072-1079) and wished to present the force which the figure of this St. Stanisław brings to the history of Christianity in Poland, and in particular to the history of the salvation of the Polish society. According to Karol Wojtyła, the Synod was to be a connection, after nine centuries, to the person of St. Stanisław through «working on the enrichment and deepening of our faith as required in our times».³⁸

Karol Wojtyła formulated some proposals in form of orientation, in which he said that the provincial Synod of the Archdiocese of Krakow could be composed of the pastoral synods of individual dioceses. He said that the starting point for such a pastoral synods must include appropriate identification of the teachings of the Vatican II from the point of view of their gradual introduction into the totality of teaching and pastoral work.³⁹

On 26th May, 1971, was the beginning of the first session of the preparatory Committee, Karol Wojtyła presented his report, thereby indicating the function of the preparatory Commission. Among other things, the Commission was to prepare a reasonably detailed concept of the Synod on the basis of the available publications, of the material concerning post-Vatican II synods in various countries. The Committee also was to prepare the structures of the Synod. The character of the Synod would be pastoral, and it should involve everyone as far as possible. The Synod had to be an opportunity to study the Vatican Council II, especially in small study groups. It was to

³⁸ A. BONIECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 431; *RLW*, 301-205.

³⁹ Cf. A. BONIECKI, 431. In the explanation of Karol Wojtyła's, the work of the pastoral synods would take place in a series of working groups. Each group would first perform a study, and after that would present proposals of an organisational nature. There was an indication from the on set that the Provincial Synod of the Archdiocese of Krakow would be based initially on the activities of single Commission and, subsequently on the activities of several others, as required: cf. *Ibid.*

become a pastoral action that would lead to practical conclusions. The Synod was to complete its work in 1979.⁴⁰ After a year of preparation Karol Wojtyła solemnly convened the Synod on 8th May, 1972 at the Wawel Cathedral. This Synod of Kraków was attended by the representatives of the entire Archdiocese-clergy, religious and laity. The Synod was governed by Central Commission, which met 119 times, assuming on-going responsibility for the Synod in between its thirteen plenary meetings.⁴¹

The Synod of Kraków did not begin by writing documents. It began by forming study groups, which lasted for two years, during which some 500-study groups were formed to read the texts of the Second Vatican Council with Karol Wojtyła's *Sources of Renewal* as a commentary. These study groups were the core of the Synod of Kraków. The study groups included all the faithful of the Archdiocese of Kraków from all walks of life. In them, were priests and laypeople, religious, intellectuals and workers, men and women, old people and young people met to pray together, to study the Vatican Council II's teachings, and to compare those teachings with their own daily lives, and also to suggest applications of the Vatican II's teachings in the various ministries of the Archdiocese.⁴² The Kraków Synod's method of dialogue made the experience of the Second Vatican Council available for thousands of Catholics throughout the Archdiocese of Kraków.

The process of the implementation of the Vatican Council II expressed in the Synod of Kraków, organised and celebrated by Karol

⁴⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 434-435. The ninth centenary of the martyrdom of St. Stanisław provided a ceremonial closing date for the Synod of Kraków, therefore, the Synod would end in 1979, since St. Stanisław had been the bishop of Kraków for eight years: cf. G. Weigel's interview with Cardinal Franciszek Macharski: cf. G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope: The Biography*, Notes, n. 64, 904.

⁴¹ Cf. G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope*, 205.

⁴² Cf. *Ibid.* The Kraków Synod, during its sessions produced about 400 pages of documents, which covered every aspect of the Church's life in the Archdiocese. These same documents were, then organised under three headings, reflecting the three roles of Christ as priest, prophet and king: the three offices in which the people of God also participates.

Wojtyła, his priests and believers of his Archdiocese, brought him (Karol Wojtyła) ever closer to mercy.

Wojtyła's Mercy Awareness: Sr. Faustina's Process of Beatification

Apart from his visit to Sr. Faustina's grave as a young worker seminarian, Karol Wojtyła as a young bishop in 1958 often visited the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, where Sr. Faustina died and was buried. He went for his own time of retreat and to conduct retreats for the Sisters.⁴³

The beatification process of Sr. Faustina was one of the means that brought Karol Wojtyła closer to mercy. The process began officially when Karol Wojtyła became the Archbishop of Kraków.⁴⁴ Because of popular desire that Sr. Faustina be raised to the honours of the altar, Karol Wojtyła asked Professor Father Ignacy Różycki to examine the writings of Sr. Faustina. Różycki began by making a thorough study of the available documents.⁴⁵ Wojtyła then conferred with the Cardinal in charge of the process of beatification in the Vatican about the desire of the faithful in Poland to have Sr. Faustina raised to the honours of the altar.⁴⁶ The cardinal urged Karol Wojtyła to begin the investigation while there were still living witnesses to the sanctity of Sr. Faustina.⁴⁷

On 21st October 1965, Karol Wojtyła, now the Archbishop of Kraków, issued a decision to begin the information process of Sr. Faustina Kowalska. He delegated the auxiliary bishop, Julian Grobicki,

⁴³ This information was verbally given in 1989 by Mother Pauline, the superior general of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, as found in G. W. KOSICKI, 132.

⁴⁴ Cf. *RLW*, 194. Here, it is necessary to recall that the process of beatification of Sr. Faustina was not as easy as we think. At a stage the process of beatification of Sr. Faustina came to a stand still. Probably because of insufficient information. That was in 1959. But in 1968, a decree from the Sacred Congregation allowing the process to start all over again was given.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ This insight is from the recordings of G. W. Kosicki: cf. G. W. KOSICKI, *John Paul II: The Great Mercy Pope*, Marian Press, Massachusetts 2001, 132.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 16.

to begin the informative process into the heroic virtues of St. Faustina. With this, a solemn session began in the archdiocese of Krakow, involving the informative process relating to the life and virtues of St. Faustina.⁴⁸ This process of beatification was recalled to assist our understanding of how it brought Karol Wojtyła to a fuller awareness of mercy.⁴⁹ This was so because the informative process would naturally involve going through St. Faustina's life and her notebooks, which are referred to as *Diary*. The notebooks (*Diary*) contained St. Faustina's recorded message of mercy, whose object was devotion to Divine Mercy.⁵⁰

This means that Wojtyła's involvement in the preparation towards St. Faustina's beatification actually brought him closer to mercy.

Mercy Experience as Cardinal: Papal Lenten Retreat

In 1976, Pope Paul VI invited Karol Wojtyła, Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow, to direct his retreat and that of his collaborators (the Roman Curia).⁵¹ To understand how this Curial retreat could be included among the means that broadened Karol Wojtyła's knowledge about mercy, the overview of its characteristics would be stated.

The Structure of the Curial Retreat

The contents of the meditations of the Curial retreat preached by Karol Wojtyła showed that he drew extensively on his own previous

⁴⁸ This information reached us from the chronicles of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, as found in A. BONECKI, *Kalendarium*, 256; cf. also G. W. KOSICKI, 132.

⁴⁹ cf. *RLW*, 194.

⁵⁰ Karol Wojtyła would later refer to St. Faustina as one of the Krakow saints to whom he also looked to as his protectors: cf. *RLW*, 194.

⁵¹ Cf. A. BONECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 696. This retreat which lasted from 7-13 March 1976, was announced in the *OR* towards the end of 1975, informing that the Archbishop of Krakow Cardinal Karol Wojtyła would give spiritual exercises at the Vatican, in the presence of Pope Paul VI, and Roman Curia: cf. L. NEGRI, «Presentazione», in KAROL WOJTYŁA, *Segno di Contraddizione*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 1979, 5.

experiences at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska and with *The Living Rosary* in Dębniaki, to both of which he referred.⁵²

The structure of the curial retreat was based in part on the Five Joyful, the Five Sorrowful, and the Five Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary, interspersed with several other topics, including three on the mystery of man in respect to truth, priesthood, and conscience.⁵³ The Mystery of Redemption and that of death, the Mystery of the Last Things, along with the Stations of the Cross.⁵⁴

This annual Lenten retreat was traditionally held during the first week of Lent, and Karol Wojtyła needed to prepare for this retreat. Although he had a brief time to prepare the twenty-two conferences (meditations), yet he did the preparation both by writing down the meditation and by asking for prayers. From 20 to 25 February, he devoted his morning writing time in his Chapel to developing the texts he had sketched in Zakopane.⁵⁵

Karol Wojtyła requested for prayers, such as the one he requested from the custodian of the Shrine in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska:

I would like to turn to you with a special request. This year, the Holy Father entrusted me with the task of conducting the Lenten retreat at the Roman Curia from March 7 to 14. The time frame is relatively short which

⁵² The Lenten Curial Retreat which took place in the Vatican from 7th to 13th March 1976, consisted of five days of meditation with four conferences each day with opening and closing words, all together twenty-two conferences, with the conclusion. Karol Wojtyła's retreat dealt with a variety of topics either touched on or fully developed. These meditations were immediately published under the title: KAROL WOJTYŁA, *Segno di Contraddizione: Meditazioni*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1979 (henceforth: *Segno di Contraddizione*). The Polish text of this Curial retreat was published under the title *Znak, Ktoemu sprzeciwie sie A. Sign of Contraddition*: cf. A. BONECKI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 697; cf. also G. H. WILLIAMS, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 224.

⁵³ Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *Segno di Contraddizione*, 117-124.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 125-141.

⁵⁵ Karol Wojtyła left for Rome on 1st March 1976 for the Curial retreat, and he spent four days 2nd to 6th March at the Polish College, retouching, finalising and polishing the meditations: cf. A. BONECKI, 696.

does not give me too much time for preparation as I only received the invitation on February 14. In connection with this, I turn to Fr. Gwardian with a request for prayers at the feet of the Mother of God in Kalwaria both during the time of preparation and the retreat itself. I thank everyone in advance for their prayers at the Shrine and I extend fraternal greetings to all [...].⁵⁸

The Significance of the Retreat

Right from the beginning of the retreat, after his homage and greetings, Karol Wojtyła analysed the retreat as a moment of meeting with the living truth. He told the retreatants that the spiritual exercises were a particular period in which we confide in God.⁵⁹ In his explanation, a retreat does not only consist of a determined series of actions, conferences, prayers, spiritual concentration in an atmosphere of the silence. Rather, within all these things, and within our own being, it acts as a *opus* impelling us towards God. According to him spiritual exercises are not to be approached as an adventure of knowledge, as scientists do in his laboratory, as a thinker does in his solitary research. Rather, retreat time is a period when we go to meet

the living Truth and the living Love.⁶⁰ In this meeting with the Truth, Karol Wojtyła said, that the retreatants needed to bring their lives, all of themselves without reserve, concealing nothing, opening their entire interior before the One who knows them through and through.⁶¹

Karol Wojtyła meant that the period of retreat required calling to mind the word of the psalmist:

Lord, you examine me and know me you know when I sit, when I rise, you understand my thoughts from afar. You watch when I walk or lie down, you know every detail of my conduct. A word is not yet on my tongue before you, Yahweh, know all about it. You fence me in, behind and in front, you have laid your upon me such amazing knowledge is beyond me, a height to which I cannot attain where I shall go to escape your Spirit? Where shall flee from your presence? (Ps 139, 1-7).⁶²

In Karol Wojtyła's explanation these words of the psalmist indicate words that are to be on the lips of the retreatants when they set out to define the proper sense and character of a retreat. He said that these words of the psalmist were wonderfully expressive of a particular need of the human spirit to get as close as possible to God and to be penetrated by his Spirit.⁶³

Message of the Curial Retreat

The twenty-two meditations with conclusion⁶⁴ given by Karol Wojtyła at the Lenten retreat in the presence of Paul VI in 1976 took its theme from the words of Simon to Mary, the Mother of God, at the presentation of the Temple, (Lk 2, 34): «[...] Look, he is destined for

⁵⁸ A. BONIFACI, *Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 696. Karol Wojtyła himself would later refer to this Curial Retreat and its preparations: «When I preached the retreat in the Vatican, it was to Paul VI and his collaborators. During the preparatory phase, there had been a problem. At the beginning of February 1976, I was approached by Monsignor Władysław Rubin, who told me that the Pontiff would like me to preach the retreat in March. I had barely three weeks to prepare my texts and translate them. The title that I later gave to those meditations was: "Sign of Contradiction." This had not been proposed to me, but it emerged at the end as a kind of synthesis of what I had wanted to say. In reality, it was not a theme, but rather a kind of key concept that tied together everything I had said in the various conferences. I remember that days dedicated to preparing the talks, twenty of them which I had to choose and put together all by myself. In order to find the necessary peace and quiet, I went the Gray Ursulines at Jaszczerówka. [...]» *RLW*, 174-175.

⁵⁹ We recall that the Gray Ursulines at Jaszczerówka, was one of the places where Karol Wojtyła used to go for his retreats: cf. *RLW*, 174.

⁶⁰ K. WOJTYŁA, *Segno di Contraddizione*, 16.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Cf. *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ According to Karol Wojtyła, the talks (meditations) were twenty, but with the conclusions we regard all as twenty-two: cf. *RLW*, 175.

126 the fall and for the rise of many in Israel. [...], destined to be sign that

is opposed » (Lk 2,34).

This theme taken from the word of Simeon to Mary leads to the

central theme of this retreat taken from GS:

In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the humanity truly becomes clear. [...] Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals humanity to itself and brings to light its very high calling.⁶³

Karol Wojtyła established the message of the Lenten retreat to the journey of the mind to God (*Itinerarium mentis in Deum*). According to Karol Wojtyła, this journey is a journey to «*Deus immensus maiestatis*». Karol Wojtyła told his retreatants that it was to this God of Immense Majesty that both he and the retreatants would turn, and directed their attention to in the Curial retreat he was directing.⁶⁴ Karol Wojtyła stated that it was to this «*Deus immensus maiestatis*» that he would repeat with the prophet Jeremiah: «Ah, ah, ah, Lord Yahweh; you see, I do not know how to speak: I am only a child» (Jr 1, 6). Karol Wojtyła meant that these words of Jeremiah were the words that should be remembered each time we walk on the road that leads the human thought to God.⁶⁵

The *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*-the journey of the mind to God is a way of thought, it is a road to be taken by man's thought, or rather by the whole person, therefore, it is *Itinerarium hominis*- a way of thought of all humanity.⁶⁶ The key to this journey of the soul, Karol Wojtyła

⁶³ VATICAN COUNCIL II, GS, n. 22.

⁶⁴ *Segno di Contraddizione*, 21.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 25. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, according to the formulation St. Bonaventure, emerges from the interior of man, from the interior of all creatures, and from the acute analysis of the universe. *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* is a particular and a unique way in which the visible cosmos, is accessible to human person. This can take definite shape within the context of any of the various types and grades of our knowledge of the cosmos. In Karol Wojtyła's further explanation, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* derivable from the book of wisdom is not a thing of the distant past, superseded, rather it is still to be found in St. Paul's letter to the Roman; and such an

said, was being in his existential aspect, an *ens contingens*. The contingency of being meant his limitation from the part of his existence, and this calls to mind the existence of the Necessary Being in the sense that it is «*apsum Esse subsistens*».⁶⁷ This journey of the soul to God was a way for all people, Wojtyła said. It is a man's journey to the truth, recognising his transcendent root.⁶⁸

Karol Wojtyła stated that it was not easy to be on the road to *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. He meant that it was not easy to maintain this journey to the truth. The Curial retreat has the message, which was expressed in the soul's journey towards the truth- the truth that was a contradiction. According to Karol Wojtyła, «sign of contradiction» belongs to the deposit of truth. In Karol Wojtyła's understanding and explanation, this theme was a fundamental component of the life of the prophets (Mt 23, 34). He said that holding on to this truth became a contradiction because it required testimony to the truth,⁶⁹ which those who had rendered this testimony demonstrated that the faithfulness to it was not an easy task.⁷⁰ For some of these, like the prophet Jeremiah, it was not easy to accept their mission (Jr 20, 7-11).⁷¹ Karol Wojtyła stated that all those who bore witness to the truth became a «sign of contradiction» for those to whom they were sent.⁷²

Itinerarium will always be for human person a continual call and a continual challenge: «Ever since the creation of the world, the invisible existence of God and his everlasting power have been clearly seen by the mind's understanding of created things. And so these people have no excuse. [...]» (Rm 1,20); cf. *Segno di Contraddizione*, 22; also ST. BONAVENTURE, *The Journey of the Mind to God*, S. F. Brown, ed., Hackett Publishing Company, Indiana 1956, *Prologue*, 2-3.

⁶⁷ *Segno di Contraddizione*, 26.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 120-121.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 122.

⁷¹ ««Segno di contraddizione» appartiene al deposito della Verità. Esso fu una componente fondamentale della vita dei profeti (Mt 23,34). Per alcuni, come il profeta Geremia, non fu facile: accettare la loro missione. Si cercavano anche delle scuse per sottrarsi: (Ger 20, 7-11); *Segno di Contraddizione*, 122.

⁷² Cf. *Ibid.*, 123. Karol Wojtyła was aware of the «Anti-Itinerario», 123. We have noted from the on set that the theme of the Curial retreat directed by Karol Wojtyła was inspired by the words of Simeon: «Behold he is set for the fall and the rising of

In exploring the Christian humanism with the retreatants, Karol Wojtyla referred extensively to the threefold office of Christ, the prophetic, priestly, and legal offices that also belonged to Christian people.⁷³ In explaining the royal offices of Christ, Karol Wojtyla said that the kingly character of the Christian consisted in the exercise of the dominion over oneself. He pointed out in his meditation that the regality of the human person involved accepting interiorly the truth of his being a sinner and to be converted.⁷⁴ In this sense, Karol Wojtyla used his personal and pastoral experience to illustrate what he learnt of human dignity and the royal office of Christian as a confessor when he said:

When a man goes down in his knees in the confessional because he has sinned, at that very moment he adds to his own dignity as a man. No matter how heavily his sin weigh on his conscience, no matter how seriously they have diminished his dignity, the act of turning again to God is a manifestation of the special dignity of man, his spiritual grandeur [...], the grandeur of the personal meeting between man and God in the inner truth of conscience.⁷⁵

In the message of the retreat which Karol Wojtyla directed and preached to the Papal Curia, he stated that God who revealed himself

many in Israel and as a sign of contradiction». Applying this quote to the present-day, Karol Wojtyla recognised that the believers and the people of God in general were going to share the fate of Christ. They were destined to become «signs of contradiction» in the modern world that was trying, either by force or by silence, to deny the truth of God and about God: cf. Commentary in S. DZIWISZ, *A life with Karol*, 40-41.

⁷³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 124-140. Karol Wojtyla examined this aspect of the Christian life.
⁷⁴ Cf. *Segno di Contraddizione*, 138.

⁷⁵ «L'uomo che si inginocchia davanti al confessionale per le proprie colpe, in quel particolare momento sottolinea la sua dignità di uomo. Indipendentemente da quanto le sue colpe pesino sulla coscienza, quanto abbiamo umiliato la sua dignità, [...] l'atto stesso di conversione a Dio, manifesta la particolare dignità dell'uomo, la sua grandezza spirituale. Sappiamo quanto questa grandezza poggi sulla grazia di Dio». K. WOJTYLA, *Segno di Contraddizione*, 138-139.

was the God of infinite Majesty who had promised redemption to man in the Covenant made with human race after its fall. The self-revelation of the incarnate Christ was presented to the retreatants as a challenge to commit themselves to.

In concluding, it will be helpful to recall that studying and writing broaden a person's view and knowledge, likewise, the preparation of this retreat was a big means of Karol Wojtyla further understanding of the theme of mercy. Therefore the Lenten Curial retreat, which its theme, its structure, and all its contents moved towards mercy and about mercy, broadened in a particular way Karol Wojtyla's awareness of mercy.

Karol Wojtyla as John Paul II: Pontificate of Mercy

The Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church elected Cardinal Karol Wojtyla Pope on the 16th of October 1978, the 264th Pope of the Catholic Church, and he took the name John Paul II.⁷⁶ From this date, then, John Paul II began to minister to the whole people of God, the Church and the world. Before articulating John Paul II's concrete teaching and understanding of mercy, I will first provide an overview of his Petrine ministry, examining how the theme of mercy was central to his pontificate. I will do this examination by describing John Paul II's gradual introduction of mercy and its development in his pontificate under these headings:

Missionary Concern

From the beginning of his Papacy John Paul II had a focus; he focused on handing on the truth of faith, the truth about mercy. He explained the content of this truth that is to be handed on:

"Missionary activity is nothing other and nothing less than the manifestation or epiphany of God's plan and its fulfilment in the world and

⁷⁶ JOHN PAUL II, «Electio Summi Pontificis», in *AAS* 70 (1978), 918-919.

in history; in this history God, by means of missions, clearly accomplishes the history of salvation".⁷⁷

According to John Paul II, therefore, missionary concern involves missionary activity, which its one purpose is «to serve man by revealing to him the love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ».⁷⁸ The editorial of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, said that there were two expressions that were of faith and hope, which seemed to give a sense of John Paul II's pontificate and, in a certain sense summarised that Petrine ministry: first, «Do not be afraid, open the door for Christ, second, «Duc in altum» ("Put out into the deep", Lk 5,4).⁷⁹ These two expressions were pronounced by John Paul II. The first was expressed during the inauguration of his pontificate, and the second was pronounced at the close of the Jubilee Year 2000, while he was opening the new century for the Church and the world.⁸⁰

With these insights, I will then look for themes, activities, and expressions that indicate John Paul II's gradual introduction and development of his pontificate of mercy.

Inauguration of John Paul II's Pontificate

John Paul II's pontificate was inaugurated on the 22nd of October 1978.⁸¹ The solemn inauguration of the Papal ministry of Pope John

⁷⁷ RM, n. 41, in *AAS* 83 (1991), 288; AG, n. 9.

⁷⁸ RM, n. 2, in *AAS* 70 (1991), 251.

⁷⁹ NM, n. 1, in *AAS* 93 (2001), 265-266.

⁸⁰ EDITORIAL, «In Memoria di Giovanni Paolo II», *La Civiltà Cattolica* 2 (2005), 105-106.

⁸¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II «Die igitur 22 m. Octobris, dominica videlicet XIX "Petri Annunt", mane sollemnia celebrata sunt ob initium ministerii Summi catholice Ecclesiae Pastoris, in platea Sancti Petri, populo reverentissima. Ioannes Paulus II, Simul cum eo celebrantibus S. R. E. Cardinalibus, sepulcrum Sancti Petri antica aditu, ut Apostolorum Principem precibus pie coleret, Missaeque celebrationi deindeque praesedit[...]», inauguration Mass of John Paul II's pontificate, in *AAS* 70 (1978), 944-951; cf. also Giovanni Paolo II, «Per l' inizio del pontificato», in *ICP*, I (1978), 35-42.

Paul II began with John Paul II himself kneeling in prayer at the tomb of the Apostle Peter in St. Peter's Basilica. At the beginning of the rite, Cardinal Pericle Felici placed the *Pallium* over the shoulder of John Paul II, formally vesting him with the symbol of authority he had received from the moment he said «I accept», in the Sistine Chapel.⁸²

The first reading during the inauguration Mass was taken from the prophet Isaiah (Is 52), this reading described the joy of Jerusalem at its Redemption by the Lord. The second reading, which was read in Polish, was taken from the first letter of Peter. In it, the leaders of the Church were admonished to lead by example and by love. The Gospel, which was taken from the Gospel of John, (Jn 21) was proclaimed in Latin and Greek.

During the homily, John Paul II facing the crowd, which spilled out of St. Peter's Square down the Via della Conciliazione,⁸³ began his homily with an act of faith in the words of St. Peter. He said:

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16,16). These words were pronounced by Simon son of Jonah, in the region of Caesarea Philippi. The words had been expressed in the proper language, with a profound lived experience and felt conviction. But these words did not find their origin and source in Peter: "because it was no human agency that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven (Mt 16, 17). These were the words of faith. They followed the beginning of the mission of Peter, in the history of salvation in the history of the people of God [...]. Today and in this place it is necessary that these same words be pronounced and listened to anew: "You are Christ, the Son of the living God." Yes, brothers and sisters, first of all these words. Their content discloses to our eyes the mystery of the living God, the mystery that the Son knows and which he has brought close to us. No one, in fact, has

⁸² *Pallium* is a sign made from white lambs wool, decorated with six black crosses and is worn by metropolitan archbishops, as a symbol of their union with Christ the Good Shepherd and with his vicar the Successors of Peter. They also wear *Pallium* as a symbol of authority and responsibility (service); cf. *RLM*, 153-154.

⁸³ Present also were an international television radio audience, dignitaries from around the world, representatives of the world of leaderships, including tens of millions of John Paul II's countrymen and women, witnessing this first Mass on Polish state television: cf. *Ibid.*, 260-261.

brought humanity close to the mystery of the living God, no one else could reveal it as has been done by himself.⁸⁴

In all this, John Paul II made an important affirmation: He said that anyone assuming the Petrine ministry in the Church had to begin the way St. Peter began. He had to begin by confession of faith: «You are the Christ, the Son of the living God». In John Paul II's understanding, the office of Peter meant bearing witness to the truth about God and about humanity.⁸⁵ Christ, John Paul II said, had brought humanity close to the mystery of the living God and the truth about man.⁸⁶ John Paul II therefore, when he addressed the world from St. Peter's Basilica during the inauguration homily, invited all to turn to Jesus with the proclamation:

Brothers and sisters! Be not afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power! Help the Pope and all who wish to serve Christ and, with the power of Christ, to serve man and the whole humanity! Be not afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of states, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilisation and development. Be not afraid! Christ knows "what is in man" He alone knows it.⁸⁷

John Paul II commenting later on his «Be not afraid» said that human person needed these words because, he had not stopped being afraid, and that he had many reasons to feel fear deep within.

⁸⁴ JOHN PAUL II, «Inauguration of the pontificate», in *AAS* 70 (1978), 944.

⁸⁵ *Cf. Ibid.*, in *AAS* 70 (1978), 945.

⁸⁶ *Cf. Ibid.*

⁸⁷ «Fratelli e Sorelle! Non abbiate paura di accogliere Cristo e di accettare la sua povertà! Aiutate il Papa e tutti quanti vogliono servire Cristo e, con la povertà di Cristo, servire l'uomo e l'umanità intera! Non abbiate paura! Aprite, anzi, spalancate le porte a Cristo! Alla Sua salvatrice povertà aprite i confini degli Stati, i sistemi economici come quelli politici, i vasti campi di cultura, di civiltà, di sviluppo. Non abbiate paura! Cristo sa "cosa è dentro l'uomo." Solo Lui lo sa!». JOHN PAUL II, «Inauguration of the pontificate», in *AAS* 70 (1978), 947; GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Per l'inizio del pontificato», *JGP*, 1 (1978), 38.

According to John Paul II, «the peoples and the nations of the entire world need these words», because their consciences needed to grow in the certainty that «Someone exists who holds in his hands the destiny of this passing world; Someone who is the Alpha and the Omega of human history».⁸⁸ The content of John Paul II's homily gradually hinted on what was to be the content of his pontificate.

J. Ratzinger (Benedict XVI) described John Paul II's pontificate in these words:

John Paul II has probably met more people personally than anyone else among our contemporaries. It would be impossible to count the individuals whose hands he has shaken, with whom he has prayed, or whom he has blessed. Although his office may create distance, his personal radiance creates nearness. Even the simple, the uneducated, and the poor do not have the sense that he is distant, inaccessible, or frightening-feelings [...]. When you meet this Pope personally, it seems as though the two of you have known each other for a long time, as though you are speaking with a close relative or a good friend. The title "Father" appears not to be a title at all but rather the expression of a real relationship that you experience in his presence. Everyone knows John Paul II: his face, his characteristic way of moving and speaking; his immersion in prayer and his spontaneous cheerfulness. Many of his words have become indelibly engraved in our memories, starting with the passionate cry with which he introduced himself to the people at the beginning of his pontificate: "Open wide the doors to Christ, and be not afraid of him." [...].⁸⁹

J. Ratzinger, (Benedict XVI) commenting on the above quotation says that the pontificate of John Paul II is condensed in the words like these: that is, the words with which he began his pontificate: «Open wide the doors to Christ, and be not afraid of him».⁹⁰

⁸⁸ *CTH*, 222.

⁸⁹ J. RATZINGER, (BENEDICT XVI) «John Paul II: twenty years in History», in *The Legacy of John Paul II: Images and Memories*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2005, 9-12.

⁹⁰ *Cf. Ibid.*

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In A. Dulles understanding, John Paul II's Christology was framed in universalist perspectives. Christ, for John Paul II, was the centre and goal of all history and indeed of the whole cosmos. «No individual could attain fulfilment without communion with Jesus Christ the universal Redeemer». ⁹¹ A. Dulles insisted that it was this conviction that was behind John Paul II's summons: «Be not afraid. Open wide the door for Christ [...]», with which he opened his pontificate. According to A. Dulles, it was fear, John Paul II believed, that drove individuals and peoples to set up barriers to the «truth, goodness and beauty of God, shining forth on the face of Jesus Christ». ⁹² We shall see next how the theme of mercy became definite and developed in the Petrine ministry of John Paul II.

Handing on of the Faith⁹³: The Truth about Mercy

In his inaugural Encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, of 4th March 1979, John Paul II definitively and clearly announced the theme of his pontificate, when he explained the purpose of that Encyclical:

I tried to express in it what has animated and continually animates my thoughts and my heart since the beginning of the pontificate [...]. The Encyclical contains those thoughts which then, at the beginning of this new life, were pressing with particular forcefulness in my mind and which, certainly, had already been maturing in me previously, during the years of my service as a priest, and then as a bishop. I am of the opinion that if Christ called me in this way, with such thoughts [...] with such sentiments, it was because he wanted these calls of the intellect and of the heart, these expressions of faith, hope and charity, to ring out in my new and universal ministry, right from its beginning. ⁹⁴

⁹¹ A. DULLES, «The Theologian», *America* 192 (April 18, 2005), 21.

⁹² Cf. *Ibid.*

⁹³ For John Paul II, faith is accepting as true what God has revealed: cf. JOHN PAUL II, *GFC*, 44.

⁹⁴ *OR(E)*, 12 (March 19, 1979), 2.

By John Paul II's own admission, his intention was to share the thought and sentiments, which he had long pondered in his mind and heart and at the same time to set the tone of his pontificate. He began by making a revealing affirmation:

The Redeemer of man, Jesus Christ is the center of the universe and of history. To him go my thoughts and my heart in this solemn moment of the world that the Church and the whole family of present-day humanity are now living. ⁹⁵

John Paul II recalled that his mind turned to this Redeemer of man immediately after he was elected as Pope:

It was to Christ the Redeemer that my feelings and my thoughts were directed on October 16 of last year, when, after the canonical election, I was asked: "Do you accept?" I then replied: "With obedience in faith to Christ, my Lord, and with trust in the Mother of Christ and of the Church, in spite of the great difficulties, I accept." Today I wish to make that reply known publicly to all without exception, thus showing that there is a link between the first fundamental truth of the Incarnation, and the ministry that, with the acceptance of my election as Successor of the Apostle Peter [...], has become my specific duty in his See. ⁹⁶

My findings revealed that John Paul II stated in his inaugural homily, and in his first Encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* that Jesus Christ was going to be the central focus of his pontificate. This meant that all the truths of our faith find meaning and relevance in the light of Christ. John Paul II articulated further these central truths of our faith in these words:

When therefore, at the beginning of the new pontificate I turn my thought and heart to the Redeemer of man, I thereby wish to enter and penetrate into the deepest rhythm of the Church's life. ⁹⁷

⁹⁵ *RH*, n. 1, in *AAS* 71 (1979), 257.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 2, in *AAS* 71 (1979), 259.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 22, in *AAS* 71 (1979), 320.

Following the example of St. Peter's confession of faith (cf. Mt 16, 16), John Paul II articulated the faith by affirming that «The Redeemer of man, Jesus Christ, is the center of the universe and of history», with this statement of conviction, Redemption emerged as the primary theological idea of John Paul II's Papacy.⁹⁸ In other words, John Paul II's articulation of Jesus Christ as «the Redeemer of man», and «the center of the universe and of history», indicated that the mystery of the Redemption, the mystery of mercy would be the centre of his Petrine ministry.

John Paul II stated that the Jubilee year 2000 called to mind the key truth of our faith:

[...]. The universal service connected with the chair of St. Peter in Rome, is already very close to the year 2000. [...] For the Church, the people of God spread to the most distant limits of the earth, it will be the year of a great Jubilee. [...] That date, will recall and reawaken in us in special way our awareness of the key truth of faith which St. John expressed at the beginning of his Gospel: «The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,» (Jn 1, 14), and elsewhere: «God so loved the world that he gave the only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3, 16).»⁹⁹

According to John Paul II, therefore, Jesus Christ, the Son sent to redeem humanity is the key truth of faith. Looking closely at John Paul II's Petrine ministry, it was discovered that it was this key truth of our faith that John Paul II spent all his energy on during his pontificate. His Papacy was imbued by the zeal for handing on this faith, the truth about mercy. John Paul II also in his pontificate insisted on implementing the Second Vatican Council's teaching. He said: «Since, therefore, in the present phase of the Church's history we put before ourselves as our primary task the implementation of the doctrine of the great

⁹⁸ Cf. J. M. MILLER, «Editor's Introduction», *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 32.
⁹⁹ *RH*, n. 1, in *AAS* 71 (1979), 258.

Council». ¹⁰⁰ John Paul II felt and believed that the implementation of the Council's teaching would open men and women's «minds and hearts more widely to Christ». ¹⁰¹ This explains the statement of D. P. Jobert, when he said that «Divine Mercy» inspired the Second Vatican Council and that «this mystery of Mercy» was the key to the interpretation of that Council. ¹⁰² Therefore, John Paul II's implementation of the Vatican II doctrine meant also creating the awareness of the truth about mercy.

The zeal to hand on the faith, the truth about mercy, led John Paul II to dedicate an Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* solely to mission. To make this message of the truth about mercy disseminate and be planted deep in the people, John Paul II called for «a new evangelization» throughout the world, «a new evangelisation», that would be «new in ardour, methods and expression». ¹⁰³ John Paul II was conscious that

¹⁰⁰ *DM*, n. 1, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1179.

¹⁰¹ *Cf. ibid.*

¹⁰² D.P. JOBERT, «The Novus Ordo: A Timely Emphasis Upon Mercy», *Faith* 39 (May/June, 2007), 22-23.

¹⁰³ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in America*, n. 6; cf. also ID., «Address to the Assembly of CELAM» (March 9 1983), III, in *AAS* 75 (1983), 778. In speaking of this need of creating the awareness of the truth about mercy, John Paul II distinguished three different situations: first, a situation that required mission in the traditional sense, meaning to those people who have not yet heard the Gospel preached to them; second, a situation properly requiring pastoral care, that is, those having been successfully evangelised required mostly the ordinary of the work of the sacraments; third, a situation which John Paul II called a «new evangelization»: cf. D.L. SCHINDLER, «Reorienting the Church on the Eve of the Millennium: John Paul II's New Evangelization», in *The Legacy of Pope John Paul II: His contribution to the Catholic thought*, G. Gneuch, ed., The Crossroad Publishing company, New York 2000, 104. John Paul II called for a «a new evangelization» throughout the whole, a new evangelization that would be new in ardor, new in methods and new in expression. John Paul II was not just calling for a renewed evangelization, although he also reaffirmed the need to revitalize traditional forms of evangelisation as an ongoing ministry of the Church. At the same time John Paul II's intention was for something more comprehensive than mere new responses to new questions: cf. E. CLARK, «What is New at the New Evangelization?», *Origins* 36(May 18, 2006). 2. When John Paul II spoke of «new evangelization», he had something different in mind. For John Paul II, the new evangelization differs from the traditional evangelisation, which John Paul II referred to as the *Missio ad gentes*, mission to the

Direct Ministry: Pilgrimage

Driven by the pastoral solicitude for all Churches and by a sense of openness and charity to the entire human race, John Paul II exercised his Petrine ministry with a tireless missionary spirit. John Paul II in the early years of his pontificate, still young and full of energy went to the very ends of the earth.¹¹³ Benedict XVI recalled that the prophetic summons John Paul II issued at the inaugural Mass of his pontificate was as if he would like to open the doors to Christ everywhere, as if he wished to open to people the gate that leads to true life, to true love, to mercy.¹¹⁴ According to Benedict XVI, if like Paul, John Paul II was found constantly and untiringly on a journey to the remotest parts of the earth, if he wished to be close to everyone and would not want to miss any opportunity to proclaim the Good News, «it is not for promotional reasons or out of thirst for popularity, but because in him are realized the Apostles words: "The love of Christ urges us on" (2 Co 5, 14).¹¹⁵

With an impassioned sense of duty, and missionary focus, John Paul II repeated the cry of St Paul: «Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel» (1 Co 9, 16).¹¹⁶ With this assertion, John Paul II declared his commitment to his mission:

In the name of the Church, I sense an urgent duty to repeat this cry of St. Paul. From the beginning of my pontificate I have chosen to travel to the ends of the earth in order to show this missionary concern. My direct contact with peoples who do not know Christ has convinced me even more of the urgency of the missionary activity. [...] ¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *My Beloved Predecessor*, E. Guerriero, ed., Pauline Books & Media, Boston 2007, 61.

¹¹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 4. L. Accattoli developing the significance of John Paul II's gesture of descending from the platform to the crowds of people on the inaugural Sunday after the liturgical celebration, said that John Paul II's going down to the crowd that day foreshadowed John Paul II's mission to the nations: cf. L. ACCATTOLI, *Man of the Millennium* John Paul II, 46.

¹¹⁵ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *My Beloved Predecessor*, 4.

¹¹⁶ *RM*, n. 1, in *AAS* 83 (1991), 249.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*

Apart from authorising the preparation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the universal catechism to make the doctrines of the Church known in modern terms to a worldwide audience, John Paul II had travelled around the world to meet and teach and minister to millions of God's peoples in various locations, in order to spread the Gospel of the truth about mercy.

John Paul II as Instrument of Mercy

As I have already hinted John Paul II's zeal to hand on the truth about mercy had led him to make various journeys outside and within Italy. Right from the beginning of his pontificate, John Paul II explained the meaning of his journeys to countries and to Organisations. He described the motive behind his untiring jet throughout the globe.¹¹⁸ John Paul II said:

Many people say that the Pope travels too much, and at too close intervals. I think that, humanly speaking, they are right. But it is Providence that guides and some times prompts us to do something *per excessum* (excessive) [...] ¹¹⁹

John Paul II further justified his journeys in an address to the Sacred College and Curia on the eve of St. Peter and Paul (28th June, 1980). John Paul II stated that his trips to the nations and Organisations were an application of the charism of Peter on a universal scale, and he gave as a theological basis the fact that the service of people today has emphasised the universal dimension:

¹¹⁸ Some people view John Paul II's numerous journeys as «excess». Some critics claimed that by making such frequent travels, John Paul II might not have time to pay full attention to the government of the Church: cf. L. ACCATTOLI, *Man of the Millennium* John Paul II, 113.

¹¹⁹ OR (D) June 13 (1980)

[...] As I have already affirmed, every journey of the Pope is an authentic pilgrimage to the living sanctuary of the people of God. In this perspective, the Pope travels to announce the Gospel, to strengthen the brethren in faith, to consolidate the Church, to meet the people [...]. In these meetings with love, of peace, of universal brotherhood, [...]. In these meetings with souls, in view of the immensity of the crowds, the modern-day charisma of Peter at the crossroads of the world manifests itself. This and only this is the goal of the pilgrim Pope, even if others may attribute other reasons to him.¹³⁰

John Paul II had affirmed that his travels to the nation were motivated by the spirit of the Gospel. They were journeys of love and peace. They were travels of mercy. It is clear that I will not mention all the trips made by John Paul II, but only some of those that best described the aim of this book.

When John Paul II assumed the Papacy, it became clear that at, the very centre of his interpretation of Christian message was a new kind of Christian humanism, a philosophy of man, which viewed human person as a creature of almost limitless gifts and unimaginable destiny. For John Paul II Man is the greatest of God's creations, and the most precious to him. In other words, it is God's design that man should be cherished and protected.¹³¹ In his defence of man, John Paul II clearly taught man about himself. Six months after his election, he told the faithful in St. Peter's square that his first liturgical, *Redemptor Hominis* which he was about to publish reflected what he called the

¹³⁰ cf. [...] Come ho affermato altra volta, ogni viaggio del Papa è "un autentico pellegrinaggio al santuario vivente del Popolo di Dio." In questa ottica, il Papa viaggia, sostenuto, come Pietro, dalla preghiera di tutta la chiesa, per annunciare, per "confermare i fratelli" nella fede, per consolare la Chiesa, per incontrare l'uomo, [...]. Sono viaggi di fede [...]. Sono viaggi di amore, di pace. In questi incontri di anime, pur nell'immensità delle folle, si riconosce il carisma dell'odierno ministero di Pietro sulle vie del mondo. Tale, e soltanto tale, è il fine del Papa-pellegrino, sebbene taluni possano attribuirgli altre motivazioni. [...] GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «La Chiesa oggi vuol essere Chiesa nel Mondo contemporaneo», *JCP*, III/1 (1980), 1878-1901.

¹³¹ Among the essential goals of John Paul II's pontificate were defence of life and the family, the protection of human rights, especially the life of the humblest, and the promotion of the dignity of women: cf. S. DZIWIŃSKI, *A Life with Karol*, 175.

central task of his new pontificate which was to interpret the connection between the Redemption and dignity of human person, in other words, the connection between mercy and the dignity of man.

In his journeys as the instrument of mercy for the world, John Paul II had always emphasised that the Church must be consistent. He insisted that the Church has to operate at a higher level than purely political plane, and should set its sights higher, on love and mercy.

Journey to Mexico

At the invitation of the Mexican president, José López Portillos and the Bishops' Conference of Latin America (CELAM)¹³² John Paul II went to Mexico. Being conscious of his message of mercy and the defence of man, John Paul II delivered the following message at the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Puebla on 28th January 1979:

[...] As brother to very beloved brothers who admired what the bishops of Latin America had accomplished in their two General Assemblies, at Rio de Janeiro in 1958 and Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, John Paul II told the bishops that their great strength lay in the fact that they came to Puebla not as a symposium of experts, not as parliaments of politicians, not as congress of scientists or technologists, but as pastors of the Church. As pastors, your principal duty was to be teachers of truth, for truth was the foundation for all truly liberating human action. The truth entrusted to the bishops was the truth concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was the centre of the "new Evangelization, which CELAM was considering at Puebla. [...] The basic truth about Jesus Christ remained the truth confessed by Peter: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." That was what the Church preached. [...] The re-reading of the Gospel through ideological lenses made an authentically Christian liberation impossible. Among the re-readings was one with which they had become familiar in recent years. This presents the image of Jesus as politically committed, as one who fought against Roman oppression and authorities, and also as one involved

¹³² Council of Latin American Episcopal conference. This was convoked by Paul VI and was confirmed by John Paul I and reconfirmed by John Paul II as the first act of his pontificate: Giovanni Paolo II, «Lavori della III conferenza Generale dell'Episcopato Latino-americano», *JCP*, I (1979), 212.

in the class struggle. The idea of Christ as political figure, a revolutionary, as the subversive man from Nazareth, does not correspond to the Church's catechesis. [...] True liberation was found in the salvation offered by Christ, a messianic liberation wrought by transforming, peacemaking, pardoning and reconciling love (mercy). The bishops' task as pastors and teachers of truth was to defend human dignity as Gospel value that cannot be despised without greatly offending the Creator.¹²³

In this speech, John Paul II was unyielding in reasserting the Catholic teaching about Christ and he insisted that the Church has to keep her freedom, so that her only option will be for human person. John Paul II meant that the Church, focusing on the Gospel, had the

¹²³ «[...] Voglio ora supplicarvi come un fratello a fratelli molto amati: È un gran sollievo per il pastore universale costatare che vi reiate qui non come un simposio di esperti, non come un parlamento di politici, non come un congresso di scienziati o tecnici, per quanto importanti possano essere tali riunioni. Ma come un fraterno incontro di Pastori avete la piena consapevolezza che il vostro principale dovere è quello di essere Maestri della verità. Non di una verità umana e razionale, ma della verità che viene da Dio; che porta con sé il principio dell'autentica liberazione dell'uomo. [...] Da voi, pastori, i fedeli del vostro Paese sperano e reclamano anzitutto un'assistenza e zelante trasmissione della verità in Gesù Cristo. Questa si trova al centro dell'evangelizzazione e ne costituisce il contenuto essenziale: non c'è vera evangelizzazione se non si costituisce il contenuto essenziale: non c'è vera evangelizzazione se non si costituisce il contenuto essenziale: non c'è vera evangelizzazione se non si costituisce il contenuto essenziale. Dobbiamo quindi confesare Cristo davanti alla storia ed al mondo con convinzione profonda, sentita, viva, come lo confessò Pietro: "Tu sei Cristo, il Figlio di Dio vivente. Questa è la catechesi della Chiesa. Ebbene esistono oggi da parti- il fenomeno non è nuovo- "tr- letture" del Vangelo, che sono risultato di speculazioni teoriche ben più che di autentica meditazione della parola di Dio e di un vero impegno evangelico. In alcuni casi, si pretende di montare Gesù come impegnato politicante, come uno che combatte contro la dominazione romana e contro i potenti, anzi implicato in una lotta di classe. [...] Gesù non accetta la posizione di questi mescolavano le cose di Dio con atteggiamenti meramente politici. Gesù rifiutò inequivocabilmente il ricorso alla violenza. La prospettiva della sua missione è assai più profonda. Consiste nella salvezza integrale per mezzo di un amore trasformante, pacificatore, di perdono e di riconciliazione. Per i vescovi la dignità umana rappresenta un valore evangelico, che non può essere disprezzato senza grave offesa del Creatore». Giovanni Paolo II, «address to the Third General Assembly of CELAM, the Council of Latin American Bishop's Conferences 29th January, 1979, IGP, II (1979), 188-230.

right to judge whether or not the various political programmes were compatible with God's intention for humanity.¹²⁴

At Cuipán Oaxaca John Paul II met with the Mexican Native American from Oaxaca, Cuilapan, and other parts of the nation. Relating to them warmly, John Paul II told this throng of people that he wanted to be their voice. John Paul II saw in the Mexican poor, the poor of the world, and he reminded them that as Paul VI had taken their part during his visit to Colombia in 1968, he, too, would do the same:

Amadísimos hermanos indígenas y compesinos, [...]. I want to repeat with him- if it were possible, in an even stronger tone of voice- that the present Pope wishes to be in solidarity with your cause, which is the cause of humble people, the poor. The Pope is with these masses of the population that are nearly always abandoned and sometimes harshly treated. [...] Adopting the line of my predecessors John XXIII and Paul VI, as well as that of the Vatican Council, the Pope wishes to be your voice, the voice of those who cannot speak or who are silenced, in order to be the conscience of consciences; to issue an invitation to action in order to make up for lost time [...].¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Cf. S. DZIWISZ, *A Life with Karol*, 76-77.

¹²⁵ «[...] Davanti a questo spettacolo imponente che si riflette nelle mie pupille, non posso non pensare all'indimentico quadro che contemplavo, dieci anni fa, il mio predecessore Paolo VI, sua memoriale visita in Colombia. [...] Con lui voglio ripetere, e se fosse possibile con un accento ancor più forte nella mia voce, che il Papa attuale vuol essere solidale con la vostra causa, che è poi la causa del popolo umile, della gente povera. I Papa sta con queste messe di popolazione, quasi sempre abbandonate ad un endogeno livello di vita. Facendo mia la condotta dei miei predecessori Giovanni XXIII e Paolo VI, e insieme quella del Concilio Vaticano II, il Papa vuol essere la vostra voce, la voce di coloro che non possono parlare o di coloro che son fatti tacere, per essere coscienza delle coscienze, invito all'azione, per recuperare il tempo perduto [...]». GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «all' Papa vuol essere la vostra voce», address to the natives on 29th January 1979, IGP, II (1979), 246.

Journey to Poland

John Paul II's visit to Poland, a pilgrimage of June 1979, was a great return.¹²⁶ It was like a triumphal march of a man returning as Pope John Paul II to the country he left as Karol Wojtyła. But there was much more than this. John Paul II's visit to Poland was for the ninth anniversary of the martyrdom of St. Stanislaus.¹²⁷ However, wherever John Paul II went, he had at the back of his mind the central motivation of his direct contact and that is the transmission of the truth about mercy.

For John Paul II, any authentic dialogue must respect the convictions of believers, and ensure all the rights of citizens. The background to almost all the teachings of John Paul II was the notion of the inseparability of a people and its religious belief. John Paul II recognised that a need for the divine is the most human thing about man; it is the heart of his humanity. For John Paul II, no theory of human person can be complete without God. The history of human person cannot be complete without God. In his homily at the Victory Square John Paul II said:

The Church brought Christ to Poland, and Christ is the key to understanding that great and fundamental reality called man. In fact it is not possible to understand man fully without Christ. Man is not able to understand neither who he is, nor what his true dignity is, nor his true vocation, nor his final destiny. He cannot understand all this without Christ. For this reason it is impossible to exclude Christ from the history of

¹²⁶ In the earlier chapter of this work we hinted on the idea of pilgrimage. That is a journey to a sacred place for prayer, penance, and almsgiving. The tradition of a pilgrimage, reflecting the biblical conviction that God had acted in history at certain specific time. The people of Poland experienced this, as the great pilgrimages of the Shrine of the black Madonna of Czestochowa and to Kalwaria Zebrzydowska testified. From John Paul II boyhood days, he had actively participated in the Poland's pilgrimage tradition.

¹²⁷ According to the final itinerary for the Pope's visit communiqué, the Polish bishops stressed that John Paul II's visit to Poland was for the ninth centenary of the martyrdom of St. Stanislaus: cf. «Communiqué of Polish Episcopate», *OR* (E), May 21st, (1979), 2.

man in any part of the globe. The exclusion of Christ from the history of man is an act against man. Without Christ it is not possible to understand the history of Poland. [...] The history of a nation is above all the history of men. [...].¹²⁸

Journey to Ireland

The message of mercy, which is embedded in the central theme of Christ, moved John Paul II when he reached Ireland to insist that the temptation to violence meant the negation of love-mercy. He took the opportunity of his visit to Ireland to condemn violence in the most emphatic and comprehensive terms. He said that violence was the exact antithesis of the ministry of love. John Paul II recognized that Ireland was a Holy land, with peculiar gift for sanctity, a pious zeal, which is almost unparalleled, a passionate loyalty to the faith:

Faith and fidelity are the marks of the Church in Ireland, a Church of martyrs, a Church of witnesses; a Church of heroic faith, heroic fidelity. [...] The Gospel and the Church have struck deep roots in the soul of the Irish people. [...].¹²⁹

John Paul II rejected absolutely and without equivocation the recourse to violence as a solution to economic and political problems.

¹²⁸ «[...] La Chiesa ha portato alla Polonia Cristo, cioè la chiave per comprensione di quella grande e fondamentale realtà che è l'uomo. Non si può infatti comprendere l'uomo fino in fondo senza il Cristo. O piuttosto l'uomo non è capace di comprendere se stesso fino in fondo senza il Cristo. Non può capire né chi è, né qual è la sua vera dignità, né quale sia la sua vocazione, né il destino finale. Non può capire ciò senza Cristo. E perciò non si può escludere Cristo dalla storia dell'uomo in qualsiasi parte del globo, e su qualsiasi longitudine e latitudine geografica. L'esclusione di Cristo dalla storia dell'uomo è un atto contro l'uomo. Senza di Lui non è possibile capire la storia della Polonia. La storia della Nazione è soprattutto la storia degli uomini. E la storia di ogni uomo si svolge in Gesù Cristo: GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Non si può escludere Cristo dalla storia dell'uomo», homily at the Victory Square Warsaw Poland, 2nd June 1979, *IGP*, II (1979), 1388.

¹²⁹ JOHN PAUL II, «Peace and reconciliation», homily at the inter- celebration of the Liturgy of the Word, 29th September 1979, *IGP*, in *AAS* 71 (1979), 1078.

In his teaching against violence, John Paul II insisted that Christianity forbids us to seek solutions to divisions by the ways of hatred. Violence was not to be accepted as a solution to problems. John Paul II saw violence as unworthy of man, and it goes against the truth of our faith. He said:

[...] The people of Ireland, when they recall the greatest commandment of Christ, the commandment of love, they cannot behave otherwise. [...] Christianity does not permit us to close our eyes to difficult social or problems. It does not permit us to neglect and refuse to see unjust social or international situations. What Christianity does forbid is to seek solutions to these situations by ways of hatred. True peace must be founded upon a sense of the unshakable dignity of man, upon the recognition of an indelible and happy equality between men, upon a basic principle of human brotherhood, that is, of the respect and love due to each man because he is man. [...] I join my voice today to the voice of Paul VI and my other predecessors, to the voices of your religious leaders, to the voices of all men and women of reason, and I proclaim, with the conviction of my faith in Christ and with an awareness of my mission, that violence is evil, that violence is unacceptable as a solution to problems, that violence is unworthy of man. [...]

Journey to United Nations Organization (UNO)

John Paul II openly declared that the situation of the contemporary world did not only display transformations that gave grounds for hope in the better future for man on earth, but also, it revealed a multitude of threats, and John Paul II in his determination to disseminate the truth about mercy, never ceased to point out these threats on various occasions: as his addresses to UNO, UNESCO, etc.¹³⁰

John Paul II's efforts to communicate the truth about man led him to make a journey to UNO. He recognised the importance of UNO. He affirmed that in UNO the legitimate desires of all people of the whole

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 71 (1979), 1079-1081.

¹³¹ John Paul II, *DM*, n. 2, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1181.

planet converge. He saw the UNO as the forum from which every man's problems are appraised in truth and justice:

Your Organization has a special significance for the whole world, for in it the needs and the aspirations of all the people of our planet come together. The supreme international forum that brings together the efforts and the determination of all men and women of good will, who have resolved to honour the pledge that the Founders of the United Nations made thirty-four years ago and inscribed in the first Article of the Charter. I would like to express the wish that, in view of its universal character, the United Nations Organization will never cease to be the forum, the high tribune from which all man's problems are appraised in truth and justice. It was in the name of this inspiration, it was in the name of this historic stimulus, that on 26 June 1945, the charter of the United Nations was signed.¹³²

Journey to United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

John Paul II efforts to make the truth about mercy known led him to make a journey to UNESCO. Addressing the staff of UNESCO in Paris, he recalled that human person lives a truly human life thanks to culture. For John Paul II, a culture without human subjectivity and without human causality is inconceivable:

[...] Man lives a truly human life thanks to culture. Human life is culture in the sense that man distinguishes himself and differentiates himself from all that exists in the visible world through culture. Man cannot be without culture. [...] Culture is a specific way of existing and being of man. Man always lives according to his own culture, and which, on the other hand, creates a tie among men that is also singular to them, by determining the inter-human and social character of human existence. The first and fundamental task of culture is education. In fact education consists in man becoming always more a man. [...] A culture without human subjectivity and without human causality is unthinkable. In the cultural field, human

¹³² JOHN PAUL II, "Address at UNO", 2nd October 1979, in *AAS* 71 (1979), 1143, 1147.

present is always the first fact. Man is the prime and fundamental fact in culture [...] ¹³⁰

Journey to Africa

John Paul II made several journeys to African continent. The first to communicate the significance for humanity of the mystery of incarnation in Christ led John Paul II to make several trips to Africa. Rechristian in Christ led John Paul II to make several trips to Africa. His second journey to African continent took him to Nigeria, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. In these travels John Paul II appealed to all people for the promotion of human dignity.

a) Nigeria

John Paul II's efforts to make the truth about mercy plant deep in the mind and hearts of the people led him to say that it is God's will that everyone will be saved. He recalled how God's saving action reached Nigeria. Thanks to the courage and heroic efforts of the first missionaries, past and present John Paul II told Nigerians that action for peace and justice was in fact important part of witnessing to the Gospel.

¹³¹ of [...] L'homme vit d'une vie vraiment humaine grâce à la culture. La vie humaine est culture en ce sens aussi que l'homme se distingue et se différencie à travers elle de tout ce qui existe par ailleurs dans le monde visible. L'homme ne peut pas se passer de culture. La culture est un mode spécifique de l' "exister" et de l'être de l'homme. L'homme vit toujours selon une culture qui lui est propre, et que, à son tour, lui aussi, en déterminant le caractère inter-humain et social de l'existence humaine. En effet, la tâche première et essentielle de la culture en général, est l'éducation. L'éducation consiste en effet à ce que l'homme devienne toujours plus homme. [...] On ne peut prêter une culture sans subjectivité humaine et sans causalité humaine, mais dans le domaine culturel, l'homme est toujours le fait premier. L'homme est le fait primordial et fondamental de la culture. JOHN PAUL II, *Address at UNESCO to the Representatives of UNESCO*, 2nd June 1980, *IGP*, III (1980), 1639-1641.

Building on his insistence on the dissemination of the truth about mercy and defence of human dignity, John Paul II recognised the significant contributions Nigeria has made and is making.

I therefore desire to pay homage to the significant contribution which the Nigerian nation has made and is making in the first place to the African continent. You forcefully stand up for political freedom and for the right of all people to the African continent. You spare no efforts to help remove all discrimination against people because of their colour, race, language or social status. You have offered help to countries in greater need and you champion brotherly relations and economic collaboration between African nations. [...] ¹³²

John Paul II acknowledged that Nigeria has been blessed by God with rich human potential and natural wealth, but he reiterated that these gifts were meant to reach all people. John Paul II praised the President of Nigeria, Shibu Shagari, and the State authorities for the high priority placed on housing, education, and social services. But he reminded the authorities that these wonderful objectives were to be directed to the benefit of everybody.

Nigeria has been blessed by the Creator with a rich human potential and with natural wealth. Such gifts, received in humble gratefulness, are also a constant challenge, for the goods of this world are given by the Creator for the benefit of all [...] I have also been informed, Mr. President, that your Federal Government and the State authorities place high priority on housing, agriculture, education and social services. May these splendid objectives truly redound to the good of countless individuals and of society as a whole. [...] ¹³³

b) Benin

In his homily at Cotonou, Benin Republic, John Paul II continued to recall the concept of human person as Christ-centred mystery. John

¹³⁴ GIOVANNI PAOL II, *Consolidating national unity of Nigeria, you re-enforced the unity of the whole African, address to the President and Government officials at Lagos*, 12th February 1982, *IGP*, V/1 (1982), 373.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 373-374.

Paul II recognising their growth in faith, called on the people of Benin to be vigilant to see that the evangelisation follows this growth, and extends to others, above all to their personal life.

He reminded the people that St. Paul went to the essential which he said that life meant confessing Christ, as the Lord with one's own whole being. He stated that the same Paul often visited communities he founded in order to see that baptism took root in their whole life. John Paul II recalled that Jesus did not only tell the Apostles to baptise, but they were also to teach people to observe all that he commanded. He therefore, said that evangelisation meant pervading the spirit of the Beatitudes. This involves simplicity of life, honesty, purity, justice, peace, courage and above all love – mercy.¹³⁶

c) Equatorial Guinea

John Paul II was conscious of the aim of his journeys to the nations. He told the people of Equatorial Guinea that he came to them in order to promote the work of evangelisation in their land. He reminded them equally that evangelisation signifies growth in faith, generous dedication to the service of the dignity of every man and fidelity to Christ and the Church.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ «[...] Frères et Soeurs du Bénin, soyez vigilants! Une nouvelle étape s'ouvre devant vous. L'évangélisation doit se poursuivre, s'étendre à d'autres, et surtout atteindre plus profondément les réalités de votre propre vie. [...] Celles, Saint Paul va à l'essentiel lorsqu'il dit: "Si tu affirmes de ta bouche que Jésus est Seigneur [...]" C'est dans cette foi que vous avez été baptisés. Le même apôtre visitait souvent les communautés qu'il avait fondées pour que le baptême, c'est-à-dire l'invitation du chrétien, ait un renforcement dans toute la vie. Jésus lui-même n'avait pas dit seulement "baptisez", apprenez-leur à garder tous les commandements que je vous ai donnés" (Mt 28,20). Évangéliser veut dire alors imprégner de l'esprit des beatitudes – simplicité de vie, droiture, pureté, justice, paix, courage et pardessus tout amour: GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Approfondite l'evangelizzazione e rimane uniti tra voi», homily at Mass in Cotonou, 17th February 1982, *JGP*, V/1 (1982), 521–522.

¹³⁷ «[...] El Papa ha querido venir hasta vosotros, para promover la cruzada de evangelización también en vuestras tierras. Esa evangelización que quiere decir crecimiento en la fe, entrega generosa a la mayor dignificación de todo hombre y fidelidad a Cristo y a su Iglesia. [...] GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «C'è una Chiesa

During his meeting with the President of Equatorial Guinea, John Paul II told the President that as the President of the nation, he was like the symbolic centre at which the living inspirations of the people converge. John Paul II reminded the President that it was his responsibility to establish social climate of authentic liberty, of justice, of respect and the promotion of the rights of each person or group, and of better conditions of life, that allow all peoples to realise themselves as human persons and as children of God.¹³⁸

d) Gabon

During his visit to the President of Gabon, John Paul II recognised that one of the characteristics of a nation, was its culture. Culture brings human person among other things ways of comportment, for example, a manner of living, a way of feeling together. According to John Paul II, culture makes people to have a special joy of being in their proper country, because there is a feeling of belonging to one family. Acknowledging the precious treasure of African culture and that of Gabon, John Paul II affirmed that this culture has to develop in everyone its sons and daughters the sentiment of satisfaction that provokes respect of others.¹³⁹

deve essere capace di reggersi con le proprie forze», homily at Mass in Bata, 18th February, 1982, *JGP*, V/1 (1982), 582.

¹³⁸ «[...] Saludar a Vuestra Excelencia, quien como Presidente de la Nación, es el centro simbólico hacia el que convergen las vivas aspiraciones de un pueblo a un clima social de auténtica libertad, de justicia, de respeto y promoción de los derechos de cada persona o grupo, y de mejores condiciones de vida, para realizarse como hombres y como hijos de Dios. [...]»: cf. *Ibid.*, «Impegnare ogni energia morale nella difficile ricostruzione del Paese», John Paul II's meeting with the President of Equatorial Guinea, 18th February 1982, *JGP*, V/1, (1982), 577.

¹³⁹ «[...] Une des caractéristiques de la nation, c'est sa culture. Celle-ci apporte à l'homme, entre autres, une manière de vivre, une manière de sentir ensemble. On est heureux d'être ou de se retrouver dans son pays, car on y éprouve la sensation d'appartenir à une famille. La culture African, don't celle du Gabon est une des expressions singulières, est un bien précieux. Surtout, elle développe en chacun des fils de la nation un sentiment de fierté, qui entraîne le respect d'autrui». GIOVANNI

Giving his final message for all Africans, John Paul II said that African man and woman, like others, but with their peculiar characteristics, need space for freedom, and creativity. He acknowledged the efforts of African continent towards development regardless of the many problems. But he did not fail to ask Africans everywhere he went, to declare what kind of progress they were looking for, what kind of man they were trying to form, what human needs were they out to satisfy.¹⁴⁰

It is understood that every message John Paul II gave with regard to mercy in any country or continent, was addressed to the same situation in any part of the globe. In other words, what John Paul II spoke against with regard to mercy, in one country was a warning sign on the whole planet where such abuse existed or a warning sign on the part of humanity today, in order that every kind of abuse of human rights anywhere on earth may be stopped.¹⁴¹

I have tried to state that John Paul II systematically set about the task of creating the keys to understanding the faith. That is, the fact that God is love-merciful, and that this constitutes the apex of all that had been revealed by the prophets and in these days by the Son» (1b 1, 1). This meant that John Paul II in his Petrine Ministry was committed to handing on the faith, the revealed truth about mercy. John Paul II was also creating the awareness that there is need to respond to this truth. In other words, the steps John Paul II took during his pontificate, which he expressed, in various forms- writing, teaching, addresses, homilies,

PAOLO II, «Possa la vostra azione portare la pace all'Africa», address during John Paul II's visit to the President of Gabon, 17th February 1982, *JGP*, V/1 (1982), 571.

¹⁴⁰ cf. [...] Votre continent, poursuit d'admirables efforts de développement. On envisage partout un désir de progresser, un enthousiasme certain. Mais, au nom de l'Eglise experte en humanité, Je repose, partout où Je vais, les questions fondamentales: quel progrès cherchez-vous? Quels besoins de l'homme voulez-vous satisfaire? Quel homme voulez-vous former? [...] L'homme Africain, comme les autres de reste, mais avec ses caractéristiques particulières et à un degré intense, a besoin d'un espace de liberté, de créativité». ID, «Guidare lo sviluppo dell'Africa in un più vasto sistema di relazioni», John Paul II's address during his departure from Africa at Libreville, *JGP*, V/1 (1982), 643.

¹⁴¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, «Address to UNO, in *AAS* 71 (1969), 1148.

General Audiences and Catecheses on Wednesdays, *Journeys* to nations, World meetings of Families, World Youth Days, Audiences and meetings held with government Personalities- Heads of States and Prime Ministers, were the means John Paul II used to hand on the faith.¹⁴² They were all ways of making the truth about mercy known. They depicted John Paul II as the instrument of mercy, and they also revealed the means that John Paul II used to call God's people to recognise that this truth about mercy needed to be committed to.

Death and Funeral of John Paul II: Witness to His Papacy of Mercy

John Paul II's pontificate of mercy, which he expressed in word and deed, continued to show itself even during his last journey. John Paul II even in his last days continued to declare that Jesus Christ was the centre of the universe and the explanation of man. He continued to tell the world: «Be not afraid!». John Paul II was ever convinced that only enlightenment by Christ would remedy any faulty visions of man.¹⁴³ He lived the last days of his earthly pilgrimage as he had lived the fifty-eight years since his priestly ordination: that is, as a catholic Pastor,¹⁴⁴ leading others to the truth about mercy, leading the people to the

¹⁴² The statistical summary of John Paul II's pontificate, released by the Vatican showed that more than 17.6 million pilgrims had participated in John Paul II's Wednesday General Catecheses Audiences, more than 8 million people had come to Rome during the Jubilee year 2000, 104 pastoral visits outside Italy, 146 within Italy, and as the Bishop of Rome John Paul II visited 317 of the city's 333 parishes, 19 World Youth Days, John Paul II met numerous personalities during his 38 official visits, and held 738 audiences and meetings with Heads of State, and 246 audiences and meetings with Primes Ministers; cf. Vatican Website: <http://www.Vatican.va>. All these are ways, which John Paul II utilised to make the truth about the universal salvation in Christ, known.

¹⁴³ Cf. J. W. KOTERSKI, «An Introduction to the thought of Pope John Paul II», in *The Legacy of Pope John Paul II: His Contribution to the Catholic Thought*, G. Gencusi, ed., The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York 2000, 20.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. G. WEIGEL, «The Death of a Priest», 4.

mystery of Christ.¹⁴⁵ I will discuss John Paul II in his final illness and death, to discover how these final events pointed to the truth about mercy.

John Paul II's last illness and Death: Witness to Papacy of Mercy

John Paul II's last illness took place «live», in front of the world's television cameras. In other words, the world was aware of John Paul II's final illness and death.

After some months of relatively stable health, John Paul II's health condition began to wane from February 2005 and he was taken to Gemelli hospital. He was discharged on 10th of February, but returned to Gemelli hospital two weeks after discharge, because he was having trouble with breathing. At this stage, the medical treatment he was receiving did not improve his health. His doctor, Buzzonetti, therefore, recommended a tracheotomy. That day, 24th February, John Paul II was taken to Gemelli Hospital for what Dr. J. Navarro-Valls later described as an «elective tracheotomy». John Paul II was aware that he would be unable to speak for a certain period of time after the surgery. He was actually unable to speak after the surgery. Shortly after the surgery, he made a sign to his secretary indicating that he would like to write something. The secretary, S. Dziwisz, provided him with a sheet of paper, John Paul II then wrote in a few words: «[...] But [...] *totus tuus*» (but I am all yours).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ This explains the statement of L. J. Suénens, when he says that the priority of Christ for the Christian is the key to John Paul II's pontificate: cf. L. J. SUÉNENS, «Who is John Paul II», in *Pastoral Vision of John Paul II: The John Paul Synthesis: A Trinity College Symposium III*, J. Bland, ed., Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1982, 10.

¹⁴⁶ In those words, John Paul II was trying to express both the regret he felt that he was no longer able to speak and his total abandonment into the hands of Mary, the Mother of God: cf. S. DZIWIŚ, *A Life with Karol*, 254. *Totus Tuus* was John Paul II's reference to his Papal motto, and also an expression of his entrustment to Mary, the Mother of God: cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Testament of the Holy Father John Paul II*, Libreria Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2005, 9, 10.

John Paul II eventually returned to the Vatican on the evening of Sunday, 13th March, in a televised motorcade.¹⁴⁷ Before his return that Sunday, John Paul II had managed a few words from the window of the Polyclinic, Gemelli during the *Angelus*. In his message read by Archbishop Sandri, John Paul II thanked so many people who work in the mass media for their invaluable service:

In these days of hospitalisation, here in Gemelli, I felt in a particular manner the presence and attention of many workers in the mass media. Today I would like to direct a word of gratitude to them, for I know that it is not without sacrifice that they render this their appreciated service, thanks to which the faithful in every part of the world, can feel that I am closer and accompany me with affection and prayer. [...] The role of mass media is very important in our present-day global communication. [...] In this time of Lent, which invites towards nourishing oneself more abundantly on the word of God, it is dear to me to remember that it is possible to nourish the proper spirit through radio, television and internet. I am grateful to those who dedicate themselves to these new forms of evangelisation of mass media.¹⁴⁸

John Paul II after his return from the hospital, continued to experience difficulty with speaking, and this meant that from then, he did not hold any more audiences. This also signified the setting in of the gradual final journey.

¹⁴⁷ According to the description of G. Weigel, and the experience of those of us who were present that day, a camera mounted behind John Paul II in the van that drove him home (Vatican) allowed the television audience to see what John Paul II saw: crowds of people even larger than on his previous trip from the Polyclinic, Gemelli: cf. G. WIEGEL, «The Death of a Priest», 14.

¹⁴⁸ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Grande è la responsabilità degli operatori dei mass media, chiamati a fornire un'informazione puntuale, rispettosa della dignità della persona umana e attenta al bene comune», *Angelus*, JGP, XXVIII (2005), 216.

Palm Sunday 20th March 2005

As the Church began to celebrate the Holy Week (the passion), John Paul II seemed to begin his own passion week, in which his illness steadily intensified. John Paul II for the first time in his pontificate was unable to be physically present to lead the Holy Week ceremonies in St. Peter's. On Sunday 20th March 2005, the Mass commemorating Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) was celebrated by Cardinal Camillo Ruini, Vicar for Rome, while John Paul II followed the celebration on television.¹⁴⁹

At the end of the Mass, John Paul II appeared briefly at his apartment window for *Angelus* and using an olive branch, he blessed the numerous young people from Rome and around the world who had gathered with the other pilgrims in St. Peter's Square. In his message (mediation) prepared by John Paul II himself¹⁵⁰, and read by Archbishop Leonardo Sandri, John Paul II recalled the first world Youth Day, twenty years before, and told the Youth of the world to gather in Cologne in August for the twentieth world Youth Day.¹⁵¹ Like the holy Magi, John Paul II called on the Youth of the world, because of the Cross of Christ, which they carry in all part of the world,¹⁵² John Paul II their belief in the love of God revealed fully in Christ. John Paul II recalled that it was providential and prophetic that the World Youth

¹⁴⁹ Cf. G. WEIGEL, 'The Death of a Priest', 15.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, 'Oggi vi dico: non stancatevi di essere testimoni della Croce per la vie del mondo', *Angelus, IGP*, XXVIII (2005), 235; cf. also *OR* (E), 23rd March (2005), 1-3.

¹⁵¹ John Paul II assured the youths of the world that the holy Magi, whose relics are being venerated there in Cologne Cathedral, would in a certain sense be your guide towards that appointment. John Paul II said that these Magi came from the East to pay homage to Jesus and declared: 'We have come to adore him' (Mt 2,2). He called to mind the rich significance of the words of the Magi, and he told the youth of the world that the words of the Magi constituted the theme of their spiritual and catechetical journey towards the World Youth Day: cf. *Ibid.*, 235-236.

¹⁵² 'Voi oggi adorate la Croce di Cristo, che portate in tutto il mondo, perché avete creduto all'amore di Dio, rivelatosi pienamente in Cristo crocifisso'; cf. *Ibid.*, 236.

Day took off exactly on Palm Sunday. He told the youth that Palm Sunday of the passion of the Lord had become their Day. The feast that contained a special grace of the joy united to the Cross, and summarised in itself the Christian mystery. At this moment John Paul II told the youth present and the youth of the world not to be afraid. He invited the youth to continue without ceasing in the journey of bearing witness to the glorious Cross of Christ.¹⁵³

Wednesday 23rd March 2005

On Wednesday 23rd March 2005, John Paul II, whose physical health was not getting better, appeared at his apartment window for a few minutes and silently greeted the thousands of people gathered in St. Peter's. He blessed the people several times, and he was greeted with applause and cries of support from the crowds of people that gathered in St. Peter's despite the cancellation of the Wednesday General Audience.

Holy Thursday 24th March 2005

On Holy Thursday, John Paul II, also was unable to be present in St. Peter's Basilica for the Chrism Mass, which he followed by television from his apartment. The Holy Thursday Chrism Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, and in his message read by Cardinal Re, John Paul II, who followed the celebration by television, expressed his gratitude to those present, and reminded the priests that they were celebrating the day in which Christ communicated to the apostles his

¹⁵³ 'Carissimi giovani! Sempre più mi rendo conto di quanto sia stato providenziale e profetico che proprio questo giorno, la Domenica delle Palme e della Passione del Signore, sia diventato la vostra Giornata. Questa festa contiene una grazia speciale, quella della gioia unita alla Croce, che riassume in sé il mistero cristiano. Oggi vi dico: con cuore senza stancarvi il cammino intrapreso per essere dovunque testimoni della Croce gloriosa di Cristo. Non abbiate paura! La gioia del Signore, crocifisso e risorto, sia la vostra forza, e Maria Santissima sia sempre al vostro fianco'; *Ibid.*, 236.

priesthood. He prayed with the whole family of the faithful that the vocation to the priesthood may never lack in the Church.¹⁵⁴ In this way, John Paul II reminded the priests of their function of *alter Christus*, instruments of mercy.

At the Holy Thursday evening Mass of the *Cena Domini*, as John Paul II was not able to be present physically, Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo, presided in place of John Paul II and he read his brief message in which John Paul II told the priests and the large numbers of the faithful participating at the Mass of the Lord's Supper that Christ was calling them to return spiritually with in the Cenacle:

Dear brothers and sisters! With mind and heart I am close to you, united near the tomb of the Apostle Peter for the Mass in *Cena Domini*, which constitutes the first act of the Paschal Triduum, that culminate the liturgical year. [...] In this Holy Thursday evening, Christ invites us to return spiritually with him in the Cenacle, to enter in depth into the mystery of Easter. In this Holy Thursday Jesus accomplished two signs, first, he washed the feet of the Apostles, wanting to give them example of a love that is of humble and concrete service. Then he consecrated the bread and wine, that sacrament of his body and his blood, given in sacrifice for our salvation. [...].¹⁵⁵

Good Friday 25th March 2005

On Good Friday evening, the traditional Way of the Cross was celebrated at the Colosseum. John Paul II had always led the paschal

¹⁵⁴ GIOVANNI PAOLO II «Sono spiritualmente tra voi e con voi rendo grazie a Dio del dono e mistero del nostro sacerdozio»; «[...] Dal mio appartamento, attraverso la televisione, sono spiritualmente tra voi, carissimi. Con voi rendo grazie a Dio del dono e mistero del nostro sacerdozio; insieme a voi e all'intera famiglia dei credenti, prego perché non manchino mai nella Chiesa numerosi e santi sacerdoti, messaggio to the priests and the faithful present at the Chrism Mass, *JGP*, XXVIII (2005), 237-238.

¹⁵⁵ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Momento altamente significativo dell'anno dell'Eucaristia», message to the participants at the Holy Mass in *Cena Domini*, *JGP*, XXVIII (2005), 239.

triduum since the beginning of his pontificate and since the tradition of making the Stations of the Cross at the Colosseum was instituted. This was not possible that year. Rather, while thousands of pilgrims celebrated the Stations of the Cross at the Colosseum using meditations prepared by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Benedict XVI), John Paul II was shown on television to crowds of people at the Colosseum and St. Peter's Square and the world. He dressed in purple liturgical vestments and sat quietly in his chapel in the Papal apartment, holding a large Crucifix. At the fourteen Station, John Paul II clasped the crucifix, a sign indicating that he was uniting himself to Christ and was joining his suffering to that of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁶

In his message to the people delivered by Cardinal Camillo Ruini, John Paul II told the people present that he was spiritually united with them at the Colosseum, the place that had evoked in him much remembrance and emotions:

I am spiritually united with you at the Colosseum, a place that evokes in me many memories. [...] I am united with you in the invocation of such a dense significance: "*Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi*, quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum."¹⁵⁷ Yes let us adore and let us bless the mystery of the Cross of the Son of God, because it is by this death that a new hope emerges for humanity. [...] Like St. Paul I offer my sufferings so that God's plan will be realised and his words spreads among peoples. I am also close to all who, at this moment are being tried with suffering. I pray for each one of them.¹⁵⁸

From the above message, it becomes more and more evident that John Paul II had continued to be conscious of his mercy pontificate. In the midst of his ill-health, John Paul II continued to hand on the truth about mercy.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. S. DZIWIŃSKI, *A Life with Karol*, 255.

¹⁵⁷ «We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world»

¹⁵⁸ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Un colloquio con Cristo in Crocea», a message in the occasion of the traditional Way of the Cross of Good Friday at Colosseum, *JGP*, XXVIII (2005), 241.

Holy Saturday 26th March 2005

On Holy Saturday, as thousands of people filled St. Peter's for the vigil of Easter, John Paul II, remained in his papal apartments, and watched on television the Holy Saturday celebration, which was presided over by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Benedict XVI). John Paul II sent a message to thousands of the faithful participating at the vigil Mass, in which he requested prayers that the world might see and recognise that through the events of Christ, what was destroyed is rebuilt and hope and joy rekindled in the heart of God's people:

Dear brothers and sisters, at the end of the penitential journey of lent and having mediated in these last days on the glorious passion of Jesus, let us celebrate his glorious mystery. [...] Thanks to the television, I am able to follow from my apartment the Paschal vigil celebrated by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in the Basilica of St. Peter. [...] Dear ones, guided by the liturgy, let us pray to the Lord Jesus that the world may see and recognise that, thanks to his passion, death and resurrection, what was destroyed is reconstructed. [...].¹⁵⁹

John Paul II's message showed that he was not worrying about his sufferings, which was evidenced in the condition of his health. Rather he was preoccupied with the proper response of humanity to the truth about mercy. In other words, John Paul II's prayer was that the world might see and recognise the efficacy of Christ's events, the mercy events.

Easter Sunday 27th March 2005

Cardinal Sodano celebrated the Mass of Easter in St. Peter's Square which was on 27th March, 2005. John Paul II, not letting his debilitating condition keep him from handing on the central message of

¹⁵⁹ ID, «Cristo Risorto vince in modo definitivo la potenza delle tenebre e riaccende nei cuori dei credenti la speranza e la gioia», message to the faithful participating at the Paschal vigil of the holy night, *JGP*, XXVIII (2005), 243-244.

Christianity- the message of mercy, appeared at the window of the Apostolic Palace to be present to the thousands of people at St. Peter's, and for the *Angelus*, but, despite his repeated efforts, he was unable to speak. He therefore blessed the people by making the sign of the cross three times, as if to communicate to them by gesture what he could not say in words.¹⁶⁰

In John Paul II's traditional Easter message *Urbi et Orbi* (to the city and the world), read by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, he highlighted that the world needs Jesus:

"MANE NOBISCUM, DOMINE! Stay with us, Lord." (Lk 24,29). [...] We, the men and women of the third millennium, we too need you. Lord! Stay with us now and until the end of time. Grant the material progress of peoples may never obscure the spiritual values, which are the soul of their civilization. Sustain us, we beg You in our journey. In You we believe, in You we hope, because only You have the word of eternal life (cf. Jn 6, 68). *Mane nobiscum Domine!*¹⁶¹

Wednesday 30th March 2005

John Paul II's sufferings were increasing, but his witness and handing on of faith, the truth about mercy, continued. On Wednesday 30th March, during the time for General Audience, John Paul II appeared at the window of the Apostolic Palace to greet and bless

¹⁶⁰ According to John Paul II's secretary, John Paul II wanted to give the Easter Sunday *Urbi et Orbi* blessing. He had actually and prepared himself. He rehearsed just before the ceremony, and everything seemed to be all right. But after Cardinal Sodano had finished reading his address, John Paul II stood motionless at the window, he was unable to speak. He then whispered to his secretary: «My voice is gone». Still silent, he made the sign of the cross three times, and waved to the crowd of people present. In all this, John Paul II added: «They will be done [...] *Totus tuus*». The expression was not a sign of desperation, but it indicated submission to the will of God: cf. S. DZIWIS, *A Life with Karol*, 255; cf. G. WIEGEL, «The Death of a Priest», 16; R. MOYNI, AN, «The last farewell: John Paul's final illness and death», *Inside the Vatican* 1, (April, 2005), 12-13.

¹⁶¹ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Abbiamo bisogno di Te», Easter message of *Urbi et Orbi* 2005, year of the Eucharist, *JGP*, XXVIII (2005), 245-247.

thousands of pilgrims and visitors present at St. Peter's Square. Before the recitation of the Our Father and the Apostolic blessing, John Paul II's greetings to the faithful were read. The following was his message in Italian, German and Polish:

I greet the Italian pilgrims, especially the boy and girls from the Diocese of Milan, who have come to the tomb of Peter to express their faith in Christ. Dear ones, may the friendship with our Redeemer, always illumine your lives! Stay united to him, by listening to his Word and by active participation in the Eucharistic table. Be his faithful witnesses, especially among your age groups. [...] On all German-speaking pilgrims and visitors, I address an Easter greeting. May the Risen One be with you always. I greet the pilgrims from Poland. Thank you for coming here, for your kind wishes and for accompanying me with your prayers. [...] I wholeheartedly bless you all.¹⁶²

After blessing the people especially the five thousands children who had come from the diocese of Milan for the profession of faith, John Paul II wanted to say something even if a word to express gratitude to the children. But no sound came from him. He came away from the window undisturbed. In other words, he did not show any impatience. Later in the day the Vatican announced through the press director, Dr Navarro-Valls that John Paul II was recovering from his February operation, but described the convalescence as «slow».

Thursday 31st March 2005

On Thursday evening, 31st March 2005, Dr. Navarro-Valls's press statement said that John Paul II was running high fever. On this date at 11 a.m. as John Paul II was celebrating Mass in his chapel, all of a sudden he developed high fever and did not wish to return to the hospital, Gemelli, but expressed his desire instead to stay at home in his apartment, and this was what happened. He received medical care just

as easily at home as in the hospital. This medical care was administered by medical staff led by his personal doctor, Buzzonetti.¹⁶³ After a temporary stabilization of his condition in the late afternoon, John Paul II's health began steadily to decline.

Friday 1st April and Saturday 2nd April 2005

On Friday 1st April, the news of John Paul II's health condition continued to grow louder. Around the world, a kind of global prayer vigil evoked by this news of John Paul II's illness, spontaneously unfolded. As the crowds of people began to gather to pray in St Peter's Square below John Paul II's window, the 11:30 press briefing from the Vatican on that 1st April, described John Paul II's health condition as «very grave».¹⁶⁴

On this date John Paul II's secretary and those around celebrated Mass in John Paul II's room.¹⁶⁵ As the day went by, John Paul II fully aware of his sufferings had asked that the Stations of the Cross, the Church's traditional fourteen meditations on the passion of Christ, be read to him. According to Dr. J. Navarro-Valls, «John Paul II followed attentively the reading of the texts and made the sign of the Cross as each Station was announced».¹⁶⁶ The secretary described that day by saying that Friday was a day of prayer: «Mass, the Way of the Cross, Terce, and some Scripture passages read by Tadeusz Śliwczew». When John Paul II ended the Stations of the Cross, he asked that the third hour of Jesus' passion be read to him, and he attentively followed the

¹⁶³ Cf. John Paul II's secretary would later explain that John Paul II refused to return to hospital indicated that John Paul II «wanted to suffer and die at home, near the tomb of Peter»; cf. S. DZIWISZ, *A Life with Karol*, 256; cf. also G. WEIGEL, «The Death of a Priest», 18.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. S. DZIWISZ, described John Paul II condition as «extremely serious»; S. DZIWISZ, 256; cf. also G. WEIGEL, «The Death of a Priest», 18.

¹⁶⁵ In John Paul II's room where they celebrated Mass, there was a picture of the suffering Christ bound with cords and an image of Our Lady of Czestochowa. After the Mass the secretary and it use present went one by one to kiss John Paul II's hand; cf. S. DZIWISZ, *A Life with Karol*, 256.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. G. WEIGEL, «The Death of a Priest», 18-19.

¹⁶⁷ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Salute», blessing of the thousands of people present in St. Peter's Square during the hour of General Audience, *JGP*, XXVIII (2005), 248.

readings.¹⁶⁷ All these moments, despite the fact that conditions of notable seriousness about John Paul II's health remained, John Paul II continued to remain «lucid, fully aware and, very serene».¹⁶⁸

The daily morning and evening Masses celebrated at St. Peter's were offered for the health of John Paul II. In the evening of the same day, Cardinal Ruini, John Paul II's Vicar for Rome, celebrated Mass for John Paul II at the Basilica of St. John Lateran. At that Mass, Cardinal Ruini suggested that the end was imminent: John Paul II, he said, «already sees and touches the Lord, he is already united with our Savior».

At 6:30 p.m., the Vatican announced that the general health conditions of John Paul II have «further worsened», and added that John Paul II with visible participation, was joining in the unceasing prayers of those assisting him. As his condition deteriorated, tens of thousands of God's people gathered in St. Peter's Square for a Rosary Prayer for John Paul II led by Bishop Angelo Comastri. The Vatican decided to keep the Piazza open throughout the night for pilgrims, mostly young people to watch and pray for John Paul II.

On Saturday 2nd April, at 11:30 a.m., the Vatican released a statement about John Paul II's health condition, in which it was said that John Paul II health condition remained «very serious». The Holy Eucharist was celebrated at 7:30 a.m. in the presence of John Paul II.¹⁶⁹ According to John Paul II personal secretary, as John Paul II's life gradually ebbed away on 2nd April, he recalled the Mother he had entrusted himself to through out his life. He therefore blessed the crowns that would be placed on the image of our Lady of Czestochowa in the Vatican Grotto, and two others that would be sent to Jasna Góra. After this blessing John Paul II bid farewell to his closest collaborators. For example, Cardinals, Bishops from the Secretariat of State, directors

¹⁶⁷ The third hour based on the Scriptural passages from the time of Jesus' passion: cf. (Mt 27:45-50; Lk 23:44-46; Jn 19:12-16).

¹⁶⁸ These were the words with which the Vatican spokesman, Dr. J. Navarria-Valls used to express the situation.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 14.

of various Vatican offices. John Paul II also said good-bye to Francesco, the worker in charge of cleaning the papal apartments.¹⁷⁰

At this point there was an atmosphere of great serenity in the environment. Although John Paul II had difficulty expressing himself yet he was still fully conscious, because he asked those staying with him to read the Gospel of John loud to him. Fr. T. Slyezen then, started to read St. John's Gospel chapter by chapter and he read nine chapters in all before John Paul II's final moment on earth came.

In the evening of this same 2nd April, drawn into the night, thousands of people, all the more, filled St. Peter's Square to pray for John Paul II, and they were really in prayer. They prayed the joyful mysteries of the Rosary for John Paul II, which was led by U.S. Cardinal Edmund C. Szoka.

At about 7 p.m. on this 2nd April, John Paul II fell into a coma. More and more people especially, young people kept coming to St. Peter's square for prayers. At a stage John Paul II's secretary, Bishop Stanislaus Dziwisz¹⁷¹, felt an inner command towards celebrating Mass: «I had to celebrate Mass». At that moment the secretary started concelebrating with Cardinal Jaworski, Archbishop Ryłko, and two Polish priests, Slyezen and Mokrzycki. The Mass they celebrated was the Vigil Mass for the Divine Mercy Sunday.¹⁷² During this Mass, John

¹⁷⁰ Cf. S. DZIWIŚ, *A Life with Karol*, 256-257.

¹⁷¹ Archbishop Stanisław Dziwisz was the personal secretary to John Paul II in Krakow and in Rome. Archbishop Stanisław was ordained a priest in 1963. He was appointed Archbishop of Krakow in 2005, and in 2006 was made a Cardinal by Benedict XVI. Archbishop Dziwisz had worked side by side with John Paul II for 39 years, 1966-2005: cf. S. DZIWIŚ, *A Life with Karol: My Forty-Year Friendship with the Man who became Pope*, Doubleday, New York 2008, 8.

¹⁷² In Catholic liturgical custom, a liturgical day begins in the evening of the previous calendar day. The core, in the liturgical fact, Divine Mercy Sunday begins in the evening of the week-long continuation of the Easter Sunday to its Octave (eight days). In other words, the Octave of Easter Sunday, that is the second Sunday of Easter, the Divine Mercy Sunday the Divine, begins on the evening of Saturday with Vigil Mass and first Vespers of Sunday: cf. *The Liturgical Calendar*.

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173 John Paul II died at 9:37 p.m., Paul II received the Holy Viaticum. Paul II himself also announced his departure. He said: Rome time, after participating in the Vigil Mass for Divine Mercy Sunday. 174 John Paul II himself also announced his departure. He said: «Let me go home to the Lord». 175 He died surrounded by prayer: by those praying the Rosary for him and calling his name: «Giovanni Paolo!» in St. Peter's Square below his window, and by the millions of people around the world. The Vatican announced the death of John Paul II's these words:

The Holy Father died at 9:37 this evening in his private apartment. At 8 p.m. the celebration of Mass of Divine Mercy Sunday began in the Holy Father's room, presided by Archbishop Stanisław Dziwisz with the participation of Cardinal Marian Jaworski, of Archbishop Stanisław Ryko and of Msgr. Mieczysław Mokrzycki. During the course of the Mass, the

¹⁷³ The Viaticum is the Latin word meaning: provision for a journey. It is the Holy Communion given to those facing life-threatening circumstances in order that they may be imbued with God's grace on their journey into eternal life. In other words, it is the Holy Communion reserved for those close to death: cf. J. QUINN, «Viaticum», in *MCE*, 899; cf. also R. MOYNIHAN, «The last farewell: John Paul's final illness and death», *Inside the Vatican* 13 (April, 2005), 13.

¹⁷⁴ According to S. Dziwisz when John Paul II breathed last those of them around started to sing the *Te Deum*. They did not sing the *Requiem* because they were not mourning, but thanking God for the life John Paul II, especially his life of mercy: cf. S. Dziwisz, *A Life with Karol*, 258-259; «Ogei Sabato 2 Aprile, alle ore 21.37 il Signore ha chiamata a sé IL SANTO PADRE GIOVANNI PAOLO II», *OR (D)*, 2nd Aprile (2005), 1.

¹⁷⁵ S. DZIWIŚ, *A Life with Karol*, 257. The news of John Paul II's death had to be announced to the tens of thousands of people keeping vigil below the window of John Paul II. This announcement was made by Archbishop Leonardo Sandri. He announced this by telling the crowds of people that had been praying the Rosary, to pray another decade of the Rosary, at the end of which he told them: «Dear brothers and sisters, at 9:37 this evening our most beloved Holy Father John Paul II returned to the house of the Father. Let pray for him». On hearing this news, a vast throng of people, which had been keeping vigil in St. Peter's Square for two days and nights, broke into clapping for many minutes. Many in the crowd wept, and after the many minutes applause, St. Peter's Square was enclosed in silent prayer. The bell of St. Peter's Basilica tolled a steady death knell: cf. R. MOYNIHAN, «The last farewell: John Paul's final illness and death», *Inside the Vatican* 13 (April, 2005), 14.

Viaticum was administered to the Holy Father and, once again, the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. The Holy Father's final hours were marked by the uninterrupted prayer of all those who were assisting him in his pious death, and by the choral participation in prayer of the thousands of faithful who, for many hours, had been gathered in St. Peter's Square. [...].¹⁷⁶

It was as if John Paul II died on the feast day closest to his heart, Divine Mercy. According to Archbishop J. M. Miller, when John Paul II's death occurred on the Vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday, it was already Mercy Sunday for most of the world in the East.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, John Paul II died on a Saturday dedicated to Mary, the Mother of Mercy. John Paul II died as he had always lived- proclaiming the truth about mercy.

Funeral and Burial of John Paul II

The funeral of John Paul II was on 8th April 2005 in St Peter's Basilica, with the open-Mass in St. Peter's Square. Many people attended his funeral. Pilgrims continued to arrive in the city of Rome by every thinkable means of transportation before the appointed day of the funeral Mass and burial of John Paul II.¹⁷⁸ Some two million people had been able to pay last respect to the remains of John Paul II in person; thousands of others would have liked to do so, and were actually waiting in line when the time finally ran out. Outside St. Peter's, and indeed throughout Rome, what seemed like unplanned Youth Day continued to evolve. This led G. Weigel to say that majority

¹⁷⁶ R. MOYNIHAN, «The last farewell: John Paul's final illness and death», *Inside the Vatican* 13 (April, 2005), 12.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. J. M. MILLER, a quoted by G. W. KOSICKI, *John Paul II: The Great Mercy Pope*, Marian Press, Stockbridge 2006, 128.

¹⁷⁸ St. Peter's Basilica was kept virtually open all day and night. It was only closed in the early morning hours, during which essential maintenance were done in the Basilica.

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of the millions who had come to Rome for the funeral of John Paul II were young people.¹⁷⁹

These millions of people came to bid John Paul II farewell, to pray, and to receive mercy. These included Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, priests and Deacons, Catholic families, and non-Catholics, men and women, more than 200 government leaders from around the world, kings and Queens, religious leaders, young people, children, large numbers of men and women religious, novices, seminarians and aspirants.¹⁸⁰

As pilgrims (people) arrived, there was also a sacramental preparation for this funeral of John Paul II. On Thursday night, 7th April, on virtually every corner on both sides of the via della Riconciliazione, there were priests hearing confessions. There were long lines that formed outside these makeshift outdoor confessionals as pilgrims from literally all over the world prepare themselves sacramentally and spiritually for John Paul II's funeral.¹⁸¹ It was as if this gesture of preparation was an answer to John Paul II's continued call to a return to the truth about mercy.

In the participation of the millions of people, John Paul II's funeral Mass was concelebrated by the entire College of Cardinals, with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Benedict XVI), as chief celebrant. Cardinal Ratzinger's homily preached in Italian, was a masterpiece: it was biblically and theologically grounded yet accessible to all.¹⁸² It touched very much on John Paul II's pontificate of mercy. After the

¹⁷⁹ Cf. G. WEIGEL, «The Death of a Priest», 94.

¹⁸⁰ According to G. Weigel, every part of the Planet Earth was aware of John Paul II's funeral Mass on 8th April, 2005. It was estimated that two billion people watched television coverage of John Paul II's funeral. Six thousand journalists worked in print and electronic media: cf. G. WEIGEL, «The death of a Priest», 104.

¹⁸¹ Cf. G. WEIGEL, «The Tears of Rome», 94. For those of us who experienced this live, that Thursday evening sacramental and spiritual preparation was a very moving sight.

¹⁸² Cf. *Ibid.*, 99.

Mass and «final commendation», John Paul II was buried in the *Grotte Vaticane*.¹⁸³

John Paul II in his final illness, suffering and death continued to give the world one message. He continued to tell humanity the truth about mercy, and this led him to exclaim: «How much the world needs to understand and accept Divine Mercy». ¹⁸⁴ What I have tried state about the mercy pontificate of John Paul II could be summarised in Benedict XVI's *Angelus* message on the First Anniversary of John Paul II's death:

[...] The message of John Paul II's long pontificate can be summed up in the words with which he chose to inaugurate it, here in St. Peter's Square on October 22, 1978: "Open wide the doors to Christ!" John Paul II incarnated this unforgettable appeal, in the whole of himself and in the whole of his mission as Successor of Peter, especially with his extraordinary program of apostolic journeys. In visiting the countries of the entire world, meeting the crowds, the ecclesial communities, the heads of governments, religious leaders, and various social realities, he was making a great gesture to confirm his initial words. He always proclaimed Christ, presenting him to everyone, as did the Second Vatican Council, as an answer to man's expectations, expectations of freedom, justice and peace. Christ is the Redeemer of man, he was fond of repeating, the one genuine Savior of every person and the entire human race.¹⁸⁵

Some Written Testimonies of Mercy Pontificate

Perhaps it would be necessary at this point to have a look at some of these testimonies:

¹⁸³ G. Weigel, John Paul II's biographer reflecting on the pontificate and death of John Paul II, said that from the African villages and homes to the homes and apartments and offices on every continent, men and women felt that they lost someone they had loved, someone who had inspired them to live in a different way: cf. G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, «Preface», XIX.

¹⁸⁴ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Questogià ti ripetiamo: Gesù, confido in te», the last gift of John Paul II, *Angelus* (The Divine Mercy Sunday, IGP XXV/III (2005), 249.

¹⁸⁵ BENEDICT XVI, «Qui b:loved Pope John Paul II: On the First Anniversary of his death», in *John Paul II my beloved Predecessor*, 78-79.

The death of His Holiness John Paul II is mourning for Italy and the whole international community. He has communicated hope and confidence to the world. He has engaged the consciences with ethical values that give dignity to the life of individuals and all human society. [...] In this moment of deep sorrow, the thought goes to the extraordinary contribution of this Supreme Pontiff, his courageous commitment to the worldwide order supported by principles and objectives of peace, his indelible apostolate in every angle of the earth in support of a better human condition. [...] John Paul II will continue to live in our hearts, in sentiments of gratitude for the gift of his testimony and of his example.¹⁸⁶

We learned with deep sorrow and grief of the news of the death of Pope John II – a great figure, a great Pole [...]. He was one of the most eminent figures of our epoch. His words and actions had an enormous influence on the situation in the Republic of Poland, on Europe and on the whole world. Since he was a tireless upholder of peace, dialogue and reconciliation, he helped to pull down many of the barriers that divided peoples [...]. The content of his Magisterium reached everyone, brought serenity to hearts and moved consciences. For millions of people, the Pope was a true authority an authentic spiritual guide.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ CARLO AZEGLIO CIAMPI, *Presidente della Repubblica Italiana*: «La scomparsa di Sua Santità Giovanni Paolo II è un lutto per l'Italia e per l'intera comunità internazionale. Egli ha comunicato speranza e fiducia al mondo. Ha scolpito le coscienze con i valori etici che danno dignità alla vita degli individui e ad ogni società umana. [...] In questo momento di profonda commozione, il pensiero va allo straordinario contributo dato dal Sommo Pontefice, al suo strenuo impegno per un ordine mondiale sorretto da principi ed obiettivi di pace, al suo infaticabile apostolato in ogni angolo della terra in sostegno di una migliore condizione umana. Egli continuerà a vivere nei nostri cuori, nei sentimenti di gratitudine per il dono della sua testimonianza e del suo esempio»: in *AAS* 97 (2005), 623-624.

¹⁸⁷ ALEKSANDER KWASNIEWSKI, *President of the Republic of Poland*, WŁODZIMIERZ CIMOSZEWICZ, *President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of Poland*, LONGIN PASTULAK, *President of the Senate of the Republic of Poland*, MAREK BELKA, *Prime Minister of the Republic*, «Poland sends Condolences», in *L'Osservatore Romano* (E), 6th April (2005), 14.

We wholeheartedly participate in the profound sorrow for the passing of the great Pope John Paul II. This extraordinary religious personality courageous visionary and remarkable universal Leader who, loving Christ with all his existence, struggled with inspired historical initiatives perseverance and a unique strength to foster universal love for peace justice and reconciliation among people of various faiths, left his luminous stamp in modern history. Remembering with gratitude his love for Albania we humbly pray that the Lord gives him rest among his saints who radiate the light of the cross and resurrection of Christ all over the world.¹⁸⁸

Throughout the many years of his service as spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Church, he was a shining example of dedication to the episcopal ministry and to the high office to which he was called. [...] By work and example, His Holiness constantly reminded all humanity of our shared responsibility to defend the rights of the poor, the defenseless, and those who have no one to speak for them. We are most grateful for his steadfast fidelity in proclaiming the "Gospel of Life" and in safeguarding the dignity and sanctity of life in all its stages. This, perhaps, will be his greatest legacy, not only to the faithful of the Roman Catholic Church, but also for all Christians and all people of good will.¹⁸⁹

John Paul II was first of all a man of faith, a visible witness of God's presence for humanity. [...] John Paul II, fluent German speaker, was not afraid of contact and was continuously engaged for understanding among religions. [...] He was also totally committed to peace among peoples. His decisive commitment to human dignity earned him worldwide respect. To many persons in poverty and hardship he was a sign of hope. He always spoke out when he saw the values he was standing for endangered. It was

¹⁸⁸ ANASTASIOS, *Archbishop of Tirana Durres and of all Albania*, in *AAS* 97 (2005), 532.

¹⁸⁹ HERMAN, *Archbishop of Washington Metropolitan of All America and Canada Primate of the Orthodox Church in America*, in *AAS* 97 (2005), 534.

admirable as John Paul II continued to dialogue with youth even in his old age, encouraging them to dare a life in responsibility and freedom.¹⁹⁰

Pope John Paul II devoted his life caring for his flock and for humanity in general, and personified the message of the Gospel to Catholics and others around the world. His Holiness has touched the lives of countless people, who benefited from hearing his messages of peace and virtue. His Holiness was well-loved and will be remembered and missed by many here in Singapore.¹⁹¹

We have lost in our time a very remarkable personality, someone who has given all his life for Catholic community and, beyond, for entire humanity. His Holiness Pope John Paul II was one of the great figures of our time who, during more than a quarter of a century of his pontificate, was an indefatigable pilgrim of the unity of the Catholic Church, of dialogue between religions and peace between peoples. [...] ¹⁹²

We in Trinidad and Tobago identify with the grief that accompany the death of this extraordinary human being who did so much to influence the

¹⁹⁰ HORST KÖHLER, *President of the Federal Republic of Germany*: «Johannes Paul II war in erster Linie ein Mann des Glaubens, ein für die Menschen sichtbarer Zeuge der Gegenwart Gottes. [...] Johannes Paul II, der fließend deutsch sprach, kannte keine Berührungssängste und hat sich unermüdlich um die Verständigung zwischen den Religionen bemüht. Mit seinem entschiedenen Eintreten für die Würde des Menschen und Gerechtigkeit erwart er sich weltweit tiefen Respekt. Für viele Menschen in Not und Armut war er ein Hoffnungsträger. Er hat sich stets zu Wort gemeldet, wenn er die Werte, für die er stand, bedroht sah. Er war bewundernswert, wie es Johannes Paul II. verstand, auch im hohen Alter noch mit der Jugend im Gespräch zu sein, und sie zu ermutigen, ein Leben in Verantwortung und Freiheit zu wagen»: in *AAS* 97 (2005), 610-611.

¹⁹¹ S. R. NATHAN, *President of the Republic*, in *AAS* 97 (2005), 659.

¹⁹² EL HADI ABASS BONFOH, *President of the Republic of Togo*, «Nous perdons aujourd'hui un homme assez remarquable, qui a donné toute sa vie pour la Communauté catholique et, par delà, pour l'humanité entière. Sa Sainteté le Pape Jean-Paul II était l'une des grandes figures de notre temps qui, pendant plus d'un quart de siècle de pontificat, a été un pèlerin infatigable de l'unité de l'Église Catholique, du dialogue entre les religions, de la paix entre les peuples. [...]»: in *AAS* 97 (2005), 668.

course of international relations for the people of the world. His Holiness understood the reality of human suffering [...]. John Paul II has left the legacy of an unremitting quest that bore the stamp of dignity, for the consolidation of the human family across national, ethnic and religious boundaries. His focus on those things that unite were manifest in his interventions from his seat at Rome and from his personal outreach throughout the globe which he pursued with the force of humility to the end. The world is richer for his life's pilgrimage. John Paul II has left a mark on human history that will not be erased.¹⁹³

I recall that during his pontificate, His Holiness twice visited Nigeria, in 1982 and 1998 respectively. During his later visit, [...] he pleaded for the release of all political detainees being held in the country's prisons, at the time, including myself. Over the years, millions of Nigerians, regardless of their religious denominations, have developed warm affection and high regard for the Holy Father, whose Charisma and dignity as a spiritual leader, with a strong sense of justice on global issues, was a shining example and source of inspiration to all mankind.¹⁹⁴

I have spent time investigating John Paul II's pontificate with the intention of discovering the theme of mercy it contained. My findings have revealed that mercy was the central theme of John Paul II's pontificate. John Paul II himself affirmed: «my entire papacy would be tied to the truth of redemption».¹⁹⁵ With this statement, John Paul II indicated that the focus of his pontificate would be based on the truth of redemption, and this was another way of hinting on mercy. As already discovered, John Paul II continued to affirm that he would be concerned with creating awareness of the fact that God is merciful. John Paul II's pontificate had ended, he had died, but he lives on in his doctrine and in his life.

¹⁹³ GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, *President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago*, in *AAS* 97 (2005), 668-669.

¹⁹⁴ CHIEF OLUSEGUN OBASANJO, *GCFR President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces*, in *AAS* 97 (2005), 642.

¹⁹⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *CTH*, 219.

CHAPTER V

THE REVELATION OF GOD OF MERCY'S CLOSENESS TO HUMANITY

In order to facilitate understanding of John Paul II's assertion that teaching on mercy was his assigned task; I have discussed his reasons for this statement. I have also made a brief survey of the Old Testament background and terminology relating to mercy to enhance understanding of the theme of this book.

Message of Mercy as an Assigned Task to John Paul II

Cardinal Léon Josef Suenens said that it is essential to read the first encyclical of a Pope to get the bearing: «It is very important always to read the first encyclical of a Pope. That is where he gives most of what is in his heart. When you consider that the Pope's first encyclical was called "The Redeemer of Man" you have the key».¹ Suenens was right in his findings, for within six months of assuming the Papal ministry, John Paul II signed his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*.² The first encyclical of a new Pope is rightly interpreted as a kind of programmatic statement of the inspiration, which will guide his pontificate. In writing the *Redeemer of Man*, John Paul II summarised the theme of mercy, for he talked about redemption, which is an important aspect of our development of God's mercy.

¹ LÉON JOSEF CARDINAL SUÉNENS, «Who is John Paul II?», in *The Pastoral Vision of John Paul II: A Trinity College Symposium III*, J. Bland, ed., Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1982, 10.

² Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor Hominis* Encyclical Letter, in AAS 71 (1979), 257-324 (hence forth: RH).

It is not difficult to notice that John Paul's pontificate was imbued with the atmosphere of mercy. He gave a strong emphasis on mercy throughout his pontificate. His effort to teach mercy concretised itself more in his writing of an encyclical *DM*, a work on the mercy of God, in which he presented a biblical theology which shows that the God who had been revealed in the Old Testament was the One who frees peoples and cultures not simply from the slavery of Egypt but, from the bondage of sin.³

John Paul II felt that the keynote of his pontificate was to spread the message of mercy. Some excerpts from his homilies and addresses are especially powerful and showed how urgent he felt that the message of mercy is for the world now, in our present human condition. John Paul II said:

[...] A year ago I published the encyclical "*Dives in Misericordia*". This circumstance made me come to the sanctuary of the Merciful Love today. By my presence I wish to reconfirm, in a way, the message of that encyclical. I wish to read it again and deliver it again. Right from the beginning of my ministry in St. Peter's Sec in Rome, I considered this message my special task. Providence has assigned it to me in the present situation of man, the Church and the world. It could be said that precisely this situation assigned that message to me as my task before God [...].⁴

³ Cf. T. PRENDERGAST, "A Vision of Wholeness: A reflection on the Scripture in a cross-section of Papal writings, in *The Thought of Pope John Paul II*, 86.

⁴ "[...] Un anno fa ho pubblicato l'enciclica "Dives in misericordia". Questa circostanza mi ha fatto venire oggi al santuario dell'Amore misericordioso. Con questa presenza desidero riconfermare, in qualche modo, il messaggio di quella enciclica. Fin dall'inizio del mio ministero nella sede di San Pietro a Roma, ritenevo questo messaggio come mio particolare compito. La Provvidenza me l'ha assegnato nella situazione contemporanea dell'uomo, della Chiesa e del mondo. Si potrebbe anche dire che appunto questa situazione mi ha assegnato come compito quel messaggio davanti a Dio [...]. John Paul II made this affirmation in Collevalenza at the shrine of the Merciful Love, Italy during his first public visit outside Rome following a lengthy recovery from his assassination attempt. It was also at a time, when, within a few days, an international congress was to be held in the city of Collevalenza to reflect on the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in mercy) one year after its publication: cf. John Paul II, "L' "Angelus" a Collevalenza: Il Messaggio dell'Amore e il mio compito nella sede di Pietro", in *Prima Lettura Della*

John Paul II did not only affirm his assigned task of teaching mercy, but he saw dissemination of mercy as a need. He said:

[...] Paying close attention to the specific needs of our times, I devoted the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* to the truth about man, a truth that is revealed to us in its fullness and depth in Christ. A no less important need in these critical and difficult times impels me to draw attention once again in Christ to the countenance of the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2Cor 1,3).⁵

John Paul II's assertion that his doctrine of God's mercy is a worthwhile task will lead us to enter into hearing his reasons for holding that the teaching on mercy is a felt need.

Reflection on Mercy as a Necessity

John Paul II based his thoughts on the words of the Vatican II, where the Second Vatican Council affirmed that Christ in his mission, «reveals man to man»⁶, and opened up to him the perspectives of that happiness to which God has called and destined him from the beginning.⁷ Basing himself on these words, John Paul II gave reasons for the importance of reflecting on the message of mercy. Among the reasons the following were outstanding:

- a) For man's understanding of himself and his vocation

According to John Paul II, people need this message of mercy in order to grasp their true worth:

Dives in Misericordia, Santuario dell'amore misericordioso, Collevalenza 1981, 20 (henceforth: *1^a Lettura*).

⁵ *DM*, n. 1, in *IAS 72* (1980), 1178.

⁶ *GS*, n. 22.

⁷ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *JSS: A Catechesis on the Creed*, vol. 2, Pauline Books and Media, Boston 1996, 348.

We read in the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*: "Christ the new Adam [...] fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his lofty calling", and does it "in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love".⁸

These words, John Paul II said, are clear testimony to the fact that the human person cannot be manifested to his full self without paying attention to God:

[...] man cannot be manifested in the full dignity of his nature without reference not only on the level of concepts but also in an integrally existential way to God. Man and man's lofty calling are revealed in Christ through the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love.¹⁰

He maintained that for the human person to arrive at the full knowledge of himself, and of the meaning of life, it is necessary to know God, especially as he has revealed himself in Jesus.¹¹ In fact, Christ did not only reveal man to himself, bringing him to knowledge of his dignity, but at the same time he revealed to man the merciful love of God. Therefore, in the light of the mystery of Christ, dignity of man and mercy of God appear as the hinges that carry authentic humanism.¹²

⁸ Cf. GS, n. 22.

⁹ According to P. Johnson, by «existential», John Paul II meant the power of the notion of God to illuminate human existence. According to John Paul II, anthropology and theology are complementary: «The more the Church's mission is centered upon man-the more it is, so to speak, anthropocentric – the more it must be confirmed and actualized theocentrically, that is to say, be directed in Jesus Christ to the Father»; DM, n. 1, in AAS 72(1980), 1179. John Paul II believed that any attempt to separate anthropocentrism from theocentrism, will be violating the fundamental teaching of the Vatican Council: cf. P. JOHNSON *Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Restoration*, 81; cf. also J.M. MILLER, «Editors Introduction», 97-98.

¹⁰ DM, n. 1, in AAS 72 (1980), 1178.

¹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹² Cf. B. SORGE, «Aprile l'uomo a Dio e la Giustizia all'Amore: il messaggio dell' enciclica "Dives in misericordia"» *Civiltà Cattolica* 131 (1980), 530-531; cf. also J. M. LUSTIGER, *Abbiate il coraggio di Crederci!* Edizioni Paoline, Milano 1987, 159-160.

b) To clarify the pre-occupation of present-day humanity

The reflection on mercy is necessary, John Paul II insisted, because of the varied experiences of the modern man. He said:

[...] it is now fitting to reflect on this mystery. It is called for by the varied experiences of the Church and of contemporary man. It is also demanded by the pleas of many human hearts, their sufferings and hopes, their anxieties and expectations.¹³

John Paul II felt that the situation of uneasiness in the modern world, despite the gigantic progress, needed to be examined in the light of the truth received from God.¹⁴ It seemed that John Paul II was saying that the reflection on the message of mercy is called for in order to provide an answer to the contemporary man overwhelmed by his spiritual miseries caused by holding on to many false values. John Paul II's teaching on mercy is meant to show, to modern man, the possibility of a life free from those false values.¹⁵ By reflecting on mercy, John Paul II meant to give confidence to many, who are under threats and afflicted by any kind of physical and moral evil, telling them that the solution is a life based on Mercy.¹⁶

c) To bring the mystery of mercy closer to man

John Paul II asserted that meditation on mercy is necessary, in order that people may learn to turn to God. According to John Paul II, one of the reasons for reflecting on mercy was because he wanted to bring the mystery closer to everyone. He stated that the truth revealed in Christ about the Father of mercies (2Cor 1,3) would enable people to see God as particularly close to humanity, «especially when man is suffering,

¹³ DM, n. 1, in AAS 72 (1980), 1178.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 2, in AAS 72 (1980), 1181.

¹⁵ Cf. DM, n. 2, in AAS 72 (1980), 1181. cf. also A. UGENTIL, «Dalla "Redemptor Hominis" alla "Dives in Misericordia"», in AA.VV., *Il Papa e la Misericordia di Dio: Testi della Dives in Misericordia. Commento originali di A. Girlanda, J. Guliot, S. De Fiores, D. Grasso, A. Ugenti, ed.*, La Parola, Roma 1981, 13.

¹⁶ Cf. DM, n. 1, in AAS 72 (1980), 1178; cf. also A. UGENTIL, 13-14.

when he is under threat at the very heart of his existence and dignity». ¹⁷ John Paul II also felt that reflection on mercy was important, because he wanted to touch on the fundamental element of the Scripture, consequently, an element important for Christian life. ¹⁸ This echoes the affirmation of B. Secondin, when he says that since the Second Vatican Council, the spiritual life has returned to be nourished in a solid and systematic manner by the Sacred Scripture. ¹⁹

An Overview of the Idea of Mercy in the Old Testament

I will give a brief overview of mercy in the Old Testament. Before entering deep into the investigation of mercy in the teachings of John Paul II, it is important, as John Paul II himself had advised, to touch on its biblical-Old Testament background. According to John Paul II, the concept of mercy in the Old Testament has a long and rich history. It is therefore, necessary to refer back to it in order that the mercy revealed by Christ may shine out clearly. ²⁰ He wrote:

[...] one encounters a problem of major importance with reference to the meaning of terms and the contents of concepts, especially the content of the concept of mercy. A grasp of the content of these concepts is the key to understanding the very reality of mercy. ²¹

Following the advice of John Paul II, it is necessary to have a look at the Old Testament background of mercy believing that such a quick study will be helpful to the development of our research.

Referring to the Scriptures, John Paul II said that the Old Testament proclaims the mercy of God by the use of terminology relating to

¹⁷ DM, 2, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1181-1182.

¹⁸ Cf. M. GILBERT, «*Dives in Misericordia di s.s. Giovanni Paolo II e la Bibbia*», *Prima Lettura della Dives in Misericordia*, 109-110.

¹⁹ Cf. B. SECONDIN, «*Actio Divina: natura e prassi: La parola di Dio fonte privilegiata di esperienza spirituale*», in *Esperienza e Spiritualità: Miscellanea in onore del R. P. Charles André Bernard*, S. J., H. Alphonso, ed., Litol Pomet, Roma 1995, 63.

²⁰ Cf. DM, n. 4, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1186.

²¹ DM, n. 3, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1185.

mercy. These terms ²² are differentiated by their particular content. But they all converge from different directions on one single fundamental content, to express the richness of mercy, and at the same time to bring it closer to man under different aspects.

By a brief exegetical retrieval of the word mercy, that is, by going back briefly to its biblical roots, we shall obtain a wider and deeper meaning of it, and how it functions. The vocabulary in the Scriptures, which expresses what is referred as mercy is so rich and varied that some of those words extend to meanings far deeper than that which is ordinarily taken to define mercy. ²³ According to Scripture scholars, there is no one word in the original languages that can encompass the full meaning of mercy. Keeping this in mind, I will consider the two most frequently used words in the Old Testament which are translated as mercy: *hesed* and *rahmanin*. ²⁴

a) *Hesed*

Hesed does not have simply one adequate translation, but it most often means loving kindness. ²⁵ It indicates a profound attitude of goodness, faithfulness. ²⁶ P. Lapide ²⁷ describes *hesed* as a «masculine» attribute, whose deepest meaning lies in the love that gives without

²² In the footnotes, n. 52, John Paul II described extensively some of these expressions: cf. DM, footnotes, n. 52, *AAS* 72 (1980), 1189-1191. We shall implore some of these terms in the texts of our research.

²³ Cf. S. BURNS, «*Academic Ministry*», *Review for Religions* 40 (1981), 722.

²⁴ Cf. E. TESTA, «*La Misericordia nell'Antico Testamento*», in *Dive in Misericordia: Commento all'Enciclica di Giovanni Paolo II, I. Saraiva*, Martinus, ed., Padua, Brescia 1981, 21; cf. also S. BURNS, «*Academic Ministry*», *Review for Religions* 40 (1981), 722.

²⁵ Cf. S. BURNS, 723.

²⁶ Cf. DM, footnotes, n. 52, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1189-1191.

²⁷ P. Lapide (Jewish) immigrated to Israel in 1940, and was involved in both military and diplomatic service. Fluent in eleven languages, he holds a B.A. and an M.A. from Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and a Ph. D. from Cologne University (1972) in Judaic studies. He directed the Government Press Office in Jerusalem for several years. A prolific writer, his books include *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine* (dialogue with Jürgen Moltmann, Fortress, 1981); (Information taken from the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 18 (1981), 140.

reward, in patience that forgives, and in loyalty that is stronger than defection and betrayal.²⁸ The word most frequently used with *hesed* is *emet* (truth, fidelity), signifying steadfast love. Both words are used to describe God's faithfulness in the covenant he has made with the chosen people at Sinai.²⁹

b) *Rahamin*

The second Hebrew word, which in the terminology of the Old Testament serves to define mercy, is *rahamin*, which can be best translated as compassion. Originally, *rahamin*, is derived from the root *rehem*, which means primarily «the maternal womb», confers the characteristics of maternal love on the mercy of God.³⁰ It has to do with the pity of a mother for her helpless child. It means «to stoop down to the needy», to show compassion in view of the sufferer's helplessness.³¹ *Rehem* (mother's womb) and another word used in connection with mercy, *hen* (meaning graciousness) were feminine traits attributed to God's mercy.³²

Rahamin generated a whole range of feelings, including goodness and tenderness, patience and understanding, that is, readiness to

²⁸ Cf. P. LAPIDE, «*Dives in Misericordia*: An Encyclical for Christians and Jews», *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 18 (1981), 141. P. Lapide comments further on the *Dives in Misericordia* of John Paul II: «The Pope, as an excellent Hebraist, goes yet a step further. In the Cantic of Zachary, the Benedictus from the Gospel of Luke (1: 72), he searches behind the Greek text to point to the Hebrew model which reveals its full meaning. The intent listener finds here an indication that stepping back spiritually into Jesus' Jewish milieu is necessary to do all justice to his Good News. Especially decisive, is the fundamental truth that rings out from this message from Rome: Christians and Jews take different paths in faith to the one God, but the practical conclusions which both are called upon to draw from their faith remain one and the same—to give love precedence and to open our hearts to compassion so that we may find access to that boundless divine love without which our lives would be meaningless». P. LAPIDE, «*Dives in Misericordia*: An Encyclical for Christians and Jews», 141.

²⁹ Cf. E. TESTA, 13, 21.

³⁰ Cf. E. TESTA, 22.

³¹ Cf. S. BURNS, 723; cf. also P. LAPIDE, 141.

³² Cf. S. BURNS, 724.

forgive. The Old Testament attributed to God these characteristics, when it uses the term *rahamin* in speaking of God: «can a woman forget her baby, feel no pity for the child she has borne? Even if these were to forget, I shall not forget you» (Is 49, 15).

According to John Paul II, we have inherited from the Old Testament in a special synthesis not only the wealth of expressions used by those books in order to define God's mercy, but also a specific and anthropomorphic «psychology» of God³³—the image of his anxious love, which in contact with evil, and in particular with the sin of the individual and of the people is manifested as mercy. This image is made up not only of the general content of the verb *hannan* (meaning: the manifestation of grace, a constant predisposition to be generous, benevolent and merciful), but also of the content of *hesed* and *rahamin*.³⁴

In addition to these basic semantic terms mentioned, the Old Testament idea of mercy is also made up of what is included in the verb *hannal* which literally means «to spare» (a defeated enemy) but also means «to show mercy and compassion», and in consequence forgiveness and remission of guilt.³⁵

Mercy in the Experience of Jewish People

The idea of mercy in the Old Testament has a long history; as John Paul II affirmed. In *DM*, John Paul II described God's mercy already at work in the history of the people of Israel. Both as individuals and as a community the Jewish people had a special experience of this mercy of God.³⁶ As a people, they knew this mercy through the saving deeds and the prophetic words. At the heart of the Old Testament there is a great story of liberation, a story of mercy: The story of how God intervened to free the people of Israel from slavery. In the story of the exodus the Jews still celebrate this momentous event of freedom from oppression

³³ Cf. *DM*, footnotes: n. 52, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1190-1191.

³⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁶ Cf. *DM*, n. 4 in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1186.

and the beginning of their journey to the Promised Land.³⁷ The remembrance and celebration of this merciful act of God, led them to recite personally a creedal formula of salvation history (the little credo):

My father was a wandering Aramean, who went down to Egypt with a small group of men, and stayed there, until he there became a great, powerful and numerous nation. The Egyptians ill-treated us; they oppressed us and inflicted harsh slavery on us. But we called on the Yahweh, the God of our ancestors. Yahweh heard our voice and saw our misery, our toil and our oppression; and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with mighty hand and outstretched arm, with great terror, and with signs and wonders. He brought us here and has given this country, a country flowing with milk and honey. Hence, I now bring the first fruits of the soil that you, Yahweh, have given me (Dt 26, 6-10).

John Paul II also recalled that at Sinai, Israel, the delivered people, entered into a covenant with God and there was a mutual relationship between them and their God. The prophets used various images to describe this relationship. In it, Israel became the flock, and God the shepherd. Israel is the vine, and Yahweh the vinedresser, Israel is the son, and Yahweh the father (cf. Ezk 34, 11-13; Jr 23, 1-3; Is 49, 9-10; 5, 1-7 Is 63, 16; Hlo 11, 1).³⁸

Israel's Refuge in Mercy³⁹

The Old Testament encouraged people suffering from misfortune, especially those weighed down by sin [as also the whole of Israel], to appeal for mercy. This enabled them to count on this mercy; it reminds them of God's mercy in times of failure and loss of trust.⁴⁰ John Paul II

³⁷ Cf. D. MCBRIDE, *Seasons of the Word: Reflections on the Sunday readings*, Redemption Publications, Hampshire 1991, 74.

³⁸ Cf. J. GILBERT-P. GRELOT, «Covenant», in *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, St. Paul Books & Media, Boston 1962, 95 (henceforth: *DBTh*).

³⁹ I owe this expression to E. Testa in his article where he described Israel's breaking of the alliance, and their hope of being pardoned: cf. E. TESTA «La misericordia nell'Antico Testamento», 38.

⁴⁰ Cf. DM, n. 4, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1191.

stated that Israel was, in fact, the people of the covenant with God; but he was also aware that it broke that covenant several times (Is 32, 1-6; Jr 22, 9).⁴¹ However, despite Israel's transgressions, God remained faithful to the covenant. This means that the chosen people took refuge in the divine mercy. For whenever Israel became aware of its infidelity through the prophets and others who awakened this awareness, it appealed to God's mercy. The books of the Old Testament bear witness to this. Among the events and texts of greater importance, John Paul recalled the following:

The beginning of the history of the Judges, (cf. Jg 3, 7-9)⁴², the prayer of Solomon at the inauguration of the temple, (cf. 1 K 8, 22-53), a part of the intervention of the prophet Micah (cf. Mi 7, 18-20), the consoling assurances given by the prophet Isaiah (cf. Is 1, 18; 51, 4-16), the cry of the Jews in exile (cf. Ba 2, 11-3, 8), and the renewal of the covenant after the return from the exile (cf. Ne 9).⁴³

John Paul II explained that, the prophets, in their preaching linked mercy with the incisive image of love on God's part. God loved Israel with the love of a special choosing, much like the love of a spouse (Hlo 2, 21-25; Is 54, 6-8), and because of this he pardoned its sins and even its infidelities and betrayals. John Paul II affirmed that in the preaching of the prophets, «mercy signifies a special power of love, which prevails over the sin and infidelity of the chosen people».⁴⁴

Mercy as an Interior Personal Experience

In Israel, mercy appeared also as a correlative to the interior experience of individuals languishing in a state of guilt. John Paul II

⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴² This was when Israel forgot Yahweh their God and served Baals and Asherahs, and were enslaved to Cushan-Rishathaim for eight years. Within the experience, the Israelites cried to their God and he raised for them a deliverer who rescued them (cf. Jg 3, 7-9).

⁴³ DM, n. 4, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1186.

⁴⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1187.

recalled that both physical and moral evil, namely sin cause the sons and daughters of Israel to turn to God, confessing their rebellion, specifying the particular sins⁴⁵ (cf. Ezr 9,10; Ne 1,7; 9,16-17; Ba 1,17), and besought his mercy.⁴⁶ He gave example of king David who turned to the Lord after the prophet Nathan had pointed an accusing finger at him; declaring him responsible for a great crime before God: «You are the man» (2 S 12,7). The king experienced a kind of revelation, and was overcome with profound emotion which he expressed in the words of the *Miserere*:

Have mercy on me, O God, in your kindness,
In your compassion blot out my offence,
O wash me more and more from my guilt,
and cleanse me from my sin.⁴⁷

According to John Paul II, at the root of Israel's many-sided conviction, was their basic experience at the Exodus: the Lord saw the misery of his people, heard their cry, and decided to deliver them (Is 3, 7). In this act of salvation by God, the prophet Isaiah perceived God's love and compassion (Is 63,9). This was the grounds upon which Israel and its members based their certainty of God's mercy, which can be invoked whenever tragedy strikes.⁴⁸

In addition, there was also the fact that sin constitutes man's misery. According to John Paul II, the people of the Old covenant experienced this misery from the time of the Exodus, when they set up the golden calf. God himself triumphed over this act of the breaking of the covenant when he solemnly declared to Moses that he was a God of «tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, and rich in faithful love» (Is 34,6). It is in this central revelation that the chosen people, would find, every time that they sinned, the strength and the motive for

returning to the Lord to remind him of what he had exactly revealed about himself (Nb 14, 18, 2 Ch 30, 9; Ne 9, 17; Ps 86(85); Ws 15,1; Si 2,11; Jl 2,13) and to besought his forgiveness. Thus, in deeds and in words, God revealed his mercy from the very beginnings to the people his has chosen for himself. This people continually entrusted itself to the God of mercies both when stricken with misfortune and when it became aware of its sin.⁴⁹

Reciprocal Dimension of Mercy (*hesed*)

John Paul II made the following strong affirmation about the psychology of mercy:

[...] mercy does not pertain only to the notion of God, but it is something that characterizes the life of the whole people of Israel and each of its sons and daughters: mercy is the content of intimacy with their Lord, the content of their dialogue with Him.⁵⁰

The attitude of the people of Israel with regard to mercy required reciprocity. It is often stated expressly that the one who receives an act of mercy (*hesed*) has to respond with a similar act of *hesed*, or at least that the one who demonstrated *hesed* is justified in expecting an equivalent act in return.⁵¹

Since covenant by definition expressed a loving relationship that required and promised fidelity and reliability, its maintenance involved the practice of mercy (*hesed*). It involves mutuality.⁵² Mercy is a covenant love. Therefore, as a consequence of his covenant with his chosen people, Yahweh-God expects mercy (*hesed*) in Israel: «You

⁴⁵ Cf. E. TESTA, 39-40.

⁴⁶ Cf. DM, n. 4, in *AAS* (1980), 1187.

⁴⁷ *Miserere mei Deus, secundum misericordiam tuam; et secundum multitudinem*

misericordiarum tuarum dele iniquitatem meam (Psalm 50/51,1-2); cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Memory & Identity*, 57; DM, n. 4, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1187.

⁴⁸ Cf. DM, n. 4, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1187.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1188; cf. also P. LAPIDÉ, 141.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1189.

⁵¹ Abimelech, for example, having received Abraham as a guest, asks him to show the same *hesed* to his host and the land where he has sojourned (Gn 21,23). Rahab likewise asks the Israelite spies to show the same *hesed* to the house of her father as they received from her (Jos 2, 12, 14). David asks Jonathan for an act of *hesed*, so Jonathan also asks *hesed* of David (1 Sam 20,8, 14).

⁵² Cf. II-J. ZOBEI, «*hesed*», 49.

have already been told what Yahweh wants of you. Only this, to do what is right, to love mercy (Mi 6, 8)). Hosea, the prophet of God's personal relationship with Israel, speaks for Yahweh: «[...] mercy is what pleases me not sacrifice (Hos 6,6)». In Micah's expression, to love mercy (*hesed*), means, «do love loyally». Only in such love may one «walk humbly with God» (cf. Mi 6, 8).⁵³

Jesus Reveals God as Mercy

Dealing theologically with the revelation of divine mercy, John Paul II started from the principle that God by his nature is inaccessible and incomprehensible, but speaks to man by means of the whole universe:

Although God "dwells in unapproachable light," (1m 6,16) He speaks to man by means of the whole of the universe: ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made (Rm 1,20). This indirect and imperfect knowledge, achieved by the intellect seeking God by means of creatures through the visible world, falls short of the vision of the Father.⁵⁴

It is true that human person with his intelligence can enter into certain knowledge of God (Rm 1, 20). This knowledge, however, is imperfect because it fails to give the complete picture of the Father. The recognition of God in most profound mystery of his being, John Paul II re-affirmed, came only through the mediation of Christ: «No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known» (Jn 1, 18).⁵⁵ According to John Paul II's affirmation, the fullness of God's revelation in his relationship of love for man shone forth in the person of Jesus Christ. John Paul II went further to explain that it was precisely in Christ that God who is

rich in mercy became visible.⁵⁶ In this way, in Christ and through Christ, God became especially visible in his mercy: «It is "God, who is rich in mercy" (1p 2,4) whom Jesus Christ has revealed to us as Father: it is his very Son who, in himself, has manifested him and made him known to us (cf. Jn 1, 18; Heb 1, 1)».⁵⁷ All this meant that, in Christ is emphasised that attribute of the divinity, which the Old Testament uses various concepts and terms to define as mercy. This will be explained and personified in Christ. In other words, the whole of the Old Testament tradition about God's mercy receives from Christ its «definitive meaning».⁵⁸

Jesus Declares His Messianic Programme of Mercy

John Paul II recalled and quoted from the Gospel of Luke, where Luke portrayed Jesus Christ at the beginning of his ministry, fulfilling the ancient prophecy of Isaiah 61, 1-2. Jesus, before his own townspeople in Nazareth, preached and made his first mercy declaration, referring and applying to himself the text of the second book of the prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives,

⁵⁶ Cf. *Ibid.* John Paul II notes that the revelation is still somewhat obscure, until the coming of Christ. In the New Testament the fundamental mission of Christ, therefore, is to give a further revelation of the Father, whose love and mercy he makes present to humanity. John Paul II maintains that this great, and important development in divine revelation is as a result of the Incarnation: «In the Incarnation of the Son of God we see forged the enduring and definitive synthesis which the human mind of itself could not even have imagined: the Eternal enters time, the Whole lies hidden in the part, God takes on a human face»: JOHN PAUL II, *Febr.*, n. 12. Sent into the world by God, Jesus was conscious of his own divinity and his saving mission: cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Jesús*, 169-17, 339. According to John Paul II, Jesus was consciously of his unique knowledge of the Father: «Jesus Christ, who "knows the Father" so profoundly, came to manifest his name to the men whom the Father had given him» *Ibid.*, 171.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³ Cf. S. BURNS, 723

⁵⁴ *DM*, n. 2, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1179-1180.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1180.

sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year from the Lord (Lk 4, 18-19; cf. Is 61, 1-2).⁵⁹

John Paul II called to mind the affirmation of the experience of the mercy of God expressed by St. John in his first letter: «We have recognised for ourselves, and put our faith in, the love God has for us. God is love, [...]» (1 Jn 4, 16). He also referred to St. Paul's recognition of the mercy of God in Christ: «God is rich in his faithful love, through the great love with which he loved us. [...]» (1ip 2, 4). These two biblical references, according to John Paul II, are proofs that this truth about mercy is not just the subject of a teaching; rather, it is a reality made present by Christ to humanity.⁶¹

Jesus proved that making God present, as mercy was the fundamental touchstone of his mission as Messiah. He confirmed this by those programmatic words he uttered in the Synagogue at Nazareth. John Paul II, still using Luke's Gospel, stated that this mercy programme of Jesus was his messianic declaration. Christ himself when commenting on the passage he read in the Synagogue announced that he was the anointed one (cf. Lc 4, 21). In this scene in the Synagogue at Nazareth (Lc 4, 16-30), Jesus gave the first concrete instance of his mercy activity. He made mercy the principal theme of his preaching, and as his custom, he first taught in parables, since parables express better the essence of things.⁶² John Paul II pointed out

⁵⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 3, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1182-1183.

⁶⁰ This is one of St. Paul's clear affirmations about God's mercy, which made K. Romanik in his reflections on mercy, to say that the idea of God's mercy came to us above all in the writings of Paul under different terms. For further information on Romanik's reflections, cf. K. ROMANIK, «La salvezza dell'uomo come opera dell'amore del Padre e del Figlio», in *Il Mistero del Padre*, Atti del II° Convegno Internazionale sulla Dives in Misericordia, Edizioni L'Amore Misericordioso, Collevalenza 1982, 55-83.

⁶¹ Cf. *DM*, n. 3, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1184.

⁶² *Ibid.* The preaching of Jesus, which in the synoptics has the principal theme of the kingdom of God, insisted on presenting the love and mercy of God. This occurred above all in the parables: cf. S. VIRGILIN, «La rivelazione dell'amore misericordioso in Gesù Cristo», in *Dives in Misericordia*, 56. John Paul II called to mind the fact that it was Jesus' custom to teach in parables since parables express better the essence of things, and there are many passages in the teaching of Christ that manifest mercy.

that the solemn declaration of Jesus' programme of mercy was directed to the needy and the poor, those without means of subsistence, people deprived of their freedom, the blind, those living with broken hearts, or suffering from injustice, and sinners. According to John Paul II: «It was especially for these last, sinners, that the Messiah becomes a particularly clear sign of God, who is love, a sign of the Father».⁶³

In the first of his sermons at Nazareth, Jesus presented himself as the one who has clear and, personal preferences for certain groups of people, which in the old economy was the *anawim Yahweh* (the poor⁶⁴ of *Yahweh*)⁶⁵, groups of people who can place their hope in *Yahweh*, because in him the acceptable time of favour has come for all.⁶⁶ In what follows our attention will be directed to Jesus to see how he has put his programme of mercy into practice.

Luke dedicated a whole chapter of his Gospel to a trilogy of parables concerning the mercy of God: The parable of the good shepherd that went in search of the lost sheep (Lc 15, 3-7; Mt 18, 12-14). This parable highlights the joy of God who pardons and recreates the heart of man. The parable of the woman who was preoccupied of the lost drachma (Lc 15, 8-10) emphasises the paternal providence of God who cares for each particular sinner. In the parable of the merciful father - the parable of the prodigal son, (Lc 15, 11-32) Jesus reveals the infinite richness of divine mercy. The parable of the good Samaritan (Lc 10, 30-37) highlights the love God has for the wretched and the needy: cf. S. VIRGILIN, 56; *DM*, n. 3, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1184. By contrast, John Paul II also cited the parable of the merciless servant (Mt 18, 23-35).

⁶³ *DM*, n. 3, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1183.

⁶⁴ D. McBride commenting on this, held that the poor meant here is not Jesus' prescriptions for people for getting poor or hunger or afflicted, etc. The poor is referring to those already committing themselves to Christ. The reference to the poor gives instances of what happens when the mercy of God arrives in the broken world. It speaks of various experiences that people go through as a result of their commitment with God's way of doing things. It also speaks of morally poor, sinners in need of God and his forgiveness. It speaks of the promise that God can handle the poverty, injustice, affliction, sin etc., and lift those involved out of them: cf. D. MCBRIDE, *The Gospel of Luke: A Reflective Commentary*, Dominican Publications, Dublin 1991, 87-88.

⁶⁵ Cf. G. RAVVASI, «Lince bibliche dell'esperienza spirituale», in *Corso di spiritualità. Esperienze Sistematiche - Protezioni*, B. Secondini - T. Goffi, ed., Queriniana, Brescia 1989, 68-70.

⁶⁶ Cf. D. MCBRIDE, *The Gospel of Luke: A Reflective Commentary*, 64, 86.

Jesus Practiced Mercy and Became its Model

As a concept, mercy seems uncomfortably abstract; but as an experience, it is remarkably concrete. Once mercy is made concrete in the words and deeds of an individual, it loses its ambiguity and abstraction.⁶⁷ This meant that Jesus did not only preach the mercy of God, he also practiced it in his own life. The earthly existence of Jesus was a continued revelation of God's goodness and mercy. Jesus revealed mercy which addresses itself to man and embraces everything that makes up his humanity. This love makes itself particularly noticed in contact with the historical human condition, which in various ways manifests man's limitation and frailty, both physical and moral.⁶⁸

As a model of merciful life for others, Christ, by his way of life and his actions, makes mercy present. Jesus' life of mercy is particularly evident in his reaching out to those who are suffering from pain, injustice or poverty; it included the whole of humanity afflicted by physical and moral evil.⁶⁹

According to John Paul II, Jesus' merciful life shined forth in his special attention to sinners. «It is especially for sinners that the Messiah becomes a particularly clear sign of God who is love, a sign of the Father». ⁷⁰ His mercy addressed itself above all to those who had lost their way in life, those who persisted in sin, and living a life that depicted withdrawal from God. To these sinners, Jesus was close with his mercy.

Jesus was faithful to his work of mercy. John Paul II cited the scene of Jesus and the messengers of John the Baptist, which confirmed this. John Paul II cited the scene of the messengers of John the Baptist, when the messengers sent by John the Baptist to Jesus to enquire of Jesus if he was the one to come or whether he has to wait longer for the fulfillment of the promise. Jesus responded by referring to his merciful

works: «The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. [...]» (Lc 7, 22-23).⁷¹

This is why J. Upton said that Jesus is the most eloquent witness in the New Testament. According to her, Jesus is never vague in his proclamation of God's mercy; he revealed God's mercy in his everyday relations with people from all strata of society. She concluded with the affirmation that Jesus is an active agent of God's mercy.⁷² Many stories in the New Testament speak volumes of the compassion of Jesus. Jesus is not portrayed as an unmoved teacher. When people are afflicted, he is moved in a way where he is able to transform the suffering into joy. The issue, which is at the heart of Jesus' merciful actions, is his compassion. The sight of affliction before him moves Jesus, and that is enough, in itself, for him to act.⁷³

Throughout the ministry of Jesus, there were many whose lives were given new significance after their encounter with him. According to McBride, the language used to describe the critical condition of the people who came to Jesus or whom Jesus sought speaks of disfiguration, and of brokenness.⁷⁴ Conversely the language appropriate for what happens to people in their encounter with Jesus is that of transfiguration and new life: the blind see, the afflicted are healed, the dead come to life, the lost are sought and saved, the poor hear good news, the outcasts experience acceptance, the sinners are touched by forgiveness, the possessed regain mastery of their lives.⁷⁵

Jesus in his practice of mercy came to the aid of the sick, to the hungry, to the afflicted, to the fragile and weak men and women both from a physical and moral point of view. Above all he had compassion and understanding for the repentant sinners - to them he opened the treasures of the charity of God.⁷⁶ Jesus' practice of mercy brings

⁶⁷ I owe this thought and expression to R. F. Mornear: cf. R. F. MORNÉAU,

«Jesus in Mercordia: Themes and Theology», Review for Religious 40 (1981), 671.

⁶⁸ DM, n. 3, in AAS (1980), 1183.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, AAS 72 (1980), 1185 cf. also J. M. MILLER, «Editors Introduction»,

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⁷⁰ DM, n. 3, in AAS 72 (1980), 1183.

⁷¹ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁷² Cf. J. UPTON, «Mercy», in NDCCSp, 654.

⁷³ Cf. D. MCBRIDE, *The Gospel of Luke*, 96.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, *Emmanuel: The gracious Visit of God according to Luke*, Dominican Publications, Dublin 1991, 91.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 91.

⁷⁶ Cf. S. VIRGILIN, 56-57.

healing, saves lives, brings teaching, brings forgiveness, delivers from death.⁷⁷ His merciful action, delivering from death, begins; it brings opportunity for people to begin again. People begin; his presence changed. In that change they see themselves differently; they see Jesus differently, and they see their future differently. According to John Paul II, mercy, in the biblical sense, is the sphere in which love manifests itself.⁷⁸ Jesus makes God's love present most dramatically in the event of the cross. We shall come to this point later. Meanwhile we will focus our attention on what was expected from those to whom he had revealed the God of mercy: those who have received all his merciful love and actions.

Practice of Mercy as a Demand of Jesus to People

"We must note that Christ, in revealing the love-mercy of God, the same time demanded from people that they also should be guided by their lives by love and mercy."⁷⁹ John Paul II used this statement to remind people of what Christ expected and still expects from their response to his revelation and incarnation of love-mercy in his life among people. Jesus demanded from his disciples the imitation of him in the practice of mercy. He demanded that those who are beneficiaries of divine mercy must make mercy part of their lives. Emphasizing this demand, John Paul II said:

This requirement forms part of the very essence of the message, mercy, and constitutes the heart of the Gospel ethos. The Teacher expresses it both through the medium of the commandment which He describes as the greatest, (Mt 22, 38) and also in form of blessing, when in the Sermon on the Mount He proclaims: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5, 7).⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Cf. D. MCHIRIME, *Emmanuel*, 49.

⁷⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 91.

⁷⁹ Cf. DM, n. 3, in AAS 72 (1980), 1184.

⁸⁰ DM, n. 3, in AAS 72 (1980), 1185.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, in AAS 72 (1980), 1185. S. Virgulin reflecting on this theme said that he proposed a synthetic formula of this teaching of Jesus with the exhortation to compassion: just as your Father is compassionate" (1.c. 6, 36). Matthew reminds

John Paul II in the above quotation brought out the fact that mercy revealed and practiced by Christ preserved a particular divine-human dimension. This means that Christ by becoming the incarnation of love that exemplifies itself with particular force with regard to human distress makes present and fully reveals God, the rich in mercy. At the same time, Jesus proclaimed the call to mercy, by becoming a model of merciful love for others by his actions.⁸²

John Paul II recognised that Jesus expressed this requirement through the means of the commandment and in form of a blessing. Jesus presented the greatest commandment thus: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment" (Mt 22, 37-38). Jesus also proclaimed blessedness to those who are merciful, "Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them" (Mt 5, 7).⁸³ With these two biblical references John Paul II understood that Christ's revelation and incarnation of mercy revolve around two strong points: (1) The love of God, and the recognition of him as rich in mercy; and, (2) The Peoples' imitation of Christ in the practice of mercy. Jesus demanded from his disciples the imitation of him in the practice of love and mercy towards other people, and it is the same demand that he is making from the people of modern times. By his words and actions Christ, the incarnate Son, personified mercy and embodied it in the situations of everyday life, and becomes for people, a model of mercy for others.⁸⁴

In the traditional understanding of mercy, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, basing itself on biblical teaching and on the continual practice of the Church, teaches:

the teaching with the phrase: "You must therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5, 48). Christian perfection is nothing but a manner of loving in the style of and with the force of the Father. That style and force is that which Jesus revealed and communicated to his disciples; cf. S. VIRGILIAN, 57.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Cf. DM, n. 3, in AAS 72 (1980), 1185.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead.⁸⁵

In Catholic theology, human mercy is distinctly defined in relation to the virtue of charity. According to the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, charity is a virtue that tends to obtain good to the neighbor and mercy is a virtue, which seeks to eliminate the evil that afflicts him. Charity, therefore, is distinguished from mercy because of the scope to which it tends. Charity tends towards the multiplication of good. Mercy, instead, considers the relieving of distress or defects. Therefore, for Aquinas, mercy toward one's neighbor is the greatest of all the moral virtues that relate to neighbor; because it eliminates his deficiencies, and becoming itself something that elevates the person for the betterment of that person.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ CCC, n. 2447.

⁸⁶ «Dicendum quod sicut amicitia seu caritas respicit in beneficio collato communem rationem boni, ita iustitia respicit ibi rationem debiti. Misericordia vero respicit ibi rationem relevantis miseriam vel defectum». St. Thomas AQUINAS *Summa Theologiae*, Edizioni San Paolo, Torino 1988, II-II, q. 31, a. 1 (beneficentia).⁸⁷

⁸⁷ «Dicendum quod aliqua virtus potest esse maxima virtus potest esse maxima dupliciter: uno modo, secundum se; alio modo, per comparationem ad habentem. Secundum se quidem misericordia maxima est. Pertinet enim ad misericordiam quod alii ciliandi, et, quod plus est, quod defectus aliorum sublevari; et hoc est maxime superioris. Unde et miseri ponitur proprium Deo: et in hoc maxime dicitur eius omnipotentia manifestari. Sed quoad habentem, misericordia non est maxima, nisi ille qui habet sit maximus, qui nullum supra se habeat, sed omnes sub se. Et cum qui supra se aliquem habet minus est et melius coniungi superiori quam supplet defectum inferioris. Et ideo quantum ad hominem, qui habet Deum superiorem, caritas, per quam Deo unitur, est potior quam misericordia, per quam deficiens proximorum supplet. Sed inter omnes virtutes quae ad proximum pertinent potissima est misericordia, sicut etiam est potioris actus: nam supplet defectum alienius inquantum huiusmodi, est superioris et melioris». *Ibid.*, II-II, q. 30, a. 4.

Augustine discussing the value of virtue for Christians says the following about mercy:

[...] to feel sorry for the afflicted with a view to his release from suffering, to be afraid for one in danger so as to prevent his death - those are emotions which, as far as I can see, no sane judgement could reprove. Of all your virtues, none was more admirable, none more attractive, than your mercy. What then is mercy but a kind of fellow feeling in our hearts for another's misery, which compels us to come his help by every means in our power?⁸⁸

I also recalled here, the traditional meaning of mercy, to remind us of what mercy towards others looks like to help us follow gradually where John Paul II's discourse and teaching on mercy are leading us. In the next chapter we will join John Paul II in going through the contemporary world to see how far this demand of mercy has become part of people's life.

⁸⁸ «[...] contristari pro afflictis v. habere, timere periclitanti ne pereat nescio unum quisquam sana consideratione reprehendat. [...] nulla de virtutibus tuis nec admirabilior nec gratior misericordia est.» Quod est autem misericordia nisi alienae miseriae quaedam in nostro corde compassio, qua utique si possumus subvenire compellimur?». ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Civitate Dei*, Bk. IX, Ch. 5, in B. Dombart & A. Kalb, ed., CCL 47, Brepols Éditiones Pontificae, 1955, 254.

CHAPTER VI

HUMANITY'S NEED OF MERCY

In this chapter I shall examine the image of the present-day world in order to see why John Paul II felt that it is a generation that needs mercy. In *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, John Paul II acknowledged that *Populorum Progressio* of Paul VI responded to the call of Vatican II and especially to the GS,¹ which, when confronted with the vast panorama of pain and suffering in the world, set forth a vision of joy and hope. In other words, clearly indicated is that the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties, in which millions of human beings live are joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.² In all these John Paul II was calling peoples' attention to the fact that it is the responsibility of the Church, as «an expert in humanity»,³ to scrutinise the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the Gospel.⁴ From his experience and analysis of the contemporary world, John Paul II observed that mercy that is meant to characterise the human society has not yet got its proper seat.

¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* Encyclical Letter, nn. 5-6, in AAS 80 (1988), 513-586 (henceforth: SrS), in AAS 80 (1988), 517-518.

² Cf. SrS, n. 6, in AAS 80 (1988), 518.

³ SrS, n. 7, in AAS 80 (1988), 518.

⁴ Cf. SrS, n. 7, in AAS 80 (1988), 518; GS, n. 4; PAUL VI, *Populorum Progressio*, n. 13.

Situation of Man in the World

According to John Paul II, the situation of human in the world today displayed transformations that give grounds for hope in a better future for man on earth, but also revealed a multitude of threats, far surpassing those known up till now. He then made a kind of an X-Ray of the modern world, and outlined his findings:

[...] man, who, thanks to the enormous development of science and technology, never before known in history, has become the master of the earth and has subdued and dominated it. The situation of the world today not only displays transformations that give grounds for hope in a better future for man on earth, but also reveals a multitude of threats, far surpassing those known up till now.⁵

In his analysis, he highlighted the light and darkness in the modern world by praising the magnificent progress, and, at the same time, underlined the growing uneasiness in which the modern man, in spite of his great progress, found himself.

John Paul II seemed to be saying that the present generation of men and women should be full of gratitude for the many blessings. These blessings are exemplified in the wonderful progress in science and technology, which cannot be compared with that of the previous generations. We shall briefly touch on some of the transformations that give grounds for hope in a better future for this privileged generation on earth.

A Privileged Generation

In his analysis of the situation, John Paul II described the various positive aspects of the contemporary world, which puts it in a privileged position. Progress has provided it with countless possibilities that were undreamt of only a few decades ago. Humankind's creative activity, its intelligence and work, have brought about profound

⁵ Cf. *DM*, n. 2, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1181.

changes both in the field of science and technology and in that of social and cultural life.⁶

John Paul II praised the modern man's development in the area of science and technology, which cannot be compared with any other period in the past. In virtue of such progress modern man has extraordinarily enlarged, and continues to enlarge the horizon of his knowledge, extending always more in this manner his dominion over nature and its laws. The great scientific discoveries of our time are legitimate motive for humankind's joy. In fact, the discoveries constitute the fruit of his intelligence, of his creative activity and of his labour. With it man becomes always more the «master of creation» (Cn 1,28).⁷

In particular, the achievements of biological, psychological and social sciences have brought the present-day humanity to understand better the richness of his being.⁸ Thanks to the development of such sciences, they have not only led humanity to greater self-awareness, but provided it with technical means of moulding the lives of the whole societies as well.⁹

Rapid Transformation

Contemporary men and women are also aware of the great impact science and technology has made in the life of the contemporary society, bringing in it a profound change at the individual, social, psychological, moral and religious levels. The life of the human person of our time is in this way, rapidly and radically transformed. John Paul II referred to this metamorphosis of society when he said that our generation «profoundly feels the change that is occurring in history».¹⁰

Among the more positive elements that the social transformation has awakened in modern man include the following: There is a feeling, in

⁶ Cf. *DM*, n. 10, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1210; cf. also B. SORGE, 535; J. SARAIVA MARTINS, 351-355.

⁷ Cf. *DM*, n. 2, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1181; *RH*, n. 15, in *AAS* 71 (1979), 286.

⁸ Cf. *DM*, n. 10, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1210-1211; *GS*, n. 5.

⁹ Cf. *GS*, n. 5.

¹⁰ Cf. *DM*, n. 5, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1210-1211.

present day humanity, of a growing sense of universality. There is no doubt that one of the fundamental characteristics of the positive effect of the progress of science, is the opening to the world and to its multiple human problems, social, cultural and religious. The extraordinary progress made in the field of information, for example, increases humanity's creative capacity and provides access to its intellectual and cultural riches of other peoples. New communication techniques encourage greater participation in events and a wider exchange of ideas.¹¹

According to John Paul II, the individualistic categories are gradually subsiding. Modern man thinks more in terms of universality without having to renounce anything of him and the environment in which he was born.¹² This sense of universality, perceived in the special manner by today's youth, brings a more conscious unity of humankind. Such consciousness constitutes, according to John Paul II, another positive aspect of the contemporary world. The fact is that modern men and women of the present-day world have been informed that in spite of their ethnic, cultural or religious differences, they constitute one family. And that is very important because of its consequence for the society.¹³ John Paul II affirmed that one of the phenomena more characteristic of the modern times is the mutual dependence among people. This interdependence becomes always stronger on both the national and international levels.¹⁴

A Feeling of Uneasiness Despite Great Technological Progress

We have seen the privileged position, which the profound changes brought about in science, and technology has placed the present-day humanity. Yet, despite these countless possibilities opened up by this

¹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹² Cf. JOHN PAUL II, «Message for the world day of peace», *OR* (15), December 24, (1980), 2.

¹³ Cf. *DM*, n. 10, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1210; cf. also J. SARAIVA, MARTINS, *Il mondo contemporaneo e le sue inquietudini*, 351-353.

¹⁴ Cf. *DM*, n. 10, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1210-1211.

progress, there also exists a «feeling of being under threat».¹⁵ John Paul II recalled the existence of threats facing the modern man. According to him, he had himself pointed out these threats on various occasions to the international bodies as in his addresses at United Nations Organisation (UNO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), etc.¹⁶ John Paul II also added that the Church has to examine these threats, too, «in the light of the truth received from God». He pointed out the dangers that can accompany a society that has a tendency to be more interested in material possessions, physical comforts, etc than in spiritual values. John Paul II had a long list in which he described the fears pressing upon humanity.¹⁸ We will present the contents of the list in a summary form.

John Paul II, apart from his being pre-occupied with the problem of dangerous wars,¹⁹ pointed out that the modern man fears being a victim of an oppression that will deprive him of his interior freedom, and the possibility of expressing the faith that he professes. In other words, the present-day human person fears a situation that can rob him of his dignity as a person in its integral dimension, that is, in his bodily and spiritual existence.²⁰

Apart from the already mentioned threats, John Paul II mentioned other sources of threats. Among these other sources of uneasiness in today's world, John Paul II, mentioned the ever-increasing gap between rich and the poor individuals, and between nations. The state of

¹⁵ *DM*, n. 11, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1212.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 2, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1181. *R/I*, n. 17, in *AAS* 71 (1979), 296-298, cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *«L'integrale umanità dell'uomo si esprime nella cultura»*, address to UNESCO, *IC/77*, III 1 (1980), 1636-1655.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1181.

¹⁸ Cf. *DM*, n. 11, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1212-1214.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1212.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1213. In this sense, John Paul II, then, asserted to the United Nations Organisation that the effort of civilisation tends from the beginning of time «to give to the life of individual political societies a form in which they can be fully guaranteed the objective rights of the spirit, of human science, of human creativity, including the relation of man with God» cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *IC/77*, III 2 (1980), 537.

inequality between individuals and nations, according to John Paul II «not only still exists; it is increasing».²¹ This led him to say:

Side by side with wealthy and surfeited people and societies, living in plenty [...], the same human family contains individuals and groups that are suffering from hunger. In various parts of the world, in various social economic systems, there exists entire areas of poverty, shortage and underdevelopment. This fact is universally known. [...] It still happens that side by side with those who are wealthy and living in plenty there are those who are living in want, suffering misery and often gradually dying of hunger, and their number reaches tens, even hundreds of millions. This is why moral uneasiness is destined to become even more acute.²²

These words of John Paul II expressed the sad reality in the contemporary world. In it, beside the zone of abundance, exist also the numerous zones of extreme poverty and misery. Continuing his examination of the negative situation, John Paul II referred to the persistent and widening gap between rich and the poor individuals and between rich and poor nations.

These points, in synthesis, are the principal factors, according to John Paul II, which explain the state of uneasiness in which the modern humanity lives. He added that this situation of moral uneasiness is destined to become even more acute. It has to be so because, according to him, «it is obvious that a fundamental defect, is at the root of contemporary economics and materialistic civilization».²³ In his analysis of the contemporary world, John Paul II discovered that what he called «a defective machinery»²⁴ is at the root of the present-day economics and materialistic civilisation; and this defect does not allow the human family to break from the ills facing it. According to John Paul II, this uneasiness is universal because, it is experienced both by

those who are «disadvantaged or oppressed» and by those who «possess the privileges of wealth, progress and power».²⁵

It is obvious that John Paul II was not just interested in pointing out the ills of the modern world. Rather, he was more interested in founding out their root-causes and their solutions. In the process for the search for the causes and solutions, John Paul II acknowledged that there were people who were making a praise-worthy effort towards the solution of this sad situation. In other words, he recognised that the world does not lack people who are trying to understand the causes of this uneasiness, or those trying to react against it with temporary means offered by technology: wealth or power.²⁶ But it is a sickness that resists cures offered by technology. According to John Paul II, this uneasiness «is stronger than all temporal means».²⁷ It is uneasiness that involves, according to John Paul II, a problem that high technology cannot solve. Technology cannot give the answer, because it is a threat that concerns the problems of all human existence.²⁸

John Paul II in his continual search for the true root-cause of this uneasiness referred to GS where the Vatican II analysed the life of the present generation. In it, he discovered and stated that the dichotomy affecting the modern world is a symptom of an interior disorder that is in man himself. The Vatican II says:

The dichotomy affecting the world is, in fact, a symptom of the deeper dichotomy that is rooted in humanity itself. It is the meeting point of many conflicting forces. As created beings, people are subject to many limitations, but they feel unlimited in their desires and their sense of being destined for a higher form of life. They feel the pull of many attractions and are compelled to choose between them and reject some among them. Worse still, they feel and smile as they are, they often do the very thing they hate and do not do what they want (Rom 7, 14). And so they feel themselves deceived, and the result is a host of disorders in social life. Many fail to see the dramatic nature of this state of affairs for their vision is blurred by

²¹ *DM*, n. 11, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1213-1214.

²² *DM*, n. 11, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1213-1214; cf. also *SrS*, n. 13, in *AAS* 80 (1988), 526. According to J. Saraiva Martins, a look at the economic map of the globe will help one to get a full confirmation of this state of inequality; cf. J. SARAIVA MARTINS, 366.

²³ *DM*, n. 11, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1214.

²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1213.

materialism, or they are prevented from even thinking about it by the wretchedness of their plight. There are still others whose hopes are set on a genuine and the total emancipation of humankind through human effort alone and look forward to some future earthly paradise. [...] Nonetheless, in the face of modern developments there is a growing body of people who are asking the most fundamental of all questions: What is humanity? What is the meaning of suffering, evil, death, which have not been eliminated by all this progress? What is the purpose of these achievements? [...]

John Paul II, acknowledged that the analyses of the Vatican II contained in the above quotation, are still valid to-day because, according to him the tensions and threats that marked our epoch have not become less.³⁰ The findings of the Vatican II show in a way, that the modern man is the source of his anguished uneasiness. Basing on the analyses of the Vatican II, John Paul II stated that the uneasiness afflicting the present-day humanity concerned the fundamental problems all human existence. He said:

This uneasiness concerns – as the analyses of the Second Vatican Council rightly pointed out – the fundamental problems of all human existence. It is linked with the very sense of man's existence in the world, and is an uneasiness for the future of man and all humanity, it demands decisive solutions. [...]

The situation of contemporary man, such as described by Vatican II's documents and confirmed by John Paul II have brought out the fact that the uneasiness being suffered by the present-day humanity concerns the problems of all human existence. It is connected with man's existence in the world. It involves humanity's misappropriations of priorities. The lack of harmony in the modern man, and the lack of the consciousness of the sense of his existence in the world manifest themselves in the chaotic life in the society. According to John Paul II, the division in him is the result of a host of discords and crisis in social

life, which manifest themselves in unjust situations. Therefore, in the explanation of John Paul II, this pre-occupying situation of the contemporary man requires decisive solutions.³² In what follows we will see how the efforts towards solutions were carried out.

1.3 Solution Based on Justice Alone is not Enough

As we have already pointed out, John Paul II did not limit himself only to the calling of the people's attention to the social-ills, he also committed himself to searching for the true causes and their solutions. We have seen that a lack of peace in regard to the situation in the world reaches out for solutions. From John Paul II's words and reflections, it is understood that men and women of our time are looking for a life that is just in every aspect. John Paul II acknowledged that a sense of justice has been reawakened in the contemporary world:

It is not difficult to see that in the modern world the sense of justice has been reawakening on a vast scale; and without doubt this emphasizes that which goes against justice in relationships between individuals, social groups between individual peoples and states, and finally between whole political systems, indeed between what we called "worlds."³³

³⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*

³¹ *Id.*, n. 12, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1215. John Paul II mentioned the effort being made toward the establishment of justice. He recalled the great effort made to give life to the United Nations Organisation, an effort conducive to the definition and establishment of man's objective and inviolable rights, with the member states obliging each other to observe them rigorously: cf. *RH*, n. 17, in *AAS* 70 (1979), 296.

John Paul II maintained that the declaration of human rights linked with the setting up of the United Nations Organisation certainly had as its aim not only to depart from the horrible experiences of the Second World War but also to create the basis for continual revision of programmes, from the single fundamental point of view, namely, the welfare of the human person. In the same historical context, over and above the efforts of each country, the United Nations Organisation had promoted consecutively two decades of development. Also, some measures, both bilateral and multilateral, had been taken with the aim of helping many nations, some of which had already been independent for some time, and the majority of others just born from the process of decolonisation: cf. *SpS*, n. 12, in *AAS* 80 (1988), 524.

³² *GS*, 10; cf. *DM*, n. 10, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1211-1212.

³³ *DM*, n. 10, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1212.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 11, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1214-1215.

While John Paul II has noted that a sense of justice has been rekindled in the modern world, he also affirmed that the Church shares with the people of our time «this profound and ardent desire for a life which is just in every respect».³⁴ With this statement John Paul II affirmed the effort being made on the part of the Church towards a life which is just. The Church, according to John Paul II, is also aware of the type of justice that the life of people and society demands. This fact is confirmed by the social doctrine of the Church,³⁵ which has greatly developed in the course of the last century.³⁶

Upon all the efforts made already, the problem of injustice persists. To overcome this crisis, John Paul II asked: Is justice enough? John Paul II had hoped that justice would be reigning in the modern world given the magnificent efforts already made towards its promotion. But his analysis of the contemporary world helped him to draw the conclusion that justice alone cannot solve the problem of injustice among the human family. Because despite the positive efforts made, the contemporary humanity still suffers many afflictions that show the inability of justice alone to solve the problem of injustice. John Paul II, therefore, invited the present generation to find authentic solutions to

³⁴ *DM*, n. 12, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1215.

³⁵ *DM*, n. 12, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1215. John Paul II confirmed that the problem of injustice is closely connected to the Church's mission in the modern world. He recalled for example, the three great documents, with declarations on the basis of social and international peace: the Encyclical letter of John XXIII *Mater et Magistra*, in *AAS* 53 (1961), 401-464, the document of Vatican II, the *Gaudium et Spes*, and the Encyclical letter of Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, in *AAS* 59 (1967), 257-299. John Paul II also stated that on the lines of this Catholic social teaching proceed the education and formation of human consciences in the spirit of justice, and individual understandings, especially in the area of the apostolate of the laity which are developing in this spirit: cf. *DM*, n. 12, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1215.

³⁶ D. Dorr gave a short history of John XXIII's contribution to the social teaching when he said that during the 1960s the Church made a serious effort to catch up with new thinking and to re-examine her role in the world. Turning to John XXIII, he affirmed that the changes in the Catholic Church are often dated from the Second Vatican Council. But as regards social teaching, the first major step in a new direction was taken in 1961, the year before the Council, when John XXIII issued the encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, the first social encyclical for forty years: cf. D. DORR, *The Social Justice Agenda*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin 1991, 50.

the crisis of injustice that was pervading the world.³⁷ Here, John Paul II set out to give the reason why he felt that justice alone could not solve the problem of unjust situations in the modern world.

[...] it would be difficult not to notice that very often programs which start from the idea of justice and which ought to assist its fulfillment among individuals, groups and human societies, in practice suffer from distortions. Although they continue to appeal to the idea of justice, nevertheless experience shows that other negative forces have gained the upper hand over justice, such as spite, hatred, etc. and this contrasts with

³⁷ Cf. *DM*, n. 12. To be just, what does it mean in light of *Gaudium et Spes*? To be just means to recognise and to give to anybody whatever is due to him or her. Justice in its very nature entails social equality. Every just demand may not ignore a just requirement from one's fellow human beings. In this regard Vatican II says: «Therefore although rightful differences exist between men, the equal dignity of persons demands that a more humane and just condition of life be brought about. For excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of human person, as well as social and international peace» (GS, n. 29). According to R. F. Mornau, «justice is an extremely rich concept. On the individual level justice deals with nature and acquired rights as well as absolute and conditional obligations. Social justice calls for a keen sensitivity to patterns of behaviour that foster peace among groupings of people. As nations continue to grow close to each other, international justice becomes a matter of urgent concern» (R. F. MORNEAU, *Advances in Misericordia*, 679).

the essence of justice³⁸, which by its nature tends to establish equality and harmony between the parties in conflict.³⁹

John Paul II served us well in stating that because of the human condition justice alone was not sufficient because it can be perverted so easily with «spite, hatred and even cruelty». ⁴⁰ John Paul II observed that, in practice, the pursuit of justice was often distorted because other negative forces had gained the upper hand over justice. The idea of justice and the practical distortion of it show how far human action can deviate from justice itself, even when it is being undertaken in the name of justice. John Paul II therefore, recalled that Jesus challenged his listeners, those who were faithful to the doctrine of the Old Testament, for their attitude, which was manifested in the words: «An eye for an

³⁸ According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation: cf. CCC, n.1928. It went further to affirm that social justice could be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of man. The person represents the ultimate end of society, which is ordered to him: «What is at the stake is the dignity of the human person, whose defense and promotion have been entrusted to us by the Creator, and to whom the men and women at every moment of history are strictly and responsibly in debt»: CCC, n.1929; cf. also *SrS*, n.47. Respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from his dignity as a creature. These rights are prior to society and must be recognised by it. Refusing to recognise them in its positive legislation, a society undermines its own moral legitimacy: cf. CCC, 1930; cf. also JOHN XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* Encyclical Letter, in *AAS* 55 (1963), 257-304.

³⁹ *DM*, n.12, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1215. G. Dalla Torre affirmed that the theme of justice in the magisterial of John Paul II is always connected with that of charity, seeing justice as a recognition of that which is a due, as the order and measure in external relationship to person, as a tendency to establish equality and equalisation between the parties in conflict (*DM* 12). According to Dalla Torre, *DM* is not the only place where John Paul II had discussed the problem of justice. He cited other numerous occasions, for example: GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Il discorso alla sacra Romana Rota*, (17 febbraio 1979), in *AAS* 71 (1979), 422-427; *Il discorso al partecipanti al congresso dell' UNEBA* (7 aprile 1979), *JGP*, II/1 (1979), 817, cf. also nn. 9,14,15,16,19,21, of *RH*, in *AAS* 71 (1979), 273-274, 285, 288-289,309,320, cf. G. DALLA TORRE, «Diritto, Giustizia Misericordia», in *Dives in Misericordia*, 287, foot-notes, n.1.

⁴⁰ *DM*, n.12, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1215-1216.

eye and a tooth for a tooth» (Mt 5, 38).⁴¹ According to John Paul II, this attitude was the form of distortion of justice at that time, and today's forms of justice seem to continue to be modelled on it.⁴² Therefore, he insisted that the experience of the past and of our own time demonstrates that justice alone is not enough, as a means of a response to the peoples' ardent desire for a life, which is just in every aspect.

John Paul II therefore, stated clearly that the mutual relationship of justice among people would be unattainable, if that deeper power, which is love, is not permitted to take upper hand over justice. On the one hand, John Paul II praised the contemporary concern, which seeks to establish justice among individuals, peoples, and nations. He maintained that a pursuit of justice is a good, which the Church should foster. On the other hand, John Paul II was convinced that because, the practice of justice is open to deviations, it needed to be completed by mercy.⁴³ This means that the pre-occupying unjust situations among human family cannot be efficaciously solved unless in the framework of mercy. John Paul II, then, committed himself to the teaching and explanation of what he meant by mercy.

The True Nature of Mercy

From his analysis of the contemporary world, John Paul II still drew the conclusion that the present generation has a particular need of mercy. But he felt that many people today are uncomfortable with the idea of mercy, and this compelled him to say:

[The present-day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life

⁴¹ Cf. G. DALLA TORRE 285-293.

⁴² Cf. *DM*, n.12, in *LET*, 2 (1980), 1216. According to R. Moreau, justice must be seen as more than a series of programmes and activities; its heartbeat must be founded on mutual respect and a profound desire for harmony: cf. R. MOREAU, «*Dives in Misericordia*», 679.

⁴³ Cf. *DM*, n.12, *AAS* 72 (1980), 1215-1216; cf. also J. M. MILLER, «Editors Introduction», 106.

and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and concept of mercy seem to cause uneasiness in man.⁴⁴

John Paul II thought that many people today are uncomfortable with the idea of mercy. According to him, the mastery of science and technology has fed a sense of dominion over the world that mercy and belittled as weakness. With the enormous development of science and technology, never known in history, the human person has become the «the master of the earth and has subdued and dominated it» (cf. Gn 1, 28).⁴⁵ This dominion over the earth, sometimes understood in a one-sided and superficial way, seems to leave no room for mercy. Also the exaltation of toughness leaves a narrow space for mercy.⁴⁶

Reasons for the Contemporary Loss of the Sense of Mercy

John Paul II gave reasons for the contemporary loss of the sense of mercy. First, according to him, the prejudices, which people have about mercy, are based on the idea that mercy means a relationship of inequality. For many people mercy suggests a relationship of inequality between the one offering mercy and the one receiving it. Those who understand mercy in this way, think that the recipient of mercy is humiliated, that mercy belittles the receiver.⁴⁷ Mercy, therefore, is resented by those who confuse it with pity. To become an object of pity is to be stripped of human dignity and worth.⁴⁸ In John Paul II's words, whenever this attitude is obtained about mercy, «we are quick to deduce that mercy belittles the receiver, that it offends the dignity of man».⁴⁹ In this sense, mercy is understood in a unilateral way, seen

⁴⁴ *DM*, n. 2, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1180-1181.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1181.

⁴⁶ Those who regard mercy as weakness, in a way glory in the exhibition toughness: cf. J. M. MILLER, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, «Editor Introduction», 104.

⁴⁷ Cf. *DM*, n. 6, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1198.

⁴⁸ Cf. J. A. O'HARE, «Mercy Appears», *America* 143 (1980), 402.

⁴⁹ *DM*, n. 6, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1198.

books, but because of the analogy's ability to enable people to understand (more fully the mystery of mercy, as a profound drama played out between the father's love and the prodigality and sin of the sons).⁵³ Our task here is to re-visit the parable of the prodigal son and to trace and follow gradually its significance in connection with our research. The parable says:

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that will come to me." So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money [...]. When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on the farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled himself with the husks the pigs were eating but no one would let him have them. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's hired men have all the food they want and more, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; threat me as one of your hired men." So he left the place and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him. Then his son said, "Father I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to the servants "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; [...]. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we will celebrate by having a feast, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate. Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. The servant told him, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the calf we had been fattening because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry and refused to go in, and his father came out and began to urge him to come in; and he retorted to his father, "All these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed any orders of yours, yet you

never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours when he comes back after swallowing up your property- [...]-you killed the calf we had been fattening." The father said, [...]. It was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found (Lk. 15, 11-32).

In what does the error of this prodigal son consist? What sin did he eventually decide to confess to his father, on his return? The answer to the questions will come step by step, in other words, the response will unfold gradually as we go along. We are told in the parable that when the prodigal son had spent everything he had received, he began to be in need, especially as a great famine arose in that country to which he had gone after leaving his father's house. In this situation this prodigal son would have been glad to have fed on anything, even the pods that the swine ate, the swine that he herded for one of the citizens of that country. But even this was not giving to him.⁵⁴

The prodigal son, at this point, was unaware of the lost dignity. John Paul II pointed out that the inheritance the prodigal son had received from his father was a quantity of material goods, but his dignity as a son in his father's house was more important than the material goods. The situation in which he found himself when he lost all the material goods would have made him aware of the lost dignity. But he did not think in that line earlier. Although he had not thought of such loss previously, when he took the inheritance that was due to him, yet he seemed not to be conscious of it even now, for he says to himself: «How many of my father's hired men have all the food they want and more, and here am I dying of hunger!» He measured himself by the standard of the goods that he had lost, that he no longer possessed, while the hired servants possessed them. According to John Paul II, these words expressed his attitude to material goods, but under their surface the tragedy of the lost dignity, the awareness of the squandered sonship, was concealed.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1193.

⁵⁴ Cf. *DM*, n. 5, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1194.

The prodigal son's sense of the lost dignity matured, when he decided to return to his father's house, to face the norms of justice, to ask his father to be received, no longer by virtue of his right as a son, but as an employee, a worker. John Paul II stated that at first the prodigal son seemed to be acting by reason of the hunger and poverty that he had fallen into. But, this motive was permeated by an awareness of a deeper loss: the fact that he had to be a hired man in his father's house is certainly a great humiliation and source of shame. He had realised that he no longer has right except to be a hired servant in his father's house.⁵⁵

The prodigal son's decision was taken in full consciousness of what he had deserved and of what he could still have a right to in accordance with the norms of justice. This reasoning demonstrated that, at the centre of his consciousness, the sense of lost dignity was emerging, the sense of that dignity that sprung from the relationship of the son with his father. And it was at this decision that he set out to return to his father.⁵⁶

In the parable of the prodigal son, John Paul II called people's attention to the conspicuous absence of the two terms justice and mercy. But he affirmed that both of them are implicitly present:

In the parable of the prodigal son, the term "justice" is not used even once, just as in the original text the term "mercy" is not used either. Nevertheless, the relationship between justice and love, that is manifested as mercy, is inscribed with great exactness in the content of the parable.⁵⁷

This John Paul II's information about the absence of the two terms mercy and justice is very important for us since we are entering into the area of the deeper significance of the analogy. The terms justice and mercy were not used at all in the parable, but they were inscribed in the parable itself, John Paul II said. John Paul II asserted that love transformed into mercy when it is necessary to go beyond the present

law of justice. According to him, this tempering of justice by love enables the recipient of another's mercy to be confirmed in his or her dignity. It enables the recipient of mercy to return to the truth about himself or herself. In other words, the attitude of the father of the prodigal son to his wayward son, points to the need of going beyond justice to the practice of mercy. Love therefore, becomes mercy when it exceeds a love that is narrowly conceived. John Paul II therefore, concluded that the primacy and superiority of love over justice were revealed precisely through mercy. John Paul II saw mercy as primary and fundamental.⁵⁸

The Conversion of the Prodigal Son and His Experience of Mercy

Before we attempt to put together the mercy experience of the prodigal son, we will first of all give the summary of the stages of his journey back to his father's house. According to John Paul II, one of the things, which the parable of the prodigal son evoked and expressed in a simple but profound manner, was the reality of conversion. The process of the prodigal son's spiritual journey or conversion to his father could be summarised in five stages:

The first stage, the beginning of the prodigal son's conversion was when he became aware of his outward exile, when things were not well with him. This young son thought of how miserable his own circumstances were, even in comparison with the hired men at his home who had bread enough and to spare. The second stage of the prodigal son's journey of conversion was when he remembered his father's house and the contrast between his own hunger and the bread given in abundance to the hired men, who, naturally, were not sons. They were no more than mere employees. This meant again that the prodigal son remembered his dignity as a son. The third stage of the son's journey to his father was when he became aware of his inward exile. This means that the awareness of the outward exile is not enough; the prodigal son became aware that his deepest error or sin was to

⁵⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, in *MAS* 72 (1980), 1195.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Cf. *DM*, n. 4, in *MAS* 72 (1980), 1191.

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separate himself from his father: «father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserved to be called your son [...]» The fourth stage of the journey of the prodigal son was the awareness of his inward exile, which led to his being able to say no to the past and yes to be reunited with his father. The fifth stage of this spiritual journeying home of the prodigal son's change of heart visible was that his What made the prodigal son's change of heart visible was that his desire was translated into action. He really went back to his father. «I will leave this place and go to my father». This is the decision of the prodigal son without which his conversion will be nothing more than a pious desire that was not translated into the new life that transformed his destiny.⁵⁹

his destiny.⁵⁹

The prodigal son's experience of mercy could be found in the unfolding of the focusing question we asked in the beginning, where we set up a task of attempting to know in what constituted the error of the prodigal son, and in what constituted the sin which he eventually decided to confess to his father on his return. The prodigal son wanted a share of the property that will belong to him; and his father divided this property between him and his brother.⁶⁰ The error or sin of the prodigal son is the sin of possessiveness,⁶¹ «he had hurt and offended his father by his whole conduct».⁶² According to the explanation of John Paul II, the prodigal son's sin lies in his temptation to separate himself from his father in order to lead his own independent existence, but he was disappointed «by the emptiness of the mirage which had fascinated him».⁶³ The son wanted to be independent, he was focused

⁵⁶ For further information on the five stages of the prodigal son's journey, see B. FORTE, 36-38.

⁶⁰ B. Forte gives further information about the word property in the context of the parable. According to him, property meant here, renders the Greek *ton ouon, ton* life and whatever is needed to live. The use of the word property in the parable is that the prodigal son does not want his father to have anything further to do with a way he organises his life: cf. B. FORTE, *To follow You. Light of Life, Series of exercises preached before John Paul II at the Vatican*, Eerdmans Publishers Company, Cambridge 2005, 35.

⁶¹ I owe this expression to B. Forte; cf. *Ibid.*

⁶² DM, p. 5, in AAS 72 (1980), 1196.

⁽¹⁾ *RP*, n. 5, in *AAS* 77 (1985), 196

on himself. He completely ignored the fact that he was wounding his father with his attitude. The son sinned against the father and his love for him.

What destiny awaited the prodigal son after he had travelled to a distant country and have squandered his property? We saw in the parable the painful consequences of separation and distance from the father. We saw the miserable condition into which the prodigal son descended.⁶⁴ According to the affirmation of John Paul II, the prodigal son, having wasted the property he received from his father, deserved, after his return to earn his living by working in his father's house as an employee and possibly, little by little, to build up a certain material goods, though perhaps never as much as the amount he had squandered.⁶⁵ This would be demanded by the order of justice, especially as the son had not only wasted the part of the inheritance belonging to him but had hurt and offended his father by his own conduct.⁶⁶

John Paul II said that this conduct of the prodigal son, had in his own eyes, deprived him of his dignity as a son. But, this loss could not be a matter of indifference to his father, because the son was bound to suffer on account of the loss, if the father did nothing to remedy the situation.⁶⁷ After all, it was his own son who was involved, and such a relationship of father and son could never be altered or destroyed by any sort of behaviour. The prodigal son was aware of this and it was this awareness that showed him clearly the dignity which he had lost and which made him to make an honest evaluation of the position that

⁶⁴ According to B. Forte the Semitic background of the prodigal son's miserable condition was shocking. In that context, eating together meant a shared life. In that same culture the pig was considered the most impure of all animals, a symbol of evil and alienation. When the prodigal son admitted that he would gladly eat the pods that the pigs are eating indicated the depths of degradation into which he had fallen. He was ready to share the life of the pigs and *s'aspirato* to their circumstances. cf. B. FORTE, 35-36.

⁶⁵ Cf. DM, n. 5, in *MAS* 72 (1980), 1195-1196.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, in *MAS* 72 (1980), 1196.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*

he could still expect in his father's house.⁶⁸ He therefore, put his decision into action by returning to his father.

When the father in the parable saw his prodigal son returning, was deeply moved, and he ran out to meet him and he was the first to clasp his son in his arms. By this action, the father forgave his son even before he could confess his sins. It was not important to the father what his son had to say. What mattered most was that the son had returned. The son did not have to ask for forgiveness because he had already been forgiven.⁶⁹ The justice that the son's misconduct deserved had been overtaken by the father's mercy.⁷⁰

The Father's Mercy and the Restoration of the Son's Dignity⁷¹

According to B. Forte, about six traits of the father of the prodigal son emerged from the parable. First, humility: The parable story

⁶⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Cf. *DM*, n. 6, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1197; cf. also W. JASINSKI, 'I will get up and go to my father's house', *Messengers of Mercy* 38 (2006), 15.

⁷⁰ This explains John Paul II's affirmation when he said that 'love is transformed into mercy when it is necessary to go beyond the precise norm of justice': *DM*, n. 5, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1195.

⁷¹ Throughout the teachings and writings of John Paul II, one hears the repeated theme of the dignity, the meaning and the value of each person, stressing the right to freedom of every human being. His thorough respect for the human being is based on the theological doctrine of *imago Dei*. The transcendent worth of the individual person is of central importance both to Christian faith and to any culture that would remain human: cf. R. D. LAWLER, *The Christian Personalism of John Paul II: The John Paul Synthesis: A Trinity College Symposium 1*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1982, 29. Early in his pontificate, John Paul II, in a letter to United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, presented his answer to the central political question of the time: 'What basis can we offer as the soil in which individual and social rights may grow?' John Paul II's reply was: 'Unquestionably that basis is the dignity of the human person': cf. John Paul II, 'Papal message on human rights to the United Nations', in *Pope John Paul II Center Newsletter*, vol. 1, 1 (1979), 7. As quoted in A. WOZNICKI, 'The Christian humanism of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła' in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* (1979 meeting) Catholic University Press, Washington 1979, 28-35.

depicted the father of the prodigal son as a humble father, who presented with his son's decision to organise his own life independently of him, offered no resistance. He could have resisted on the basis of the law, which permits the father even to stone a rebellious son.⁷² But he did not behave that way; he lets his son go. Although his son's demand must have wounded him deeply, yet, he did not attempt to go against his decision. He accepted his son's decision with infinite humility. Second, hope: the father presented in the parable is a father who knows how to wait.⁷³ This father is presented as the one who waited in hope looking out for the return of his son.⁷⁴ Third, loving with a mother's love: in the parable, the father is depicted as the father who loves with a mother's love, a love that leads him to respect his son's freedom to the end and to go on loving him, in spite of his being rejected. Fourth, courageous love: that this father in the parable should run toward his son, and throw his arms around him, was unimaginable for the Semites. This is because a father was always expected to behave in a manner that depicts dignity.⁷⁵ The parable thus presents a father who has no fear of losing his own dignity. Fifth, celebration of joy: this fifth trait emerges from what the father in the parable does when the son arrives home: It is a father who knows how to celebrate joy. Every thing he does is an evident expression of this joy. Sixth, capable of suffering: the parable represents a father who is capable of suffering for love of his son. The parable itself contains an important affirmation, where the reason for this joy and this sorrow is expressed: 'This son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found'. The first reason for the father's sorrow is that the son 'was dead'; he had

⁷² According to the *Torah*, if someone has a stubborn and rebellious son, he was authorised to present him for stoning (Dt 21, 18-21): cf. B. FORTE, 32.

⁷³ B. Forte stated that humility's second name is hope: 'if humility means making room for the other to live, hope means going out to the other, longing that he or she might truly come to be, in the free and generous response of love': B. FORTE, 33.

⁷⁴ Cf. *RP*, n. 5, in *AAS* 77 (1985), 197.

⁷⁵ According to B. Forte, for the Semites, the father running toward his son was a scandalous behaviour, because a father was expected to carry himself in a heroic fashion. It was actually the son who should have presented himself to his father in prostration before him: cf. B. FORTE, 33-34.

destroyed himself. The second reason «he was lost», this is related to the fact that the son had distanced himself from his father.⁷⁶

John Paul II explained that the conduct of the father in the parable and his behaviour, help to rediscover the individual threads of the Old Testament vision of mercy in a synthesis which is totally new, full of simplicity and depth. In this parable of the prodigal son, John Paul II presented the father as faithful to his fatherhood, faithful to the love that he had always lavished on his son.⁷⁷ The father's fidelity to himself, a characteristic already known by the Old Testament, is at the same time expressed in a manner particularly *marked* with affection. For when the father saw the prodigal son *returning* home «he was moved with pity», and he ran to meet him. The father did this under the influence of a deep affection for the son, and this explained the father's generosity toward his son.⁷⁸

The father's fidelity to himself is totally concentrated on the humanity of his son, his dignity. This explains the father's joyous emotion at the moment of the son's return. Of the father's concern John Paul II wrote:

This fidelity is expressed in the parable not only by his immediate readiness to welcome him home when he returns after having squandered his inheritance; it is expressed even more fully by the joy, the merry-making for the squanderer after his return, merry-making which is a generous that it provokes the opposition and hatred of the elder brother who had never gone far away from his father, and had never abandoned the home.⁷⁹

As we have already noted, the inheritance that the son has received from his father was a quantity of material goods, but more important than these goods was his dignity as a son in his father's house. The father himself was prodigal in his love. Joy at his son's return was

⁷⁶ Cf. B. FORTE, 34.

⁷⁷ Cf. DM, n. 6, in AAS 72 (1980), 1196; cf. also J. M. MILLER, «Editor's Introduction», 104.

⁷⁸ Cf. DM, n. 6, in AAS 72 (1980), 1197.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* in AAS 72 (1980), 1196.

prompted by his awareness that a fundamental good has been saved: the good of his son's humanity, his dignity.⁸⁰ In fact, two goods were involved in the situation: one good that remained intact, and another that was lost and found again.⁸¹ Despite his son's waywardness, the father never stopped being his father's son. In other words, even if the son was prodigal, a son does not cease to be his father's son; the joy also indicated a good that had been found again, which in the case of the prodigal son was his return to the truth about himself.⁸² This understanding points to the reality of fatherhood itself, which never ceases, even in the face of his son's squandering, obliged his father to be concerned about his son's lost dignity. Indeed, the father by running to meet the son loses his own dignity.⁸³ According to John Paul II, the father's concern for the son sprung from the measure of his love for him, the love which St. Paul described as: patient and kind. [...] love that is never boastful or conceited, never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes (cf. 1 Cor 13, 4-8).⁸⁴

John Paul II made an important affirmation when he stated that what took place in the relationship between the father and the son in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, was a proof that mercy does not belittle the receiver. Mercy is not a demeaning pity; it does not lower somebody's dignity. The parable of the prodigal son bears witness to this reality. In it, the relationship of mercy involved both father and son in sharing the common experience of the son's restored dignity. Mercy is based on that common experience of the good, which is human person, on the

⁸⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, in AAS 72 (1980), 1197.

⁸¹ John Paul II also recalled here the theme of joy, a trait of the father's fidelity that is present in other parables of the same chapter: «the same chapter (Lk 15) of the Gospel, we read the parable of the sheep that was found (Lk 15, 3-6) and then the same joy that is present in the case of the prodigal son»; cf. *Ibid.*

⁸² Cf. *Ibid.*, in AAS 72 (1980), 1198.

⁸³ Cf. J. M. MILLER, «Editor's Introduction», 105; B. FORTE, 34.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, in AAS 72 (1980), 1197.

common experience of the dignity that is proper to him.⁸⁵ In all this John Paul II is affirming that mercy in no way compromises human dignity. Rather, it restores it to its full value.⁸⁶

The Figure of the Father in the Parable Reveals God as Father

According to John Paul II, the analogy of the prodigal son reveals God as Father.⁸⁷ This is to say that, like the father in the parable, God looks out for the return of his child. John Paul II said that the exact picture of the prodigal son's state of mind, which our research has allowed us to see, would enable people to understand exactly what the mercy of God consists in: God is presented as Father who is merciful to the prodigal son.

In explaining the significance of the parable of the prodigal son, John Paul II presented a wide-ranging application of the analogy. John Paul II reminds everyone that the son who received from the father the portion of the inheritance that was due to him and left home to squander it in a far country, refers to the «man of every period». The squanderer is in a far country, who was the first to lose the inheritance «of grace begun with Adam, who was the first to lose the inheritance of grace and original justice».⁸⁸ In other words, John Paul II was pointing out that each of us in each age is the prodigal. In the same wide application of the parable, John Paul II included the meaning of the reaction of the prodigal son's elder brother. According to him, when the parable invokes, in the figure of elder son, the «selfishness which divides the brothers», it also becomes the story of the human family: «It describes

our situation and shows the path to be followed».⁸⁹ The prodigal son, John Paul II explained, in his worry for conversion, to return to his father and to be forgiven, represents those who are aware of the existence in their hearts of a longing for reconciliation at all levels and without reserve, and who realise with an inner conviction that this reconciliation is possible only «if it derives from a first and fundamental reconciliation».⁹⁰ That is, the one, which brings a person, back from distant separation to filial friendship with God.⁹¹ But when the parable is read from the point of view of the elder son, then, it portrays the situation of the human family, «divided by forms of selfishness».⁹² This according to John Paul II, throws light on the difficulty involved in satisfying the desire and longing «for one reconciled and united family».⁹³ This reminds every human person of the need for a profound transformation of hearts through the rediscovery of God's mercy and through victory over misunderstanding and over hostility among brothers and sisters.⁹⁴ Explaining further the parable's content of the Fatherhood and mercy of God, John Paul II affirmed that the parable indirectly extended to every breaking of the covenant of love, to every loss of grace, and to every sin.⁹⁵

⁸⁵ *RM*, n. 9, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 197.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 9, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 198.

⁸⁷ *cf. Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *cf. Ibid.*

⁹¹ *cf. Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *cf. Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1198.

⁸⁶ *cf. Ibid.*; cf. also J. M. MILLER, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, Atlanta: Introduction, 104-105.

⁸⁷ B. Forte says that the father portrayed in the parable of the prodigal son can immediately recognised as the Father of Jesus. This is understood from the fact the parable talks about how the son who had been lost returns home: cf. B. FORTE, 31.

⁸⁸ *DM*, n. 5, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1194.

⁸⁹ COUNCIL OF CARITATIVE, DS, 239.

⁹² *cf. RM*, n. 9, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1194. G. Weigel gives a synthesis of John Paul II's understanding of Christ's parable when he wrote that Christ's parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15, 11-32) is, for John Paul II a synthesis of the biblical theology of mercy, and it demonstrated how the question of a true humanism opens up the question of God. In John Paul II's analysis of this New Testament parable, the prodigal son is a kind of every human person, burdened by the tragedy of human condition which is the awareness of squandered sonship, of one's lost dignity. The father, who is the wayward son, is the truth about himself, which is the lost dignity of the sonship of God. Weigel, *The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, 388. This led Al. Sapeyko to ask: «if justice alone remained, who could be saved? With this statement he is affirming that if God had treated humankind according to strict justice,

In the words of John Paul II, the parable of the prodigal son is about all the story of the inexpressible love of a Father, God, who in his mercy, offers to his son and his daughter when he or she comes back to him the gift «full of reconciliation».⁹⁷ According to John Paul II, mercy as Christ had presented it in the parable of the prodigal son has the interior form of love that the New Testament calls *Agape*.⁹⁸ Hence John Paul II said, is the love that is able «to reach down to every prodigal son, to every human misery, and above all to every form of moral misery, and to every sin».⁹⁹ In fact, all we have said about the merciful attitude of the father in the parable of the prodigal son, is analogously referring to God as mercy.¹⁰⁰ This is why J. Ratzinger in his introduction to John Paul II's *Encyclicals* said that one of the important points of the *Encyclical Dives in Misericordia*, is its profound interpretation of the parable of the prodigal son, in which the image of the Father shines out in all its greatness and beauty.¹⁰¹

After his analysis of the contemporary world, and the explanation of the essence of mercy, John Paul II drew further conclusion and assumed that mercy, in spite of many prejudices about it, is particularly necessary for our times. John Paul II, further, called people's attention to the essence of mercy when he said that the true and proper meaning of mercy does not consist only in looking, however penetratingly and compassionately, at moral, physical or material evil; mercy he said, is manifested in its true and proper aspect when it restores to value

promotes and «draws good from all the forms of evil» existing in the world and in man.¹⁰² In the next chapter, we shall explore further Christ's revelation of God's mercy in its fullness, to enable us see the effects of these Jesus' events on John Paul II himself.

he would neither have sent promised nor sent the saviour after the fall of it. See POCOCK, *Lord, have mercy on us*, Lower Bellingham, Hereford 1968, 51.

⁹⁷ *Id.*, n. 6. According to John Paul II, the most striking element of the parable is the father's fierce and loving welcome of the returning son and daughter. It is the father's mercy, who is always willing to forgive. Cf. *Id.*, n. 8.

⁹⁸ *Agape* is a Greek word for love, which is in reality is unconditional love.

⁹⁹ *DM*, n. 6, in 445 72 (1980), 1198.

¹⁰⁰ For more information on the merciful attitude of the father in the parable referring to God's mercy, cf. R. FORTI, 31-37, cf. also J. PEREMAS, *The Parable of Jesus*, SCM Press, New Jersey 1963, 124-127.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*, same point important de l'encyclique est sa profonde interprétation de la parabole du fils prodigue, dans laquelle l'image du Père se reflète dans une

gratitude et sa bonté. Cf. J. RATZINGER, *«Miserationem»*, in *Les 14 Encycliques*

John Paul II: Présentation du Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Toga, Paris 2002, 11.

John Paul II: Présentation du Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Toga, Paris 2002, 11.

¹⁰² *DM*, n. 6, in 445 72 (1980), 1198. In these words with which John Paul II

explained the true and proper of nature of mercy, he was warning against limiting mercy exclusively to the sphere of thoughts and feelings. In other words, mercy, by its essence, is a creative love, an elevating power restoring man to himself.

PART FOUR

THE CROSS OF CHRIST AS THE CLIMINATION OF MERCY

CHAPTER VII

THE SPIRITUALITY OF MERCY OF JOHN PAUL II AS A FAITH-RESPONSE TO MERCY

This concluding chapter of this book, based on the understanding of the leading word spirituality, will reflect on the Paschal Mystery, the summit of Christ's revelation of mercy. This means that I will attempt to look into the Trinitarian communion exemplified in the economy of salvation. We shall see how this Trinitarian soteriology is actualised beginning with the work of the Father and the Son. This will lead us to the dynamism of the Spirit, which clarifies the foundation of the spirituality of mercy of John Paul II. Our reflection will lead us to investigate how John Paul II has actualised, in some way, the gift of mercy he had received. This will also bring us to see his pastoral recommendations for the Church's and people's effective witness to mercy.

Before I move on further into our discourse in this chapter, it is necessary to clarify briefly the meaning of spirituality.

The Term Spirituality

J. R. Sheets made it clear that spirituality is not easy to define. According to him, spirituality is often used today in a generic sense to describe what is common to all religions. One hears for example, of the spirituality of Hinduism, of Buddhism, of Confucianism, as well as the spirituality of Judaism and Christianity. According to J. R. Sheets, the

same word is used to describe the content of religious that are radically different in their perception of the divine, creation, history, and the meaning of the human person.¹ For our research, we are limiting ourselves to Christian spirituality.

Understanding the Term

Spirituality² is a term that has not yet been defined or analysed in the satisfaction of anyone.³ With the Vatican II, however, spirituality became a subject not only of the selected few but also of the ordinary people.⁴ After Vatican II there was a shift in the traditional systematisation in spirituality.⁵ The aim of our reflecting on the word spirituality, here, is to show how our understanding of it will help to

throw light on the spirituality of mercy as exemplified in the life and teachings of John Paul II. We shall do this with a brief trace of the understanding of the concept of spirituality.

The word spirituality has for long been referred to, as the daughter of modernity, but the term was already present in its extract form in the patristic period. From 9th and 11th centuries, spirituality was indicated as the reality and activity that does not come from nature, but from the grace of the Holy Spirit present in man or 'supernatural life'.⁶ But from the 12th century on the homogeneity of meaning began to disintegrate: on the one hand, the sense of 'supernatural' remained, as a life in the light of faith and in opposition to the existence without grace, on the other hand, the term *spiritualitas* was designated to that which is immaterial, in contrast to the tangible material realities.⁷

B. Secondin reflecting further acknowledged that spirituality has known a particular fruitful period from the scientific point of view. Both as a theological discipline and as a Christian way of life, spirituality has been subjected to a series of rethinking and opening to new horizons. B. Secondin sees spirituality as a discipline that involves experience. This means that spirituality is primarily presented not so much as a system of ascetical norms, but rather as the narration of the integral lived spiritual life of Christ in human history.⁸ M. A. McIntosh understands spirituality as a discovery of true self. He sees spirituality as a transformation and a discovery of self, which happens in an

¹ Cf. J. R. SHEETS, 'The Spirituality of John Paul II', in *The Thought of John Paul II*, 98.

² The term spirituality derives from the Latin *spiritualitas*, an abstract word derived from the noun *spiritus* and the adjective *spiritualis* (or *spirituālis*), which was used to translate Paul's *poenitentia* and *pneumatikos*; cf. A. SOLIGNAC, 'Spiritualitas', in *DSM*, vol. XIV, Beauchesne, Paris 1990, 1142-1143.

³ According to B. McGinn, the academic discipline of Christian spirituality is rather new one that does not, as yet, have a commonly accepted definition. He traditional Roman Catholic esoteric and mystical theology covered much, but by no means all, of what is intended by the term, especially because ascetical and mystical theology and even what in more recent times has been called spiritual theology tend to neglect the collective, social dimensions that have been so important to the lived experience of Christian faith. Spirituality, both as lived experience and as reflections on that experience, is a broader and more inclusive than either asceticism or mysticism; cf. B. MCGINN, 'Introduction', *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the twelfth century*, B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff, J. Leclercq, ed., vol. I, Crossroad Publishing Company, New York 1985, vii (hereafter *CSP*).

⁴ This also explains the affirmation of J. Castellano Cervera, where he said the one of the present tasks of spiritual theology is the study of Christian experience and initiation to the mystery of God through Christ and the Holy Spirit as a lived life and vision and therefore as *mystagogy*, but in a full ecclesial dimension, for the people of God and not restricted only for the selected group of the believers; cf. J. CASTELLANO CERVERA, 'Mistagogia pastorale e Spiritualitas', in *Atti della Spirituality*, B. Secondin, J. Janssens, ed., Borla, Roma 1984, 29.

⁵ Cf. K. WAALDMAN, 'Toward a phenomenological definition of spirituality', *Studies in Spirituality* 3 (1993), 30-57.

⁶ Cf. B. SECONDIN, 'E. GOFFI, "Introduzione Generale", in *corso di Spiritualità: Esperienza - Sistematica, Proroghe*, B. Secondin - T. Goffi, ed., Queriniana, Brescia 1989, 8-9.

⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

⁸ Taking off from the reality of spiritual experience, it is possible to rethink and relive this ascetical-mystical doctrine under the new light. Therefore, B. Secondin states that spirituality more than elaborate theoretical system, is committed to narrate how the human community is called to live within the redeemed history, how the believers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit will be going progressively forming the integral risen Christ, how the believer can and is to advance towards mystical experience together with the assembly of brothers and sisters. In other words, spirituality is not so much about the individual ascetics, but rather the communal commitment in realising the great history of the redeemed; cf. B. SECONDIN, 'INTRODUZIONE', *Proroghe e Prospettive di Spiritualità*, T. Goffi-B. Secondin, ed., Queriniana, Brescia 1983, 5.

encounter. In M. A. McIntosh's understanding, spirituality is the result of the encounter with God; it is the impression that the encounter with God makes «on the transforming life of individual or of peoples». ⁹ This means that spirituality is the impression that this meeting with God leaves on the person or peoples while at the same transforming with God lives. A. Sampaio describes spirituality as a process that contains the object material of theology, that is the spiritual experience in its two dimensions- object and subject. According to him, spirituality encounters between God and man. According to him, spirituality considers the spiritual experience from the point of view of the process of transformation given in a person when a person is in relation with God. ¹⁰

For S. M. Schneiders spirituality is «the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives». ¹¹ W. Principe, in his effort toward definition, sees spirituality in the first place as the quality- the lived quality of a person. It is a way a person understood and lived. It is like a chosen religious ideal in the «realm of the spirit or the transcendent». «For Christians such a life would be one influenced, as Paul thought by the Holy Spirit incorporating the person into Jesus Christ as He led through whom he or she has access to the Father in a life of faith, hope, love, and service. ¹² According to S. De Fiores, spirituality from the Christian point of view is «the coincidence of the human spirit with the divine Spirit. ¹³

⁹ Cf. M. A. MCINTOSH, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology*, Backwell Publishers, Oxford 1998, 5-11.

¹⁰ A. SAMPAIO COSTA, *L'oggetto formale della Teologia Spirituale: Il processo di trasformazione*, Lecture notes for Students, AP 2028 *Introduzione*, Lezione Settima, 1-7; Lezione Ottava, 1-3, PUG 2003/2004.

¹¹ S. M. SCHNEIDERS, «Spirituality in the Academy», in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader*, K. J. Collins, ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan 2000, 254.

¹² W. PRINCIPLE, «Toward defining spirituality», *A Canadian Journal*, vol. 11 (1983), 135.

¹³ «La spiritualità, [...] dal punto di vista cristiano è la coincidenza dello spirito umano con lo Spirito divino»: S. DE FIORES, «Spiritualità contemporanea», *NDSp*, 1525.

C. A. Bernard, in his description spiritual theology, presents spirituality as a theological discipline which, founded on the principles of revelation, studies Christian spiritual experience, describes its development and progress and explains its structures and laws. ¹⁴ Following the trend of this explanation and definition, C. Bernard seems to be saying that spirituality also helps in clarifying and naming Christian experience. L. Richard sees spirituality as a radical drive of the person toward self-transcending authenticity in knowing, naming the person toward God. According to him knowing, naming and loving are not only the basic structures of spirituality but also of theology. For it is the ongoing function of the theologian to know, name and love the mystery in which, he or she is grounded. ¹⁵ H. Alphonso says that spirituality is the way in which a person animated by the living presence and action of the Spirit of Christ acts and reacts habitually in accordance with his or her own characteristic Christian gifts. ¹⁶ For C. J. Healey, «Christian spirituality focuses on "the particular way in which Christian men and women have come to understand, value, and direct their lives as disciples of Jesus of Nazareth in their own world"». ¹⁷

K. Waajman describes spirituality by saying that spirituality touches the core of our human existence: our relation to the Absolute. This relation, he explains, is variously described in the spiritual traditions. It is called: «emanation from the One; creation by the all-good God; acceptance in grace; being clothed with the way of love; ultimate Deliverance». ¹⁸ According to K. Waajman, biblically-

¹⁴ «La teologia spirituale è una disciplina teologica che fondata sui principi della rivelazione, studia l'esperienza spirituale cristiana, ne descrive lo sviluppo progressivo e ne fa conoscere le strutture e le leggi»: C. A. BERNARD, *Teologia Spirituale*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo, Milano 2002, 73.

¹⁵ L. RICHARD, «Theology in Need of Spirituality», *Studies in Formative Spirituality* 2 (1992), 161-172.

¹⁶ Cf. H. ALPHONSO, *Placed with Christ the Son*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand 1993, 151-162.

¹⁷ C. J. HEALEY, *Christ's Spirituality: An Introduction to the Heritage*, Paulist Press, New York, 1999, n. ci also R. WOODS, *God's Presence in History*, Thomas More Press, Chicago 1989, 4.

¹⁸ K. WAAJMAN, *Spirituality: Forms Foundations Methods: Studies in spirituality*, Supplement VIII, Peeters, Dudley 2002, 1.

orientated traditions express this relation by saying: «man has been created in God's image in order to grow toward conformity with God»¹⁹.

J. R. Sheets went further to bring out the significance of spirituality in the writings of Paul, where St. Paul uses the adjective, *pneumatikos*, to describe the person who has been transformed by the Spirit of God into the likeness of Christ.²⁰ For Paul the Spirit is an energiser, a Spirit of power (1 Co 2, 4; Rm 15, 13) and the source of Christian love, hope, and faith. J. R. Sheets holds that spirituality is not a style of the spiritual life. For him, spirituality is a particular way in which the Holy Spirit orients the pneumatic person.²¹ According to him, «the Holy Spirit provides a vision, with a focus, with an inner orientation of the self to express the fullness of the Spirit within a certain concentration or focussing of the gifts of the Spirit».²² We have taken this long pre-step of tracing the significance or meaning of spirituality to help us discover the spiritual experience that can explain John Paul II's spirituality of mercy. Also, our pre-step of explaining the term spirituality will help to present better what we mean when we talk in terms of the spirituality of mercy of John Paul II. After these efforts to clarify what the term spirituality means in itself, we will now turn to investigate the Trinitarian communion in the mercy plan.²³

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Cf. J. R. SHEETS, «The Spirituality of Pope John Paul II», in *The Thought of Pope John Paul II: A Collection of Essays and Studies*, 102.

²¹ *Pneumatikos* = pneumatic person, J. R. Sheets uses this expression to describe the person who has been transformed by the indwelling of the Spirit of God, cf. *Ibid.* Cf. *Ibid.*, 110. This makes J. R. Sheets to explain that the Holy Spirit can create a certain species of pneumatic person, in this sense, those whose lives form a certain identical pattern because they received the same gifts. This is noticed when one speaks of a certain «spiritualities»; for example, the spirituality of the laity, of priesthood, of religious life, secular institutes, Benedictine, Franciscan, Jesuit, Carmelite spiritualities etc. Therefore, different spiritualities arise, because the Holy Spirit draws from the natural gifts of different individuals special pneumatic gifts, cf. *Ibid.* In other words, The different spiritualities emerge «from a certain convergence of gifts toward a common focus those called into special vocations are drawn into this convergence to form a community», *Ibid.*, 108.

²² J. O'Donnell reflecting on mercy says that the constant teaching of the Bible is that God, out of the sheer goodness of his heart, has shown humanity abundant mercy.

The Trinitarian Event as the Foundation of John Paul II's Mercy Life

Our task here is to trace the Trinitarian mystery, within the soteriology.²⁴ In other words, we will attempt to pinpoint the soteriological role of each of the three Divine Persons in the economy of salvation, which would eventually lay the foundation of John Paul II's spirituality of mercy.

John Paul II had stated that the mercy plan is the Trinitarian event, since the divine Trinity is at the very origins of existence and history and is present in their final goal.²⁵ The passion and death of Christ, John Paul II said, «is an ineffable mystery of love in which the three

He recalled the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola, where Ignatius, invites retreatants to contemplate the divine Trinity looking upon the world with compassion: «We should recall how the Three Divine Persons look at the entire surface and roundness of the world, so full of human beings. Seeing all of them going down into abyss they decide that the Second Person should become man to save the human race. In the fullness of time they send the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary», ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *Spiritual Exercises*, n. [102], in M. IVENS, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, Action Publishing Technology, Gloucester 1998, 91. In his own ways, says J. O'Donnell, Ignatius of Loyola is doing no more than echoing St. Paul's words in his letter to Titus: «When the kindness and love of God our Saviour were revealed, it was not because of any upright actions we had done ourselves; it was for no reason except his own faithful love (mercy)» (Tit 3, 4); cf. J. O'DONNELL, *A Faith You can Live with*, Sheed & Word, Wisconsin 1999, 229-230.

²⁴ John Paul II notes that Christianity is a religion of salvation, a soteriological religion. Therefore, Christian soteriology focuses on the Paschal Mystery, cf. CTH, 68.

²⁵ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *The Trinity's Embrace God's saving Plan: A Catechesis on Salvation History*, vol. VI, Pauline Books & Media, Boston 2002, 308 (henceforth TE). History is important for John Paul II, because it is a time of redemption. It is a link between the fall from paradise and eschatological fulfilment. History is a salvation history, for man cannot return to his paradise beginning, but only move forward into his redemption. John Paul II led to mind that history begins with sin and the expulsion from the garden, but most importantly, this history begins with a promise of a messiah. Therefore, history is the gradual unfolding of God's plan of salvation which finds its «key center and purpose in Jesus Christ»; cf. TE, 121; TMA, n. 45; cf. also P. J. MILLER, «Foreword», TE, XIII-XIV.

and he does not receive it. Even those who are closest to him cannot protect him and snatch him from the hands of his oppressors."⁴⁰

John Paul II, here, observed a hostile response portrayed by the action of the people to whom Christ had done good deeds. The hostility of the people to Jesus demonstrated a rejection of the man who had shown them mercy. John Paul II also noted the silence of the Father whose mercy Jesus had borne witness to. The Father of Jesus did not spare him the terrible suffering of death on the cross, instead he made him to be sin who knew no sin. In all these, John Paul II pointed out that Jesus, who more than any other human being deserved mercy, did not receive it during the tortments of his passion. In spite of the appeals in *Confessio* to his Father, the Father did not spare the Son (cf. *Rm* 8, 32).⁴¹

John Paul II then pointed out the reason for the Father's silence despite the Son's appeals to him. According to John Paul II, it was to fulfil the words uttered by the prophets concerning the servant of Yahweh. Especially the prophet Isaiah, who articulated the healing dimension of the servant of God's role: "...[w]hereas he was being wounded for our rebelliousness, crushed because of our guilt, the punishment reconciling us fell on him, and we have been healed by his bruises" (*Is* 53, 5).⁴² John Paul II affirmed that these prophetic words were fulfilled in Christ.⁴³ According to him, although the work of redemption pertains to the Blessed Trinity, yet it was brought about in some by Jesus Christ. The Father's silence, therefore, points to the plan that Christ has to undergo the cross for the sake of the distressed humanity: "Through his stripes we are healed" (*Is* 53, 5).⁴⁴

According to John Paul II, drawing closer to the content of his first Encyclical *PII* will be helpful in expressing the depth of the truth about mercy.⁴⁵ He discussed the Mystery of Mercy (Redemption) from two

⁴⁰ *DM*, n. 7, in *AAS* 72 (1990), 1200.

⁴¹ *CT* *Ibid.*; cf. also J. M. MII J.F.R., *Editor's Introduction*, 100.

⁴² *CT* *DM*, n. 7, in *AAS* 72 (1990), 1200.

⁴³ *CT* *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *DM*, n. 7, in *AAS* 72 (1990), 1200.

⁴⁵ *CT* *DM*, n. 7, in *AAS* 72 (1990), 1199.

different perspectives: that is, from his two foci of divine and human.⁴⁶ First, from God's side, the Paschal Mystery, in the most empirical and historical way, enables humanity to uncover the depth of that love which does not recoil before the extraordinary sacrifice of the Son, "in order to satisfy the fidelity of the Creator and Father towards human beings, created in his image and chosen from the beginning".⁴⁷ John Paul II therefore, affirmed that the cross is a superabundance of justice that bears upon sin and restores love. He wrote:

In the passion and death of Christ- in the fact that Father did not spare his own Son, but "for our sake made him sin" (2 Co 5, 21)- absolute justice is expressed, for Christ undergoes the passion and cross because of the sins of humanity. This constitutes even a "superabundance" of justice, for the sins of man are "compensated for" the sacrifice of the Man-God. Nevertheless, this justice is properly justice, "to God's measure," [...].⁴⁸

John Paul II, here, was affirming that Christ's redemptive act carried out for the salvation of humanity fulfilled the demands of divine justice. But this justice, John Paul II said, is justice "to God's measure". In other words, the divine justice revealed in the cross of Christ was "to God's measure", because it sprang from love and was accomplished in love. It emerged completely from the mercy of the Father and of the Son, and it entirely bore fruit in love, producing fruits of salvation.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *CT* *PII*, n. 9, in *AAS* 71 (1979), 272-273.

⁴⁷ *DM*, n. 7, in *AAS* 72 (1990), 1199-1200.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1990), 1201; cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, Bk. XV, Ch. 18, n.32, in W. J. Mountain, ed., *CCL*, 50A, Editores Pontifici, Brepols 1968, 507.

⁴⁹ *CT* *Ibid.* John Paul II wanted to stress, here, that love and mercy remain the definitive explanation of the redemption through the cross. According to him it is a question of a love, which surpasses justice. John Paul II stated that if an innocent person, who is holy, like Jesus, is sentenced to suffering and death on a cross to fulfil the Father's eternal design, i. e. want that, in sacrificing his Son, God goes in a certain sense beyond the order of justice. He reveals himself in Christ, and, through him, reveals the riches of his mercy - *Dives in Misericordia* (Tp 2.4): cf. JOHN PAUL II, *JSS*, 426; cf. also K. ROMANUK, *«La salvezza dell'uomo come opera dell'amore del Padre e del Figlio»*, in *Il Mistero del Padre. Atti del II° Convegno Internazionale sulla Dives in Misericordia*, 60-61. This God's agape- his unconditional love has also

John Paul II also stated that the cross of Christ was a witness to what evil was up to in the world. The cross testified to the strength of evil against Christ, who was by his nature absolutely innocent and free from sin. But precisely in the same Christ, justice was done to sin at the price of his sacrifice and death.⁵⁰ In the same way, John Paul II affirmed that justice was brought to bear upon death, which from the beginning of humanity's history had been joined to sin.⁵¹ Also, by the passion of Christ, justice was done to death at the price of the death of Christ, who was without sin and who was able «to inflict death upon death, by his own death».⁵² In this way, the cross of Christ rendered justice to God. This, according to John Paul II, is «a radical revelation of mercy».⁵³ John Paul II described this as the love that goes against what constitutes the very root of evil in the history of humanity, the love that goes against sin and death.⁵⁴ John Paul II extolled further the Cross and God's mercy. He said:

Believing in the crucified Son means "seeing the Father" (cf. Jn 14:9), means believing that love is present in the world and that this love is more powerful than any kind of evil in which individuals, humanity or the world are involved. Believing in this love means believing in mercy. For mercy is an indispensable dimension of love; it is as if we were love's second name and, at the same time, the specific manner in which love is revealed and effected vis-à-vis the reality of evil that is in the world, affecting and besieging man. [...].⁵⁵

led R. Latourelle to note when he asserted: «If God, in Christ, comes towards man and leans towards him, how can this presence be anything other than grace and salvation for man? In Christ, the goodness of God our Savior and his love for men have appeared (1 Th 3,4)»: R. LATOURELLE, *Theology of Revelation*, Society of St Paul, New York 1966, 390.

⁵⁰ Cf. *DM*, n. 8, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1203.

⁵¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1204.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 7, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1203.

John Paul II affirmed that by raising Jesus from the dead God the Father again manifested his mercy. According to him the Resurrection of Christ was a proof of God's fidelity. In his Resurrection, Christ «experienced in a radical way mercy shown to himself, that is to say the love of the Father which is more powerful than death».⁵⁶ Moreover, through his Resurrection, «Christ has revealed the God of merciful love, precisely because he accepted the Cross as the way to the Resurrection».⁵⁷ John Paul II maintained that the resurrection of Jesus on the third day constituted the final sign of the messianic mission. This is to say that in John Paul II's understanding, the resurrection of Christ was a sign that perfects the entire revelation of the mercy in a world that was subject to evil.⁵⁸ At the same time the resurrection, he said, constituted the sign that foretold «a new heaven and a new earth», when God's presence will wipe away every tear for there will be no more death, no mourning or pain (cf. Rv).⁵⁹ John Paul II explaining further, said:

[...] In fact, Christ whom the Father did not spare for the sake of man and who in His passion and in the torment of the cross did not obtain human mercy, has revealed in His resurrection the fullness of the love that Father has for Him and, in Him, for all people. [...] And it is the same Christ, the Son of God, who at the end of His messianic mission and, in a certain sense, even beyond the end—reveals Himself as the inexhaustible source of mercy, of the same love that, in a subsequent perspective of the history of salvation, is to be everlastingly confirmed as more powerful than death.⁶⁰

In the above quotation, John Paul II wanted to stress the fact that the glorified Son, Christ, was both the living embodiment of mercy received from the Father and its inexhaustible source for humanity.

Second, John Paul II discussed the human dimension of the Paschal Mystery, and pinpointed what that Paschal Mystery had achieved for

⁵⁶ *DM*, n. 8, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1207.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 8, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1204-1205.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1205.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

humanity. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy says of Christ's Pascal Mystery:

Christ the Lord completed his task principally by the Pascal Mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension, whereby dying he destroyed our death and rising, restored our life.⁶¹

John Paul II called to mind this efficacy of the Pascal Mystery with regard to man:

The Pascal Mystery is the culmination of this revealing and effecting of mercy, which is able to justify man, to restore justice in the sense of that salvific order which God willed from the beginning in man and, through man, in the world. The suffering Christ speaks in a special way to man, and not only to the believer. The non-believer also will be able to discover in him the eloquence of solidarity with the human lot, as also the harmonious fullness of disinterested dedication to the cause of man, to truth and to love.⁶²

John Paul II in the above quotation saw the cross of Christ as a gift to humanity. This was because the cross emerged from the love that man was created in the image and likeness of God. God, as John Paul II had reminded us, is not merely satisfied with remaining closely linked with the world as the Creator and the ultimate source of existence, but he is also linked to humanity. John Paul II had pointed out and continued to insist that the Pascal Mystery is the high point of the manifestation of God's mercy. It is the peak of the revelation and effecting of mercy. It is the work of redemption, which is able to justify man, and to restore him to the state, which God willed from the beginning for him. John Paul II was saying that the *mysterium pietatis* which coincided with the mystery of Redemption was God's response to the *mysterium iniquitatis*.⁶³ The suffering of Christ spoke in a special

way to humanity as a whole. According to John Paul II, Christ's suffering did not only speak to the believer, but also to non-believer because, the non-believer will discover in Jesus' suffering, the outstanding generosity of action which he accomplished for the good of every human person. In other words, it was a work of love done on behalf of every created human being.

John Paul II continued to affirm that the Redemption that took place through the Pascal Mystery definitively achieved the restoration of dignity to man and had given meaning to his life in the world, a meaning that was lost to a considerable extent because of sin.⁶⁴ In John Paul II's understanding, the cross on Calvary upon which Christ conducted his final dialogue with God was an action, which emerged completely out of love for man created in the image of God.⁶⁵ In John Paul II's explanation, the Cross of Christ was the most profound condescension of God to humanity and to what man, especially in difficult and painful moments, looks on as his unhappy destiny.⁶⁶ John Paul II, therefore, said that the Cross of Christ was like a touch of eternal love upon the most painful wounds of humanity's earthly existence,⁶⁷ showing love to be more powerful than sin. He went on to say that in the Pascal Mystery the limits of the many-sided evil in which human person became a sharer during his early existence were surpassed. In this statement, John Paul II was stressing the fact that in the Pascal Mystery, the human dignity lost by physical and moral evil was restored.

The Cross of Christ on Calvary, therefore, stood beside the path of the «wonderful exchange» the «*admirabile commercium*», the wonderful self-communication of God to humanity, which involved the call to human person to share in the divine life. It included the granting

releuto dal prezioso sangue di Cristo», address at Nairobi, *JCP*, III/1 (1980), 1184-1187.

⁶¹ Cf. *RH*, n. 10, in *AAS* 71 (1979), 274.

⁶² Cf. *DM*, n. 7, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1201-1202.

⁶³ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 8, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1204.

⁶⁴ Cf. *DM*, n. 8, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1204.

⁶¹ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *SC*, n. 5.

⁶² *DM*, n. 7, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1201.

⁶³ *RP*, n. 19, in *AAS* 77 (1985), John Paul II continued to acknowledge the mercy of God shown in our Redemption: GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Noi siamo il popolo

of participation in the life of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁶⁸ E. R. Martinez describing how St. Paul sees God's work in our reconciliation says that according to Paul God has demonstrated his love and mercy for humanity by appointing Jesus as the *hilasterion* (Propitiatory, atonement).⁶⁹ In considering the work of Christ, John Paul II at this

⁶⁸ Cf. *Ibid.* n. 7, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1202. Here John Paul II brought out the theology of the *admirabile commercium*, where Jesus suffered and underwent the Cross in our place by confronting the power of sin and overcame it through suffering love. According to J. J. O'Donnell this means that we are then inserted into his Sonship anew. This explains why Paul says that we are a new creation. Therefore, in the theology of the *admirabile commercium*, Jesus became what we were (sin) so that we could become what he was (righteousness): cf. J. J. O'DONNELL, *The Mystery of the Trinitarian God*, Sheed & Ward, London 1988, 71. John Paul II here called to mind the presence of the three divine Persons in the Paschal Mystery. According to him, the passion and death of Jesus is an ineffable mystery of love in which the three divine Persons were present. God the Father took the absolute initiative, because he loved humanity first, and in delivering the Son, he exposed his dearest possession. Quoting Paul, he said that God «did not spare his own Son», that is, he did not keep him for himself as a jealously held treasure, «but gave him up for us all»: cf. *TE*, 70. In John Paul II's explanation, just as in the intimacy of Trinitarian life, so too in this exchange of love that took place between the Father and the Son in the mystery of Golgotha, the Holy Spirit was the Person-Love in whom the love of the Father and the Son converge. The Letter to the Hebrews develops this image of the sacrifice, when it states that Jesus offered himself «through the eternal Spirit» (Heb 9,13). John Paul II recalled that it had been shown in *Dei* that the «eternal Spirit» meant precisely the Holy Spirit, and just as the fire consumed the sacrificial victims of the old ritual sacrifices, so «the Holy Spirit acted in a special way in this absolute self-giving of the Son of Man in order to transform this suffering into redemptive love», *Dei*, n. 40: *TE*, 70-71. According to II. Von Balthasar, to think of the event of the Cross as a divine drama involving the Father and the Son, then, this drama must be grounded in the eternal Trinitarian drama of the divine life: cf. II. U. VON BALTHASAR, *Theodramatik* III, Johannes, Einsiedeln 1980, 297-305.

⁶⁹ *Hilasterion* was the golden steel plate, which used to be on top of the Ark of the Covenant in the temple of Jerusalem. It was a point in the «Holy of Holies», that is, a place designated as the holiest where atonement to God is made and where God used to meet with his people every year for mercy and forgiveness: cf. E. R. MARTINEZ, *La vita Cristiana e la spiritualità secondo San Paolo*, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Roma 2000, 58. E. R. Martinez explaining further said that the original *hilasterion* was destroyed or lost when the temple of Solomon was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B. C., but there is no danger of destruction of the new *hilasterion* and nothing can separate us from him, cf. *Ibid.* St. Bonaventure also reflecting on Christ's Passion toward redemption wrote: «Christ the Lord was stained with his own

point recalled the affirmation of some earlier Councils of what is essential for Jesus' messianic mission. He said:

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed expresses it as follows: "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven." The essential thing in Christ's entire mission is the work of salvation, which is indicated by his very name "Jesus" (*Ye-shua* - God saves). That name was given together with the announcement of the birth of the Son of God, when the angel said to Joseph, "She [Mary] will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21).⁷⁰

John Paul II said that the Cross of Christ made clear to humanity the deepest root of evil, which were fixed in sin and death. He saw the Paschal Mystery as the total fulfilment of the messianic programme that Christ formulated in the Synagogue at Nazareth (Lk 4, 18-21).⁷¹ The content of the programme, John Paul II recalled, consisted in the revelation of the merciful love for the poor, the suffering and the prisoners, for the blind, the oppressed and sinners.⁷² He therefore concluded that it was precisely beside the path of humanity's eternal election to the dignity of being adopted children of God that there stood in history the Cross of Christ.⁷³

Benedict XVI also tells us how deep and how far the love and mercy of God have gone:

[...] In Jesus Christ, it is God himself who goes in search of the "stray sheep", a suffering and lost humanity. When Jesus speaks in his parables

and blood, which flowed profusely: first from the blood sweat, then from the lashes and from the thorns, then from the nails and finally from the lance. So that with God there might be *plentiful redemption*» (Ps 129, 7): cf. ST. BONAVENTURE, *The Soul's journey into God. The Tree of Life. The Life of St. Francis: The Classics of Western Spirituality*, Paulist Press, New Jersey 1978, 156.

⁷⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Jesus: Son and Savior. A Catechesis on the Creed*, vol. II, Pauline Books and Media, Boston 1996, 389-390 (henceforth: *JSS*).

⁷¹ Cf. *DM*, n. 8, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1204.

⁷² Cf. *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, n. 7, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1202.

of the shepherd who goes after the lost sheep, of the woman who looks for the lost coin, of the father who goes to meet and embrace his prodigal son, these are no mere words: they constitute an explanation of his very being and activity. His death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love.⁷⁴

The Holy Spirit as the Life of Mercy

Christ promised to the Apostles that he would send the Holy Spirit who will make sure that the mercy he had incarnated continued:

When the time for Jesus to leave this world had almost come, he told the Apostles of "another Counselor" (Jn 14,16). The Evangelist John, who was present, writes that, during the Last Supper before the day of his Passion and Death, Jesus addressed the Apostles with these words: "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son [...] I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever."⁷⁵

John Paul II explained that the Spirit of truth whom Jesus called the Paraclete (*parakletos*) meaning «Counselor», and also «intercessor», or «advocate» would come. This Paraclete will be another Counselor, since Jesus was the first Counselor (cf. 1Jn 2,1).⁷⁶ Jesus Himself felt that his departure was necessary in order to send the second Counselor. But it was a departure that will cause the Apostles to be sorrowful, the sorrow that would be eventually turned into joy:

Therefore Jesus Christ says in the Upper Room: "It is to your advantage I go away: [...] if I go, I will send him to you" (Jn 16, 7). The "departure" of Christ through the Cross has the power of the Redemption- and this also means a new presence of the Spirit of God in the creation: the new beginning of God's self-communication to man in the Holy Spirit.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 12.

⁷⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *DeV*, n. 3, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 813.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 3, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 813.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 14, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 821.

John Paul II gave the proper identity of the type of spirit the Apostles were waiting for. He explained that they were waiting for the Holy Spirit, «the Spirit of the Father», the Spirit of the Son. John Paul II asserted that Holy Spirit was the Spirit of Jesus Christ, as the Apostles and Paul of Tarsus testified.⁷⁸ John Paul II affirmed that the risen Christ eventually sent the Holy Spirit: «[...] on the evening of that day, the day of the week, [...] Christ stood among them in the Upper Room, where the disciples were, [...] breathed on them, and said to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit"» (Jn 20, 19-22).⁷⁹

John Paul II paid particular attention to the relation of the incarnate Son, Christ to the Holy Spirit. In other words, he pointed to the fact that Pneumatology and Christology were interdependent. He repeatedly mentioned that the Holy Spirit was the gift, which Christ gave through his cross. For John Paul II, while Jesus was the first Paraclete (cf. 1 Jn 2, 1), the Holy Spirit continued Christ's merciful mission. J. M. Miller observed that John Paul II drew attention to the causal relationship of interdependence between the two divine Persons: «The Holy Spirit will come insofar as Christ will depart through the Cross: he will come not only *afterwards*, but *because of* the Redemption accomplished by Christ, through the will and action of the Father». ⁸⁰ John Paul II held that the God's new self-communication to human beings was

⁷⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *DM*, n. 8, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1207

⁸⁰ *DeV*, n. 8; cf. nn. 3, 13, 14, 30, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 813-814, 822, 831; cf. also J. M. MILLER, «Editor's Introduction», 262, F. J. Caponi reflecting on the Pneumatology of H. U. Von Balthasar pointed out that for Von Balthasar, the Holy Spirit is both revealer of Jesus Christ and revealed by Jesus Christ. Following St. Paul's emphases that the Holy Spirit «Christifies» believers: «As you are sons, God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son crying, "Abba, Father"» (Ga. 4,6). Von Balthasar insisted that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. According to him, the Holy Spirit is both the «glory that radiates forth from the form of Christ, and the grace that responds from within the believer» according to F. J. Caponi, in Von Balthasar's view, without this Holy Spirit, *neither* can the form be correctly perceived, nor can the believer be transformed; cf. F. J. CAPONI, «Aspects of the Pneumatologies of Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar», *NTR* 20 (2007), 8-9; cf. also G. FERRARO, «The Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*: The Pneumatological Dimension», *OR* (17), 14 September (1981), 5.

inseparably linked to Christ's redemptive work, which the Holy Spirit prolonged in history. John Paul II continued to explain that Christ's departure at Calvary was the price paid for the Spirit's coming.

Mission of the Holy Spirit to Humanity

John Paul II called people's attention to the mission of the Holy Spirit to humanity and said that the Holy Spirit was present in the Paschal Mystery «in all his divine subjectivity»: as one who is now to continue the salvific work rooted in the sacrifice of the Cross.⁸¹ According to John Paul II, the Paraclete was active in the world from its origins, but because of original sin and subsequent history of actual sin, a fresh start was necessary. This was accomplished through the Paschal Mystery, and it ushered in «the time of the new beginning of the self-communication of the Triune God to humanity in the Holy Spirit through the work of Christ the Redeemer».⁸²

John Paul II took up the mission of the Holy Spirit to the individual. According to J. M. Miller, John Paul II's view of the Spirit's mission to the individual was in light of the importance he attributed to the dignity of human person.⁸³ In John Paul II's explanation, the individual's personal fulfilment is found in divine affiliation. The Holy Spirit as the Giver of life communicates himself to human beings, and establishes an intimate interpersonal communion between each individual and Triune God. The gift of the Holy Spirit, John Paul II maintained, «ultimately meant a call to friendship, in which the transcendent depths of God become in some way opened to participation on the part of man».⁸⁴ «When God the Father sends the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, Sanctifying grace is the principle and source of man's new life: divine, supernatural».⁸⁵

⁸¹ *DeV*, n. 42, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 857.

⁸² *DeV*, n. 23, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 831.

⁸³ Cf. J. M. MILLER, «Editor's Introduction», 264.

⁸⁴ *DeV*, n. 34, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 847.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 52, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 872. F. J. Caponi reflecting on K. Rahner's Pneumatology, touches on his «supernatural existential», that is K. Rahner's proposal that God offers the Holy Spirit to every human being on the level of a person's

John Paul II affirmed that the Holy Spirit gives life and strengthens the «inner Man»:

*In this Spirit, who is the eternal gift, the Triune God opens himself to man, to the human spirit. The hidden breath of the divine Spirit enables the human spirit to open in its turn before the waving and sanctifying self-opening of God. Through the gift of grace, which comes from the Holy Spirit, man enters a "new life," is brought into the supernatural reality of the divine life itself and becomes a "dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit," a living temple of God. For through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son come to him and take up their abode».*⁸⁶

Building on the above quotation we recall John Paul II's affirmation where he said that there is only one vocation for every individual, which is in terms of the elevation to divine grace, leading to the communion with the Triune God. In John Paul II's explanation, new life comes to people when God sends the Spirit of Jesus the Son into their hearts (cf. Ga 4, 4; Rm 5, 5; 2 Co 1, 22). The divine filiation placed in the human soul through the sanctifying grace is the work of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁷ As the uncreated Gift, the Holy Spirit gives human beings the created gift of new life. Through the Holy Spirit the Trinity comes to dwell in them (cf. Jn 14, 23) and raises people to a sharing in the divine

transcendental openness. This is because God desires the salvation of all men and women (cf. Tm 2, 4). K. Rahner teaches that the Holy Spirit gives rise to the concrete experiences Christians associate or connect with the Holy Spirit for example, worship, joy, peace hope, forgiveness, etc. For K. Rahner, all powers and possibilities of Christian action, as authorised, sustained, and animated by the Holy Spirit of God, «are charisms, gifts of the Spirit». In the explanation of F. J. Caponi, for K. Rahner, through these experiences we become more like Christ. Therefore for K. Rahner, the Holy Spirit is the agent of Christification, and the Church is the concrete means of the Holy Spirit's work: cf. F. J. CAPONI, «Aspects of the Pneumatologies of Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar», *NTR* 20 (2007), 12-13. A. Pigna describes the Holy Spirit as the divine energy that continually acts in the world: cf. A. PIGNA, *La Vita Spirituale: Contenuti, in errore, pienezza*, Edizioni OCD, Roma 2004

⁸⁶ *DeV*, n. 58, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 873.

⁸⁷ Cf. *Ibid.* n. 52, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 872.

life itself.⁸⁸ In this sense, according to John Paul, «man lives in God and by God: he lives according to the Spirit».⁸⁹ This meant that the Holy Spirit's first mission was to individual human beings, for he raised them to supernatural life.⁹⁰ John Paul II explained that through the gift of grace that comes from the Holy Spirit, human person enters a new life, and he or she is brought into the supernatural reality of the divine life and becomes a «dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit», a living temple of God (cf. Rm 8,9; 1Co 6,19).⁹¹

John Paul II affirmed that human person's intimate relationship with God in the Holy Spirit also enables him or her to understand himself or herself and his own humanity in a new way. In this way, the image and likeness of God, which man was from the beginning is fully realised.⁹²

This intimate truth of the human being, John Paul II said, has to be continually rediscovered in the light of Christ, the prototype of the relationship with God.⁹³ John Paul II affirmed that the effective knowledge and full implementation of this truth about human being came about only by the power of the Holy Spirit. John Paul II affirmed

⁸⁸ J. J. O'Donnell reflecting said that the image of the Holy Spirit as a Gift has a firm foundation in the Bible. He recalled the favourite text of St. Augustine, namely, Romans (5:5): cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, Bk XV, ch. 18, n. 32, where St. Paul speaks of «love of God which has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us». J. J. also called to mind the letter to the Hebrews (6:1) where the authors speaks of the enlightenment which believers receive «when they have had a taste of the heavenly gift and share in the Holy Spirit»: cf. J. J. O'DONNELL, *The Mystery of the Trinitarian God*, 77. In this context K. Rahner in one of his works speaks of the Giver, the Gift and the condition of accepting the Gift. All these three can be identified with the Holy Spirit: God gives himself, he bestowed himself as Gift. This gift enables people to participate in God's own life. But according to K. Rahner, the elevation of human person to share the divine life exceeds the capacity of creature. Therefore, K. Rahner says that the Holy Spirit is the condition of possibility of our accepting the gift: cf. K. RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, Darton Longman and Todd, London 1978, 223.

⁸⁹ *DeV*, n. 58, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 884.

⁹⁰ Cf. J. M. MILLER, «Editor's Introduction», 265.

⁹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 58, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 884.

⁹² Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 59, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 884-885; cf. (Gn 1,26): AQUINAS, *STh.* I, q. 93, aa. 4, 5, 8.

⁹³ Cf. *DeV*, n. 59, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 885.

that man learns this truth from Jesus and puts it into practice in his or her own life by the power of the Spirit, «whom Jesus Christ has given to us».⁹⁴ He asserted that the risen Christ is now at work in the hearts of men and women through the power of his Spirit. The Spirit of the risen Christ animates, purifies and strengthens the noble longings «by which the human family strives to make its life more humane [...]».⁹⁵

John Paul II dealt with the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church, which was manifested on Pentecost and the era of the Church began when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostolic community in the Upper Room. John Paul II said:

Having accomplished the work that the Father had entrusted to the Son on earth (cf. Jn 17,4), on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was sent to sanctify the Church forever, so that believers might have access to the Father through Christ in one Spirit (Ep 2,18). [...] «Doubtless the Holy Spirit already was at work in the world before Christ was glorified. Yet on the day of Pentecost, he came down upon the disciples to remain with them forever. On that day the Church was publicly revealed to the multitude, and the Gospel began to spread among the nations by means of preaching.» The era of the Church began with the «coming» that is to say with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem.⁹⁶

According to John Paul II the Church perpetuates this Pentecostal grace through time, and in this sense, he called the Church «the visible dispenser of the sacred signs, while the Holy Spirit acts in them as the invisible dispenser of the life which they signify».⁹⁷ In John Paul II's explanation, there is no doubt that the Holy Spirit was also present outside the visible body of the Church.⁹⁸ Because as the source of all God's salvific activity in the world, the Holy Spirit was active from the beginning through man created in the image and likeness (Gn 1, 26-27). This universal presence of the Holy Spirit notwithstanding, John Paul II

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 60, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 888; cf. GS, n. 38.

⁹⁶ *DeV*, n. 25, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 833-834.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 63, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 892.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 53, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 874.

still attributed a necessary role of mediation to the Church.⁹⁹ In explaining he said that in the Church, the Holy Spirit «unceasingly continued the historical presence on earth of the Redeemer and his saving work».¹⁰⁰ It is through the Church that the Holy Spirit is present in the world. John Paul II held that ever since the Pentecost experience, Christ's promise to send the Holy Spirit «is being fulfilled in human history through the Church».¹⁰¹ He saw the Church as the Holy Spirit's bridge in the world, in the sense that by means of the Church, the Holy Spirit reaches the heart of the people of all times and places.

Now I shall call to mind our intent. We recall that our intention was to discover within the Soteriology, the role of each of the divine Persons that will serve as the foundation of John Paul II's spirituality of mercy. John Paul II remembered Jesus' announcement: «Unless I go, the Paraclete will not come to you» (Jn 16, 7).¹⁰² John Paul II asserted that Jesus announced that the Holy Spirit would come to «remain with us».¹⁰³ «And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always» (Jn 14, 17). These words express the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as inner guest in people's hearts. John Paul II called to mind that Holy Spirit was present in the Paschal Mystery «in all his divine subjectivity as the one who is now to continue the salvific work rooted in the sacrifice of the Cross».¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 54, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 876; cf. also J. M. MILLER, «Editor's Introduction», 265.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 7, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 816.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, n. 61, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 889; cf. nn. 3, 14, 23, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 813-814, 822, 831.

¹⁰² John Paul II recalled that Jesus announced that the Holy Spirit would come to remain with people. The Holy Spirit remains in the heart of anyone among all the souls belonging to Christ who welcomes the Spirit. John Paul II explained further by saying that through the presence of the Holy Spirit in the soul, a person can become that true worshipper of God (cf. Jn 4, 24). According to John Paul II, the hour of those who «adore the Father in spirit and truth» arrived with Christ and it becomes a reality in every person who accepts the Holy Spirit and lives according to Spirit's inspiration and personal direction: cf. JOHN PAUL II, *The Spirit, Giver of Life and Love: A Catechesis on The Creed*, vol. III, Pauline Books & Media, Boston 1996, 273 (henceforth: *SGI*).

¹⁰³ *SGI*, 273.

¹⁰⁴ *SGI*, n. 42, *AAS* 78 (1986), 857.

Following the explanation of John Paul II, the Holy Spirit is the love of the Father and the Son, and as such is the, Trinitarian gift, and at the same time the eternal source of divine giving of gift to creatures.¹⁰⁵

In John Paul II's understanding, the mission of the Holy Spirit to humanity, was the assurance of the given of gifts to men and women. In other words, John Paul II affirmed that becoming children of God occurred when God the Father send the Holy Spirit of his Son into our hearts, and this meant a new life. We have seen that the mission of the Holy Spirit to humanity involved a new life, which brought participation, a sharing in the divine life where human person lives in God and by God;¹⁰⁶ he lives according to the Spirit and sets his or her mind on the things of the Spirit.¹⁰⁷ All these Holy Spirit's actions in the life of human person depicted mercy achieved by the Cross of Christ.

Here we need to call to mind John Paul II's affirmation concerning what Jesus said about reciprocity of mercy:

[...] Christ's messianic program, the program of mercy, becomes the program of his people, [...]. Christ, precisely as the crucified one, is the

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 63, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 891-892.

¹⁰⁶ This is why D. V. Meconi said that in Christ, the Holy Spirit confers the Father's very life, uniting humanity and divinity in an everlasting union of grace: cf. D. V. MECONI, «Dedication in the thought of John Paul II, *ITQ* 71 (2006), 128.

¹⁰⁷ This would mean that the person, he or she must be someone who knows how to discern the Spirit. In this context B. Secondin reflecting on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian calls to mind the affirmation of Paul, where he highlighted that for Paul, a Christian is constitutively a person who knows how to discern (Ga 5, 16-23). He recognised that the ideal life of a mature Christian (a mature person) is to arrive at a point where he or she is a person directed by the Spirit (Rm 8, 2), that is, the capacity to accept God and his will in the proper conduct of his or her life: cf. B. SECONDIN, *La Spiritualità nei Ritmi del Tempo*, Edizioni Borla, Roma 1997, 34. The Second Vatican Council emphasised this point on discerning and responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit when it says: «The people of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the whole world. Impelled by that faith, they try to discern the true sign of God's presence and the purpose in the events, the needs and the desires which it shares with the rest of humanity today. For faith casts a new light on everything and makes known the full ideal which God has set for humanity, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human» *GS*, n. 11.

one who stands at the door and knocks at the heart of every man, without restricting his freedom, but instead seeking to draw from this very freedom love, which is not only an act of solidarity with the suffering Son of man, but also a kind of mercy shown by each one of us to the Son of the eternal Father. [...] In a word, is not this the position of Christ with regard to man when he says: as you did it to one of least of these... you did it to me (Mt 24.35)?¹⁰⁸

Here John Paul II, remembered Jesus' requirement from the people, which held that mercy was to be reciprocated. John Paul II noted the reciprocal attitude involved in the merciful act of Redemption. In the above quotation, Jesus was not only the merciful Redeemer, but also «the one who stands at the door of every man».¹⁰⁹ In this sense, Christ sought people's love; he manifested a desire for a kind of solidarity in mercy.¹¹⁰

From what I have discussed and heard John Paul II say about the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of the people, it is clear that the possibility of solidarity in mercy is made possible only through the action of the Holy Spirit. In other words, I gathered from John Paul II that the reciprocity of mercy, which Jesus expected from the beneficiaries of mercy, is a response that is possible only under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

According to John Paul II's understanding, Pauline expression in some way encompassed and synthesised the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the people: «The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us» (Rm 5, 5). John Paul II, therefore, pointed out that the Holy Spirit is the one who pours out God's love and mercy into human hearts in overflowing measure, thereby enabling people to become sharers in that love and mercy.¹¹¹ In other words, this action of the Holy Spirit in the life of the people will help to explain the spirituality of mercy in John Paul II. In what follows we shall see how it all came to be.

¹⁰⁸ *DM*, n. 8, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1205-1206.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1205.

¹¹⁰ Cf. J. M. MILLER, «Editor's Introduction», 105.

¹¹¹ Cf. *SCG*, 281-282.

The Foundation of the Spirituality of Mercy of John Paul II

Considering what we have already discussed above about the role of the three divine Persons in the actualisation of the merciful plan, and the insights on the action of the Holy Spirit in particular, it is clear that John Paul II had received mercy as a gift. This is in line with J. J. O'Donnell's reflection when he says:

This outpouring of the Spirit and the essential link of the Spirit with the cross has important implications for Christian spirituality and praxis. Here it could suffice to say that the gift of the Spirit, poured out from the cross, grounds the Christian spirituality of compassion. [...] The suffering and sin of the world touch the divine heart, so that the three persons of the Trinity involve themselves in our suffering and redeem it. On the basis of such a vision of God the only legitimate Christian response is a spirituality of compassion. [...] ¹¹²

J. J. O'Donnell in the above reflection points at the sending of the Holy Spirit linked with the Paschal Mystery as the basis for Christian spirituality of compassion. He is affirming that it was mercy that prompted the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity to turn to our misery and removed it forever. For this reason, J. J. O'Donnell said that the only adequate response to such a merciful action is a spirituality of mercy.¹¹³

¹¹² J. J. O'DONNELL, *The Mystery of the Trine God*, 73.

¹¹³ Explaining further, J. J. O'Donnell said that the Christian is called not to withdraw from the world but to overcome the threat of a lack of interest or concern, and like God, to open himself to the suffering of other people (brothers and sisters). Cf. *Ibid.* He called this identification, (the key word in Christian spirituality), in the sense that God has identified himself with the poor and the abandoned in the Cross of Christ, the Christian, in turn, wants to place himself or herself where God has placed himself. This means that the more a person grows in love, the more the person chooses the form God himself has chosen. In this sense it will be a choice motivated by an identification of love. In other words, the Holy Spirit poured out from the Cross, drives the contemporary humanity (believer) to an identification of mercy/compassion with the contemporary Christ, the Christ who can and must be

In the context of J. J. O'Donnell's insights, Augustine called us back to the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the people when he affirmed that mercy is always a gift received. St. Augustine says:

«[...] You have no source of mercy in yourself; you can show mercy to someone else only because God has given it to you as a gift [...]».¹¹¹

Augustine meant that no one has mercy in himself or herself except as a gift received; this is another way of saying that for anyone to practice mercy he or she must have received it from the source of mercy. This brings us to our earlier discovery about spirituality where J. R. Sheets affirmed that spirituality is not a style of life, but a particular way in which the Holy Spirit moves the pneumatic person providing a vision, with a focus. Therefore, from our findings within the research we have revealed that the profound root of John Paul II's spirituality of mercy is disclosed in his *Encyclical Dominum et vivificantem, Lord and Giver of Life*. In it one gets to the *Pneuma* (the Spirit) behind all the pneumatic activity in time.

The Holy Spirit is presented as both within the Trinitarian life and the inspirer, the orchestrator of all the redemptive activity in time and history.¹¹² The Holy Spirit is presented as the absolute basis behind all spirituality. He himself as love is the eternal uncreated Gift. The Holy Spirit is the source and the beginning of every giving of gift to creatures.¹¹⁶ He is the eternal source of every gift that comes from God, the direct principle and the subject of God's self-communication in the order of grace.¹¹⁷

Ibid.; cf. also ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA as found in M. IVENS, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary A Handbook for Retreat Directors*, n. 167, 125.

¹¹¹ «In te, a te, in alterum nulla est misericordia, nisi eam tibi Deus donet [...]» ST. AUGUSTINE, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 76, 9-10, in D. E. Dekkers - J. Trapport, ed., CCL 39, Turnhout, Brepols 1956, 1060.

¹¹² Cf. J. R. SHEETS, «The spirituality of Pope John Paul II», 112.

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Dei*, n. 34, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 846.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 50, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 869-870; cf. also J. R. SHEETS, 112. In this context it would be appropriate to recall the affirmation of K. McDonnell when he speaks of the Holy Spirit as the light, which allows people (believers) to see Christ. According to him unless one dwells in this light the eye is blind and fails to grasp and

This gift of the Holy Spirit explains the spirituality of mercy of John Paul II. He received the grace of response to the self-communication and self-giving of the God of mercies culminated in the Paschal Mystery of passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven which is completed at Pentecost, with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles.¹¹⁸

John Paul II himself was certain that mercy was a gift from the source of mercy to man when he affirmed that Christ taught that man does not just receive and experience mercy of God, but that he is also called to practice mercy toward others.¹¹⁹ T. Koehler also sees mercy, as an invitation to imitate divine mercy: «Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate» (Lk 6, 36). He linked this invitation with another call in Matthew: «You must therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect» (Mt 5, 48). According to Koehler, since the beginning of Christianity, mercy is seen as a fulfillment of a spiritual growth according to Christ's teaching on perfection. As Mediator, Christ taught and fulfilled the Father's mercy, and included mercy among the Beatitudes (Mt 5, 7).¹²⁰ Koehler recalled that for St. Paul God's mercy is a mystery beyond any understanding (Rm 8, 10-11). He

understand Christ as the revelation of the Father's mercy. He sees the Holy Spirit as the proportionality and says that with the proportionality which the Holy Spirit gives, a person can know Jesus, the image of the Father of mercy: cf. K. McDONNELL, «A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit», *Theological Studies* 46 (1985), 223.

¹¹⁸ JOHN PAUL II, C77H, 58.

¹¹⁹ Cf. DM, nn. 3, 14, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1185, 1221.

¹²⁰ T. KOEHLER, «Misericordia», in *DSP*, X, 1313. In Koehler's understanding when one reads the biblical texts on mercy, one rapidly becomes aware, that it is not a question of mere pity towards one's neighbour, and one cannot reduce mercy just to forgiving of offences or hurts. To live according to the likeness of the Father of mercy (2 Co 1, 3; Jm 5, 11). Koehler says, includes a moral, spiritual and religious conversion. According to him the Old Covenant for the benefit of Israel prepared the New Covenant for the benefit of all humankind, for in this New Covenant, imitation of the Father has become perceivable and entirely human in Jesus. As Mediator, Koehler says, Christ taught and fulfilled the Father's mercy, and included mercy among the beatitudes: cf. *Ibid.*

laid out Paul's reflections on God's mercy in his letter to the Romans, where Paul described God's mercy in its universal outreach:

«...!; it was through one man that sin came into the world, and, since death came owing to sin, thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned. [...] There is no comparison between the free gift and the offence. If death came to many through the offence of one man, how much greater an effect the grace of God has had, coming to so many through the one man Jesus Christ» (Rm 5, 12.15).¹²¹

This God's mercy is to be responded to with mercy. This is the point I have already established, namely, that the spirituality of mercy of John Paul II was a response to mercy. The Holy Spirit moved him to mercy through which God's mercy incarnated by Christ would be manifested. The spirituality of mercy of John Paul II is a faith-response to the gift of Redemption, the gift of mercy he had received, which the gift of the Holy Spirit enabled him to recognise. It is a grace received; it is the gift of mercy that John Paul II has responded to.¹²²

Having spent time on my attempt to discover the foundation of John Paul II's spirituality of mercy, and I have revealed that it is a response to mercy which the gift of the Holy Spirit made possible in John Paul II. We shall now turn to see how John Paul II utilised this gift of mercy he had received.

Practice of Mercy in John Paul II's Life

My task here is to investigate how John Paul II has put into practice the gift of mercy he has received. John Paul II had placed a strong

¹²¹ According to T. Koehler, Paul sees God's merciful plan as gratuitous one. He recalled God's revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai as a sign of this mercy. God is merciful towards Moses and Israel, not because of Moses' merits, but because he is mercy. This mercy finally includes all nations. Paul's reflections lead him to concentrate on the vision of the merciful plan unfolding itself from Adam to Jesus cf. I. KOEHLER, «Miscellanea», 1316.

¹²² According to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, John Paul II's Spirituality of mercy would be regarded as of the fruits of grace the Spirit produces in God's people: cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, LG, n. 39.

emphasis on mercy throughout his Petrine ministry. We recalled how he had right from the beginning of his pontificate, declared that creating the awareness of mercy was his special task. He considered mercy as an assignment Providence has given him in the situation of humanity, the Church and the world. John Paul II regarded mercy as the task he had to live and fulfil. He therefore felt that mercy had to be disseminated and be perpetuated. He wrote strongly of his ministry as a ministry of mercy:

The Bishop of Rome exercises a ministry originating in the manifold mercy of God. [...] The authority proper to this ministry is completely at the service of God's merciful plan and it must always be seen in this perspective. He knows that he must be a sign of mercy. His is a ministry of mercy, born of an act of Christ's own mercy [...].¹²³

John Paul II continued to assert that mercy was his assigned task. To talk about the practice of mercy by John Paul II, would mean presenting the whole of his pontificate. I say this because it is like he spent all of his Petrine ministry teaching and living mercy. We have seen above that for Aquinas, the word mercy denotes a person's compassionate heart for another's distress.¹²⁴ Aquinas sees mercy as heartfelt sympathy for another's unhappiness, impelling us to help him or her to remedy the evil that causes the suffering.¹²⁵ John Paul II understood mercy not only as a virtue, but also as a Christian way of life, which reveals and realises itself particularly in the face of suffering, injustice, poverty, as well as physical and moral evil in which human person becomes entrapped. He therefore warned against limiting mercy exclusively to the area of thoughts and feelings:

The true and proper meaning of mercy does not consist only in looking, however penetratingly and compassionately, at moral, physical or material

¹²³ JOHN PAUL II, *Ut Unum Sint* Encyclical Letter, nn. 92-93, in *AAS* 87 (1995), 976.

¹²⁴ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *STH*, II-II, q. 30, a. 1.

¹²⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*

evil: mercy is manifested in its true and proper aspect when it restores to value, promotes and *draws good from all the forms of evil* in the world.¹²⁶

In this sense, John Paul II presented mercy as a unifying and elevating power restoring man to his own self. John Paul II pointed to the fact that mercy is based on the common experience of that good which is man, and on the common experience of the dignity that is proper to him.¹²⁷ It was the same concern that John Paul II, as Karol Wojtyła, expressed in 1968 to the Jesuit theologian, Henri de Lubac:

I devote my very rare free moments to a work that is close to my heart and devoted to the metaphysical sense and mystery of the PERSON. It seems to me that the debate today is being played on that level. The evil of our times consists in the first place in a kind of degradation, of the fundamental uniqueness of each person. [...] This evil is even much more of the metaphysical order than the moral order. To this disintegration, we must oppose, rather than sterile polemics, a kind of "recapitulation" of the inviolable mystery of the person.¹²⁸

In other words, John Paul II's practice of mercy followed this direction. He lived mercy by creating an awareness of mercy, which he concretised by writing the *Dives in Misericordia* as we have already mentioned above. It will be helpful to highlight some more areas of his virtue of mercy.

Solicitude for Humanity's Welfare and the Dignity of Human Person

John Paul II also lived mercy by his concern for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the citizens of the world and by creating a general awareness of the dignity of these human persons.

At the General Assembly of the United Nations, John Paul II, in his practice of mercy, appealed to the inhabitants of the earth to reject

¹²⁶ *DM*, n. 6, in *MIS* 72 (1980), 1199.

¹²⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 1198.

¹²⁸ H. DE LUBAC, *At the Service of the Church*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1993, 171-172; cf. also A. DULLES, «The Theologian», *America* 192 (April 18, 2005), 18.

practices that devalue human dignity. He declared that every analysis towards human welfare and harmonious living, has to start from the «premise that every human being is endowed with a dignity that must never be lessened»,¹²⁹ but has to instead be respected and safeguarded. He enumerated some of the most important human bodily and spiritual welfare that are universally recognised: the right to life, liberty and security of persons; the right to food, clothing, housing, and sufficient health care; the right to education and culture; the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the right to manifest this religious belief either individually or in community, in public or in private.¹³⁰

J. R. Formicola expressed her views about John Paul II's practice of mercy: According to her, John Paul II's prophetic commitment and effort to eradicate misery in the contemporary world rest on his theological and philosophical understandings of, and respect for, human dignity. She stated that both originate in the religious canon of *imago Dei* and the philosophical theory of transcendence.¹³¹ J. R. Formicola explains her statement:

Imago Dei is the Catholic theological belief that a person is created in the image and likeness of God, a seminal dogma that arises from the biblical account of creation. In Genesis 2: 26, the Lord says, "Let us make mankind in our image and likeness." [...] Every being then, is theologically considered to be equal and worthy of respect, and every person is also understood to have an eschatological longing to return to his or her maker one day.¹³²

According to J. R. Formicola, John Paul II's thorough respect for human being is based first on the theological doctrine of *Imago Dei*.

¹²⁹ JOHN PAUL II, «New York at the General Assembly of the United Nations», in *Pilgrimage of Peace: The Collected Speeches of John Paul II in Ireland and the United States*, Collins, London 1980, 73.

¹³⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 74.

¹³¹ Cf. J. R. FORMICOLA, *Pope John Paul II, Prophetic Politician*, Georgetown University Press, Washington 2002, 52. O. Höffe also observes that emphasis on the rights of man was one the points John Paul II had followed without ceasing, with insistence: cf. O. HÖFFE, «Le Pape Jean Paul II et les Droits de l'homme», in *AA VV, Jean Paul II et les Droits de l'homme*, Éditions Saint-Paul, Paris 1980, 27.

¹³² J. R. FORMICOLA, 53.

and it is the primary source of his commitment to the welfare of every person throughout his pontificate. She asserted that John Paul II's philosophical training was a secondary source of his total dedication to the dignity of the person.¹³³ The view of J. R. Formicola about John Paul II's practice of mercy resembles what J. Ratzinger (Benedict XVI) said about John Paul II's mercy life: «Being near John Paul II, one realizes that he cares about people because he cares about God».¹³⁴ These insights will aid us in affirming what we have proposed above that it looked like John Paul II spent all his Petrine ministry living and teaching mercy.

Forgiving and Asking Forgiveness

One of the ways in which John Paul II lived the virtue of mercy was when he forgave his would be assassin, Mehmet Ali Agca,¹³⁵ in his prison cell on December, 27th, 1983. John Paul II was also instrumental in asking for and receiving clemency for him.

«Let us forgive and ask forgiveness».¹³⁶ Forgiving and asking for forgiveness were among the characteristics of John Paul II's practice of mercy. This was evidenced during the preparation for the celebration of the Year 2000, when John Paul II made the Church more conscious of

¹³³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 53-58.

¹³⁴ J. RATZINGER (now BENEDICT XVI), *The Legacy of John Paul II*, 12.

¹³⁵ Mehmet Ali Agca, was the gunman who tried to kill the John Paul II on 13th May 1981. On 17th May 1981, when Vatican Radio transmitted to the crowd waiting in St. Peter's Square a message recorded by the John Paul II, speaking slowly, he said: «Pray for the brother who shot me and whom I have sincerely pardoned. United to Christ, Priest and Victim, I offer my sufferings for the Church and for the world». L. ACCATTOLI, *Man of the Millennium John Paul II*, 90. Forgiveness is the first act of mercy. The CCC teaches the centrality of forgiveness when it explains the conditional phrase of the Lord's Prayer: «Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us»; CCC, nn. 2838-2845.

¹³⁶ «Perdoniamo e chiediamo il perdono»; GIOVANNI PAOLO II, homily on the Day of Pardon, *IGP*, XXIII/1, 351-355; cf. N. BENAZZI, *Il Papa chiede perdono: Memoria e Riconciliazione la chiesa e la colpa del passato*, N. Benazzi, ed., *L'Espresso* Piccino, Trento 2000; INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the fault of the past*, and homily of John Paul II Mass for the Day of Pardon, Pauline Books and Media, Boston 2000.

the counter-witness of her children by recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel and, instead of offering to the world the witness of a life inspired by the values of faith, «indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly forms of counter-witness».¹³⁷ John Paul II also expressed mercy by asking forgiveness from various groups for the lack of mercy they must have experienced from some sons and daughters of the Catholic Church, over the course of history.¹³⁸ He publicly made these apologies during a public Mass of Pardons.

John Paul II's Mercy Response to the Sick and the Suffering

John Paul II stated that suffering is a feature of every individual life.¹³⁹ According to him it is a fact that every one knows about both from physical suffering of bodily pain and the moral suffering of humiliation and disappointments.¹⁴⁰

In the perspective of the Old Testament, suffering was often regarded as a punishment for sin.¹⁴¹ The story of Job in the Old Testament bears witness to this. In the story the just man Job, who through no fault of his own, suffered great tribulations (cf. Jb 42, 2-17). But the same book of Job makes a further advance by recognising

¹³⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *TMA* Apostolic Letter, n. 33, in *AAS* 87 (1995), 26.

¹³⁸ Cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Day of Pardon» *IGP*, XXIII, 1, (2000), 351-355.

¹³⁹ This is why P. Boyle, in his article on the theology of suffering said that since suffering will certainly be part of human lives, it is better now to analyse human suffering in order to see whether or not, when it arrives, we will be able to make the time profitable for us, to see if «we can make it a time of peace, not confusion: to see if we can make it a time of joy, not sorrow; to see if we can make it a time of merit, not merely a time of endurance»; P. BOYLE, «The Theology of Suffering», *Linacre Quarterly* 70 (2003), 98.

¹⁴⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Solvi feci Doloris* Apostolic Letter, nn. 5, in *AAS* 76 (1984), 203-204, 8, in *AAS* 76 (1984), 208-208 (henceforth: *SD*).

¹⁴¹ Many prophets used this explanation to account for the setbacks of Israel. For example, Azariah in the book of Daniel said to God in prayer: «For you are upright in all that you have done for us, all your deeds are true, all your ways right, all your judgements true. True is the sentence you have given in all that you have brought down on us [...], for you have treated us rightly and truly, as our sins deserve» (Dn 3,27-28); *SD*, n. 10.

suffering that is not a punishment for sin but a test to establish an innocent man's loyalty to God.¹⁴²

John Paul II's apostolic letter *Salvifici Doloris* belonged to the themes which John Paul II had admitted their long gestation in his thought. In one of his plays, *Job*, written when he was 19 years old, John Paul II as Karol Wojtyła recognised the liberating effect of suffering. In his letter to Mieczysław Kotłarczyk on 2nd November 1939, he wrote:

I have lately given much thought to the liberating force of suffering. It is on suffering that Christ's system rests, beginning with the Cross and ending the smallest human torment. This is the true Missiad.¹⁴³

B. Taborski commenting said that these observations of the young Karol Wojtyła were the springboard from which, a few months later, his play, *Job* appeared.¹⁴⁴ The play, *Job* contained the nucleus of the thoughts John Paul II developed on the theme of suffering over the years, up to his Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, in which John Paul II's last words on the meaning of Job's suffering were pronounced:

[...] If the Lord consents to test Job with suffering, he does it to demonstrate the later's righteousness. The suffering has the nature of a test. The Book of Job is not the last word on this subject in Revelation. In a certain way it is a foretelling of the Passion of Christ [...]. Love is more the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of suffering. This answer has been given by God to man in the Cross of Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁵

According to John Paul II, suffering has a new face with the coming of Christianity. With the advent of Christianity it becomes clear that suffering is a divinely appointed means of spiritual transformation, a means of conversion and sanctification. In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ raised human suffering to the level of the redemption, thereby making it possible for each human

¹⁴² Cf. *SD*, n. 12, in *AAS* 76 (1984), 212-213.

¹⁴³ K. WOJTYŁA, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, 24.

¹⁴⁴ B. TABORSKI, introduction to *Job*, in K. KAROL WOJTYŁA, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, 24.

¹⁴⁵ *SD*, nn. 11, in *AAS* 76 (1984), 211-212, 12, in *AAS* 76 (1984), 212-213.

person to become a sharer in his own redemptive suffering.¹⁴⁶ John Paul II meant that human suffering, which is united, with Christ's salvific suffering has a transforming effect on the person who suffers. In his explanation, John Paul II held that in suffering, there is a concealing power that draws an individual interiorly close to Christ. It is a special grace, which, according to John Paul II, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Ignatius of Loyola had received, and it was responsible for their profound conversions.¹⁴⁷

John Paul II, however, alerted the people by stating that the salvific value of suffering provides no excuse for inflicting suffering or failing to alleviate it when we can. John Paul II recalled that Jesus Christ was moved to compassion in the presence of human misery, and he proposed the parable of the Good Samaritan to demonstrate how people are to relate to those who suffer:

The parable of the Good Samaritan belongs to the Gospel of suffering. For it indicates what the relationship of each of us must be towards our suffering neighbor. We are not allowed to "pass by on the other side" indifferently; we must "stop" beside him. [...] This stopping does not mean curiosity but availability. It is like the opening of a certain interior disposition of the heart. The name "Good Samaritan" fits every individual who is sensitive to the sufferings of others, who "is moved" by the misfortune of another. If Christ, who knows the interior of man, emphasizes this compassion, this means that it is important for our whole attitude toward other's suffering.¹⁴⁸

John Paul II insisted that suffering calls for a personal response of love. Suffering constitutes an appeal for mercy and compassion. He said that the proper response to suffering is a double one: people are called to do good both by patient acceptance of their own suffering and by compassionate assistance towards others who suffer.¹⁴⁹ After given human suffering this meaning, John Paul II himself, responded with mercy to the sick people. He established a yearly celebration of the day

¹⁴⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 19, in *AAS* 76 (1984), 225-226.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. P. HOYTLE, "Theology of suffering" 107-108.

¹⁴⁸ *SD*, n. 28, in *AAS* 76 (1984), 243-244.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 30, in *AAS* 76 (1984), 246-248.

of the sick called *The World Day of the Sick* (February 11th feast of Our Lady of Lourdes). John Paul II continually visited hospitals and the sick, both when in Rome and during his international travels (pilgrimages). When as a patient himself, John Paul II visited the sick of Gemelli Hospital. Then after he was discharged, he said: «Now I know better than before that suffering is a dimension of life in which, more profoundly than ever, the grace of redemption takes hold of the human heart». ¹⁵⁰ He also lived the virtue of mercy in his own personal suffering, which he offers for the Church and the world: «I offer my sufferings for the Church and for the world». ¹⁵¹

Promotion of the Message of Mercy Recorded by St. Faustina ¹⁵²

The practice of mercy by John Paul II was also evidenced by his interest in the promotion of the message of mercy as recorded by the Polish nun, Sr. Faustina Kowalska. John Paul II emphatically said that the reflections he offered in his Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* were

¹⁵⁰ John Paul II disclosed this insight on 14th August 1981, as quoted by L. ACCATTOI, *Man of the Millennium John Paul II*, 97.

¹⁵¹ L. ACCATTOI, «Vatican Radio Message transmitted to the crowd on 17th May, 1981», 90; cf. also G. W. KOSICKI, *John Paul II: The Great Mercy Pope*, 17.

¹⁵² St. Faustina Kowalska, was a Polish religious known as the apostle of Divine Mercy, who died in 1938 at the age of thirty-three. Through a series of mystical experiences, St. Faustina believed that she had been called to renew Catholic devotion to God's mercy, which in turn would lead to a general renewal of Catholic spiritual life. Some elements of the divine mercy devotion she created include the «chaplet of Divine Mercy», a set of prayers asking God's mercy on the Church and the world; and a special time at 3 P. M. in memory of Christ's death, including the stations of the cross or Eucharistic adoration when possible. The devotion's icon is the «image of the Merciful Jesus», a painting of Christ clothed in a white garment with two rays emanating from him, representing the vision that St. Faustina had on 22nd February 1931. St. Faustina recorded her mystical experiences in a spiritual diary (*Divine Mercy in my soul*) she kept for four years before her death: cf. ST. FAUSTINA KOWALSKA, *Diary: Divine Mercy in my Soul*, Marians of the Immaculate Conception, Stockbridge 1987 (henceforth: *Diary*). For further information about St. Faustina and the message of Divine Mercy: cf. the Preface, VII-IX, and the Introduction to the *Diary*, XV-XXVII, and the *Diary* itself.

the fruit of his pastoral experience in Poland, especially in Kraków, where St. Faustina was buried. ¹⁵³ John Paul II said:

[...] The reflections offered in *Dives in Misericordia* were the fruit of my [...] pastoral experience in Poland, especially in Kraków. That is where Saint Faustina is buried. [...] I mention Sister Faustina because her revelations, focused on the mystery of Divine Mercy, occurred during the period preceding the Second World War. This was precisely the time when those ideologies of evil, were taking shape. Sister Faustina became the herald of the message capable of offsetting the evil of those ideologies, the fact that God is mercy – the truth of the merciful Christ. And for that reason, when I am called to the See of Peter, I felt impelled to hand on those experiences of a fellow Pole that deserve a place in the treasury of the universal Church. ¹⁵⁴

The contents of the above quotation must largely be the part of the reasons why John Paul II stated that the message of mercy had been always near and dear to him. According to him, the message of mercy was like a message of hope during the ravaging experience of the Second World War:

The message of Divine Mercy has always been near and dear to me. It is as if history had inscribed it in the tragic experience of the Second World War. In those difficult years it was a particular support and an inexhaustible source of hope, not only for the people of Kraków but also for the entire nation. ¹⁵⁵

John Paul II's interest in the promotion of mercy led to his beatification ¹⁵⁶ and canonisation of St. Faustina. ¹⁵⁷ John Paul II

¹⁵³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Memory & Identity*, 5. Here, it could be said that the influence of St. Faustina had on John Paul II, was evidenced in John Paul II's promotion of the message of mercy recorded by St. Faustina.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹⁵⁵ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Divine Mercy, Poland», *IGP*, XXI (1997), 1444.

¹⁵⁶ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, «Beatification of St. Faustina Kowalska», *IGP*, XVII (1993), 914-920.

Paul II, this handing on of mercy from generation to generation is to take place through the Church.

John Paul II in his desire to spread mercy indicated the role that the Church has to play in order to give mercy its prominence in her life and in the lives of the people. According to him, the mercy revealed in the Paschal Mystery of Christ is to be handed on «from generation to generation», and this is to take place through the Church. John Paul II felt that the Church of our time is to be profoundly conscious of the sufferings of the great human family and she is to bear witness accordingly in her whole mission to mercy.¹⁷² He suggested the ways through which the Church is to witness to mercy: In order to bear witness to mercy, John Paul II recommended that pastoral actions be undertaken simultaneously by the Church on three directions. First, the Church is to profess and proclaim mercy; second, she has to help people to embody mercy in their lives; and third, she has to plead for mercy. Therefore, our task now is to trace how the Church is to accomplish this function.

The Church is to Profess Her Belief in Mercy

At the climax of Jesus' messianic mission, the Holy Spirit becomes present in the Paschal Mystery in all of his divine subjectivity: as the one who is to continue the salvific work rooted in the sacrifice of the cross. Of course Jesus entrusts this work to human beings: to the apostles, to the Church. Nevertheless, in and through them the Holy Spirit remains the transcendent and principal agent for the accomplishment of this work in the human spirit and in the history of the world.¹⁷³

The above quotation proved that the messianic programme of Christ, the programme of mercy is to become the programme of the Church.¹⁷⁴ In other words, the Church has the task of acting in the name of Christ and in his authority. In this sense the Church remains the main trustee

¹⁷² Cf. The introduction to ch. VII of *DM*, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1217.

¹⁷³ *RM*, n. 21, in *AAS* 83 (1991), 268; *DeV*, n. 42, in *AAS* 78 (1986), 857.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *DM*, n. 13, in the *AAS* 72 (1980), 1218, 1220-1221; cf. also J. SARAIIV A MARTINS, «editors introduction», *Dives in Misericordia: commento all'Enciclica di Giovanni Paolo II*, 14.

and dispenser of this mercy. A. Dulles recalled this when he affirmed that the Church exists to perpetuate Christ's redemptive work.¹⁷⁵ According to A. Dulles, the Church is equipped for this task by its apostolic heritage of faith, together with the promised assistance of the risen Christ, who acts through the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁶ Basing himself on the teachings of the Church, A. Dulles affirmed that the Church of Christ is the «universal sacrament of salvation»¹⁷⁷ and that she (the Church) is the first beneficiary of this mercy, since Christ won her for himself at the price of his own blood, and chose her as his bride.¹⁷⁸ John Paul II therefore, stated that the Church is to bear witness to mercy by professing mercy primarily as a salvific truth of faith necessary for a life in harmony with faith.

According to John Paul II the Church is to profess mercy «in all its truth, as it has been handed down to us by revelation».¹⁷⁹ This truth about mercy, John Paul II said, has been affirmed by some theologians as the greatest of the attributes and perfections of God, and he stated that the bible, tradition and the whole faith life of the people of God give particular proofs of this.¹⁸⁰ John Paul II explained that the perfection meant here is not just the perfection of the inscrutable essence of God in the mystery of the divinity itself, but that he was talking of the perfection and attribute whereby man, in the intimate truth of his existence, «encounters the living God particularly closely and particularly often».¹⁸¹ For John Paul II this is an encounter with

¹⁷⁵ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL I, *Pastor aeternus et episcopos animarum nostrarum* [cf. *IPt* 2,25], *ut salutarium opus perenne redderet, sanctam aedificare Ecclesiam decrevit*, Prologue of the institution and the foundation of the Church, DS, 3050.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. A. DULLES, «The Church as Locus of Salvation», in *The Thought of Pope John Paul II*, 173.

¹⁷⁷ *LG*, n. 48; *GS*, n. 45; *RM*, n. 20, in *AAS* 83 (1991), 267.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. A. DULLES, «The Church as Locus of Salvation», 173; *RM*, n. 9, in *AAS* 83 (1991), 257.

¹⁷⁹ *DM*, n. 13, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1218.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

GENERAL CONCLUSION

«*Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo*».¹ Throughout this study, we have followed the theme of mercy in John Paul II. I have attempted to trace its development from beginning to end. I started from the early life of Karol Wojtyła to his discovery of a new vocation to the priesthood, and then as bishop, cardinal and his many years as pope. We have followed mercy in John Paul starting with the beginning of his encounter with the mystery of Mercy.

My search to understand how the idea of mercy began in the mind of the young Karol Wojtyła took us to his homeland and early background. This study offered us an opportunity to investigate the environment and context of John Paul II's birth, his early childhood and adulthood. This journey to John Paul II's home environment² has revealed that this spirituality of mercy, while his pontificate gave him the world stage as the arena to proclaim mercy, was a message that

reaches back to his early years. We have journeyed with John Paul II through the environment and situations into which he was born and brought up, in order to trace the spiritual experience in the many events of his early life that were fundamental in introducing him to the idea of mercy.

This book has brought us into direct contact with the events, experiences and persons that helped to inform John Paul II about mercy in his early years. By this we are able to acknowledge the importance of the events, experiences, and of all the people in John Paul II's life. In my investigation, I revealed how influential these events, experiences and people were in giving John Paul II a taste of mercy. I demonstrated the influential role of the Polish nation's intense Marian devotion and pilgrimage. We have seen how the Polish nation's entrustment to Mary, the Mother of God, exemplified in the frequent and yearly pilgrimages, which all Catholics, including John Paul II's family, made in large numbers to the Marian shrines³, helped to initiate John Paul II into a developing understanding of mercy in his early childhood.⁴

I explored John Paul II's family, a religious home, in which he learned especially from his father,⁵ the attitude of constancy in prayer and how to ask in prayer for mercy by the entrustment to the intercession and guidance of Mary, the Mother of God. This was expressed in constant pilgrimages to Poland's major Marian Shrines,

¹ «The mercies of the Lord I shall sing forever» (Ps 89, 1). This was John Paul II who, in gratitude for all the mercies of the Lord broke into the praise of God, re-echoing the word of the Psalmist, and he affirmed that these words of the Psalmist have been placed on the lips of all God's people: *DM*, n. 8, *AAS* 72 (1980), 1207.

² This journey to John Paul II's homeland environment is in line with the advice of the German poet: According to Benedict XVI, the great German poet, Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, said that he who wishes to understand a poet, should visit his native land. «This is also true for those who wish to understand the life and ministry of John Paul; it is necessary to come to the land of his birth». BENEDICT XVI, *John Paul II my beloved Predecessor*, E. Guerrero, ed., Pauline Books & Media, Boston 2007, 97; BENEDICT XVI, «Second International Apostolic Visit: Poland, 25-28 May», *OR* (E), n. 22-31 May (2006), 7. Likewise, those who wish to understand John Paul II's spirituality of mercy should visit the environment of his birth and development. According to M. Malinski, to understand John Paul II, one has to reach back to his early years: «To understand the Pope as he was today one would have to describe the past, the time when his personality was developing most intensively». M. MALINSKI, *Pope John Paul II: The Life of Karol Wojtyła*, Doubleday, New York 1979, 17.

³ We have shown from our study, that among the Marian Shrines of Poland, Czestochowa and Kalwaria Zebrzydowska were pre-eminent in shaping the spirituality of John Paul II and had helped to introduce him to mercy.

⁴ This is why J. Martin refers to John Paul II as «a man whose faith was nurtured in the intensely pious atmosphere of early-twentieth-century Polish Catholicism». J. MARTIN, «Introduction to the New Edition: Images of John Paul II», *Go in Peace: A Gift of Enduring Love by John Paul II*, J. Durepos, ed., Loyola Press, Chicago 2003, XIII.

⁵ As John Paul II's had lost his mother at an early age, the captain, his father became an attentive, generous and selfless man, who knew how to adjust to the needs of his son, Karol Wojtyła. He became an incomparable mentor of spiritual life for his John Paul II himself, have acknowledged that almost all the memories of his childhood and adolescence were connected with his father and that his austere way of life and constant prayer were exceptionally eloquent. Cf. A. FROSSARD, «Non Abbiate Paura», 13; R. ALLEGRI, *A Life of Grace*, 39, *GM*, 20.

especially that of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. We have discovered from work that the Captain, John Paul II's father, was a religious educator by example as much as by admonition and instruction.⁶ As the Captain himself sought help through prayer, he and his son, Karol Wojtyła prayed together regularly and his trust in the power of prayer for obtaining mercy and comfort made him decide to make a pilgrimage with his sons to the Marian Shrine, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska after his wife's burial. John Paul II himself acknowledged that it was his father, who first took him to pilgrimage at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska after his mother's death and, he testified to the frequent pilgrimages he made to the Shrine of Kalwaria.⁷ My investigation, therefore, has revealed that the home environment and its setting of prayer and devotion was the first to give John Paul II the idea of mercy.

I have also on further examination revealed influential role played by the parish of Wadowice in leading John Paul II to the taste of mercy. We have seen how the devotional and liturgical actions of Baptism, Eucharist, Confession, Marian devotion, and Scapular devotion in his home parish of Wadowice, were the early means of John Paul II's contact with mercy. John Paul II also confirmed the role of his home parish when he stated that he learned the traditional devotions to the Mother of God in his home parish at Wadowice. He recalled how the people from Wadowice would go to the Carmelite monastery for confession. He recognised the contribution of the Carmelite Fathers in introducing the Scapular devotion, which also drew people from

⁶ This is in line with John Paul II's concept of family, where he described family as the basic cell of society: JOHN PAUL II, *Christifideles Laici* Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, n. 40, in *AAS* 81 (1989), 470-472 (henceforth: *CL*); cf. also II, *Familiaris Consortio* Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, n. 42, in *AAS* 74 (1982), 134 (henceforth: *FC*); ID, *Centesimus Annus* Encyclical Letter, n. 49, in *AAS* 83 (1991), 854-856 (henceforth: *CA*). For John Paul II, the family is the place where future citizens are formed, and from where they receive their basic training in virtue. John Paul II regarded the family as a force that is able to humanise and personalise society. In John Paul II's view, the family has the capacity of giving the individuals a sense of their own uniqueness and unreplaceability: cf. *CL*, nn. 40, 43, in *AAS* 81 (1989) 470-482; cf. also A. DULLES, *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II*, 109.

⁷ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Pilgrims to Poland*, 197.

Wadowice in large numbers to the monastery, and John Paul II asserted that he still wore the Scapular he received at the age of ten.⁸

This study revealed John Paul II's experience of mercy as a young adult. As a child, John Paul II's parents and other spiritual mentors helped to direct his steps towards spiritual life and experience of mercy. But as a young adult, he made his own spiritual journey, which brought him, closer still to mercy experience. The intention of John Paul II's movement with his father from Wadowice to Krakow in 1938 was interrupted by the Second World War, which caused a distressed situation in Poland, yet this stay in Krakow brought him into contact with mercy. We know that as John Paul II moved to Krakow his devotional practice did not decrease. Rather it was intensified, given the distressed situation. This study provides an insight into John Paul II's involvement in the drama and the theatre in his youth and his later involvement in *The Theatre of the Living Word*, and to see their important contribution in preparing John Paul II for his function as priest.

This study showed that John Paul II worked as a labourer in a stone quarry attached to the Solvay chemical plant and water purification facility in the bicarbonate plant at Borek Falecki. The kindness that John Paul II experienced from his fellow workers during his years, as labourer made me to regard his place of work as the milieu of mercy experience. He was grateful for the favours he had received in those difficult times by the people, which he believed God had placed on his path. I also discovered that John Paul II did not experience mercy only at his place of work, he also came into its contact on his way back from work. His stop at the Redemptorist Church for prayer and Holy Mass became his source of strength throughout that distressed period. Moreover, John Paul II tasted mercy through his devotion to St. Faustina, which exemplifies itself in his visit often to her grave during his service as a labourer.

⁸ John Paul II also recalled his enriching contact with the Carmelite Fathers, which increased his interest in the Carmelite spirituality. This inspired his wanting to join the Carmelite Order, but his Bishop advised that he had to finish what he had already begun: cf. *GM*, 24.

This study has allowed us to discover the clarification process of John Paul II's experience of mercy with regard to Marian devotion. We discovered that while John Paul II had been much involved in Marian devotion from childhood, he later went through a short period in which he tried to have a more adult relationship with Christ himself, resulting in seeking a lesser mediation on the part of Mary. He was helped, however, by the work of Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, *Treasure of the true Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*.⁹ This book indicated that true devotion to Mary always led to Christ. This discovery of the mature form of devotion of Mary resulted in John Paul II's intensification of his entrustment to the Mother of God.

The study also has revealed that John Paul II contact with Jan Tyranowski, a man of quite ordinary appearance but of extraordinary spiritual depth, was one of the means by which mercy reached John Paul II. Jan Tyranowski, as I discovered, formed a prayer group, which he called *The Living Rosary*, which turned in prayer to the Mother of God. In other words, the aim of the society was a devotion to Mary, help of Christians, and to inculcate self-discipline. John Paul II's contact with *The Living Rosary* deepened his mercy experience and his spiritual life. I noticed that Jan Tyranowski trained the members of his group in ascetical and mystical life, and inspired some of them. John Paul II inchoately, to read the works of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila.¹⁰

My search brought reached a point where I found John Paul II discovered his true vocation, the priesthood.¹¹ John Paul II had

⁹ We recall that this book was read while he was working as a laborer at the quarry and that the reading was made possible by the kindness of the foreman and other laborers, who made allowances for John Paul II to read, particularly during the night shifts.

¹⁰ John Paul II himself acknowledged this when he recalled that Jan, whom he considered a saint, introduced him to the great Spanish mystics and in particular to St. John of the Cross of *Mystic Poet*, II, C III, 142.

¹¹ The secret that John Paul II's enthusiasm and interest, which were formerly focused on poetry, literature and theater, had been overtaken. To recall some influences on John Paul II towards this decision, mention has to be made of Fr. Kazimierz Rygiel, who was John Paul II's confessor and spiritual director. Fr. Rygiel had served as a companion to John Paul II's all through those years on the

narrated that «faced with the spread of evil and the atrocities of the war», the meaning of the priesthood became much clearer to him. The Second World War, the closure of his university and the loss of his much-loved father all brought with them, «a progressive detachment» from his earlier plans. But it was not just a negative process. It was a fight that was beginning to shine «in the back of his mind». The Lord wanted him to become a priest, and one day he saw this clearly, it was like an interior illumination and its awareness filled him with great inner peace.¹²

We, therefore, saw John Paul II ordained to the priesthood, we saw him become a bishop, archbishop and cardinal. All of these were means through which mercy came closer to him. I also revealed that John Paul II's ministry as priest introduced him not only to the experience of mercy but also to a mediator role, an instrument of mercy for the people of God in the administering and in the celebration of the Christian mysteries, the sacraments.

This book revealed the extent that Marian devotion, which John Paul II had been introduced into at his earliest days and youth, and had developed as he matured, had such an influence on him. He manifested his trust in the merciful protection and intercession of Mary by going on a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Jasna Góra immediately

long path of his journey. We have to bring into this scene John Paul II's father, whose own solid attachment to the life of prayer, had inspired early in his son, the idea of God and his mercy. Still more, the encounter with Jan Tyranowski, the tailor, had left a very deep imprint on John Paul II's spiritual life. Tyranowski taught his group the fundamentals of the spiritual life and methods for systematically examining and improving their daily lives. Another important influence was John Paul II devotion to Brother Albert, Adam Chmielowski, who dedicated himself to the service of the very poor and the handicapped. John Paul II felt inspired and strengthened by this extraordinary Polish figure. He was fascinated by Brother Albert's character. In him, John Paul II understood how it could be possible, at a certain point in life, to cast aside even the most dear things, such as art and literary interests, to respond to the call to the real vocation that exploded within. In one way or the other, John Paul II himself had acknowledged the influences of these people in the choice of his true vocation and each, in his own way, had played a role in his gradual contact with the mystery of mercy. Cf. *GM*, 19-20, 25-23, 31-33.

¹² Cf. *GM*, 34-35; cf. also J. GALLAGHER, *John Paul II, Catholic Truth Society Publishers of the Holy See*, 2005, 31.

after his episcopal ordination, and by adopting «*Totus Tuus*» for his episcopal motto.¹³

My study has demonstrated that John Paul II's involvement in the Second Vatican Council was one of the means that brought him closer to the awareness of mercy. It drew him closer to the awareness of the *ad extra* action of God, that is, the God who creates and stays in

¹³ John Paul II explained that this complete abandonment of himself to Mary is expressed in his Marian devotion leading to Christ. Our research has revealed John Paul II's affirmation that his *Totus Tuus* was tied to his earlier youthful experiences as well as the special bonds that continued to unite him to Mary in ever new ways. According to him, the first and the oldest way was tied to all the times during his childhood that he stopped before the «image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in the parish Church of Wadowice». It was tied to the tradition of the Carmelite Scapular, which he knew from his youth through the Carmelite convent in his hometown. It was tied to the tradition of his making pilgrimages to the Shrine of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. John Paul II asserted that from his earliest years, his own devotion to Mary was deeply connected to his faith in Christ, and that the Shrine of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska had helped him greatly in achieving this: cf. JOHN PAUL II, *CTH*, 213–215. This explains John Paul II's assertion when he said that his total abandonment to Mary exemplified in his Marian devotion, must not be understood only as a devotion addressing a need of the heart, a sentimental inclination, but it corresponded to the objective truth about Mary, the Mother of God, the new Eve, placed by God in close relation to Christ: cf. *Ibid.* Benedict XVI referring to John Paul II's Marian devotion said that John Paul II's who had lost his own mother at an early age, loved his heavenly Mother all the more. It was like he heard the words of the crucified Jesus as personally addressed to him: «This is your mother» (Jn 19, 27). John Paul II, therefore, did as the beloved disciple, John did: «he took her into his own home». From this Mother, then, John Paul II learned how to conform himself to Christ. According to Benedict XVI, John Paul II's abandoned himself totally to Mary because he found in her the «purest reflection of God's mercy»: cf. BENEDETTO XVI, *John Paul II my Beloved Predecessor*, 62. John Paul II himself, in his 1988 Holy Thursday letter to all the priests of the Church reminded all the priests about Mary's Motherhood to them all. He said: «Speaking from the Cross on Golgotha, Christ said to the disciple: "Behold, your mother." And the disciple "took her to his own home" as Mother. Let us also take Mary unto the interior "home" of our priesthood. For we belong to the faithful in whose rebirth and development the Mother of God cooperates with a maternal love». JOHN PAUL II, «1988 Letter to all the Priests of the Church», in *Letters to My Brother Priests: Complete Collection of Holy Thursday Letters* (1979/2005), J. Socias, ed., Midwest Theological forum, Woodbridge 1992, n. 6, 146.

relation to his people, with the desire to offer them assistance and mercy.

It also brought us to the point where we saw John Paul II became Pope and led the Church from 16th October, 1978–2nd April 2005. It demonstrated how the theme of mercy shaped his pontificate, and how his final illness, sufferings and death, continued to be ways he used to tell humanity the truth about mercy, the ways by which he emphasised the priority of Christ for Christians and humanity. My survey into John Paul II's teaching on mercy has led us to the discovery of the prominent place mercy had in his pontificate and how this theme of mercy characterised his Petrine ministry. We have also that John Paul II placed a great emphasis on mercy during his pontificate because, he felt and understood that the keynote of his pontificate was to spread the message of mercy. He saw his pontificate as a forum to teach mercy and he put all his energy in making that a reality. Through his literary works, speeches, homily and personal example, he tried to drive home this reality to the present-day Church and humanity.¹⁴

John Paul II took special note of the fact that while the revelation of God's mercy and saving deeds has its beginning in the mystery of creation, it was the truth that was greatly clarified by the people of the Old Testament. Both as individuals and a community the Jewish people had a special experience of God's mercy. They knew mercy as an interior personal experience when they faced the suffering and misfortune of physical and moral evil. But they also knew mercy as a people, because God revealed this mercy to them through saving deeds and prophetic words. Despite their transgressions, God remained

¹⁴ This must be the reason behind the statement of J. W. Koterski, when he said that John Paul II's labours as Pope have been pastoral and intellectual. According to him, John Paul II with his zeal which showed itself also in his numerous visits to countries around the globe had provided personal example of how to carry out special effort to reawaken faith: cf. J. W. KOTERSKI, ed., *The Legacy of Pope John Paul II: His contribution to the Catholic Thought*, The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York 2000, 7.

faithful to the Covenant he made with them.¹⁵ John Paul II pointed out that mercy, especially in the preaching of the prophets, signified a special power of love, which prevailed over the sin, and infidelity of the people of Israel.

Through this survey, I revealed that John Paul II was convinced that his mission was to recall God's mercy revealed by Christ who, by his way of life and his actions, and especially through his Paschal Mystery, revealed God as mercy. Christ was presented as the incarnation of God's mercy, the one in whom and through whom the mystery of God's mercy was visible to humankind. By this, Jesus became a model of merciful love for others. In this book, I have revealed the reason why John Paul II felt that the message of mercy was necessary. For him, the message of mercy was important in order «to recall the Father's love, revealed in the whole mission of Christ, beginning with his coming into the world up to the Paschal Mystery of his Cross and Resurrection».¹⁶ The message of mercy was necessary for people to know their true worth. John Paul II understood that in order to know what it meant to be fully human, it is necessary to know God, especially as he has revealed himself in Jesus. The message of mercy was important John Paul II insisted, in order that people may learn to turn to the God of mercies to enable them to see God as particularly close to humanity, especially when a human person is suffering, when he or she is «under threat at the very heart of his existence and dignity». John Paul II had written and spoken about the need for people to turn to the mercy of God as the answer to the problems of our times.¹⁷

¹⁵ John Paul II insisted that it was necessary to refer back to the understanding of mercy in the Old Testament in order that the mercy revealed by Christ may shine out more clearly. cf. *DM*, n. 4, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1186.

¹⁶ John Paul II communicated this reason for the publication of *DM*, on the First Sunday of Advent in 1980: cf. *JOHN PAUL II, «Il Santo Padre annuncia l'Enciclica Divina in Messianismo», Angelus Address, Insegnamenti, III/2 (1980), 1455-1458.*

¹⁷ In this sense, John Paul II affirmed that many individuals and groups guided by a lively sense of faith are turning to this mercy of God, and he asserted that their turning to the mercy of God was a sign that they were «being moved to do this by Christ himself, who works within human hearts through his Spirit». cf. *DM*, n. 2, in *AAS* 72 (1980), 1182.

I have also shown that John Paul II from his analysis of the contemporary world drew to the conclusion that it was mercy that present-day humanity needed. He came to this conclusion because he observed that despite the countless possibilities opened up by science and technology, and in spite of the sense of justice being reawakened on a vast scale, there exists a feeling of uneasiness, and accordingly, the picture is that «there is so much evil both physical and moral» afflicting modern humanity. In order to overcome this crisis, John Paul II therefore, asked: Is justice enough? He asked this question because he observed that in practice justice was often distorted, and this contrasts with the essence of justice, which by its nature tends to establish equality and harmony between individuals and peoples. John Paul II therefore said that since justice is open to deviations, it has to be tempered by mercy. In other words, our research indicated that in John Paul II's understanding, the solutions to the situations of misery afflicting present-day humanity could only be solved in the framework of mercy.

John Paul II noted that many people today are uneasy with the idea of this mercy to which he was appealing. He suggested some reasons for such contemporary loss of the sense of mercy. He then pointed at the mastery of science and technology as the realities that have so fed a sense of dominion over the world that mercy is belittled as weakness. For some people the idea of mercy meant a relationship of inequality between the person offering mercy and the person receiving it. This leads people to think that the recipient of mercy is humiliated, that he or she is stripped of his or her dignity. In order to enlighten people with the truth about mercy, John Paul II dealt with these misconstrued attitudes with regard to mercy. John Paul II used the parable of the prodigal son to teach the true nature of mercy. It is a parable in which the father's mercy did not belittle the son. Rather, the relationship of mercy expressed there, involved both father and son in sharing the common experience of the son's restored dignity. John Paul II articulated the fact that many people reject mercy because they felt that it is a way of indulgence. His interpretation of this parable of the

prodigal son was shown to reveal the true nature of mercy and supported the dignity of human person so much valued to day.¹⁸

I have shown as well that John Paul II affirmed that God's mercy for humanity culminated in the Cross of Christ. The Paschal Mystery remained Christ at the summit of the revelation of mercy. John Paul II therefore noted that the Cross of Christ had remained the definitive sign of the Covenant broken and then restored, it had remained a sign of a God ever faithful to his people, it was a sign of pilgrims who wandered and have regained their way.¹⁹ John Paul II asserted that the Paschal Mystery has remained the peak of the demonstration of Jesus' revealing and affecting mercy, which was able to justify humanity. My study has shown that Jesus, after his revelation of mercy, first in the event of the Incarnation (which he expressed in the messianic declaration followed by actions and words which made the Father present among people) and most dramatically in that of the Cross,²⁰ demanded for reciprocity of mercy. John Paul II therefore articulated Jesus' demand for the mutuality of mercy:

[...] We must note that Christ, in revealing the love-mercy of God, at the same time demanded from people that they also should be guided in their lives by love and mercy. This requirement form part of the very essence of the Gospel *ethos*. The Teacher expresses this both through the medium of the commandment which he describes as "the greatest" (Mt 22, 38), and also in the form of a blessing: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5, 7).

¹⁸ In T. Prendergast's view John Paul II emphasis on the dignity of the human person partly explains the great stress he puts on Genesis 1,26-28 in all his writings, because it was there that the notion of the human person created in the image of God was powerfully expressed: cf. T. PRENDERGAST, "A Vision of 'Whole': A reflection on the use of Scripture in a cross-section of Papal Writings", in *The Thought of Pope John Paul II*, 70.

¹⁹ Cf. DM, n. 8, in AAS 72 (1980), 1204; cf. also J. A. O'HARE, "Mercy Appears", *America* 143 (1980), 402.

²⁰ Cf. DM, nn. 3, 7, in AAS 72 (1980), 1182-1186, 1199-1203.

Christ, precisely as the Crucified One, [...], is the one who stands at the door and knocks at the heart of every man (Rv 3, 20), without restricting his freedom, but instead seeking to draw from this very freedom love, which is not only an act of solidarity with the suffering Son of man, but also a kind of "mercy" shown by each one of us to the Son of the eternal Father. In the whole of this messianic program of Christ, in the whole revelation of mercy through the Cross, could man's dignity be more highly respected and ennobled, for, in obtaining mercy, he is in a sense the one who at the same time "shows mercy"? In a word, is not this the position of Christ with regard to man when he says: "As you did it to one of the least of these [...] you did it to me"? Do not the words of the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5, 7), constitute, in a certain sense, a synthesis of the whole of the good news? [...]

The life of Jesus was a life of mercy made visible through his constant reaching out to those who were threatened interiorly and exteriorly. In his embracing of the cross, Jesus incarnated the mercy of the Father. John Paul II, in the above quotations, called to mind these merciful actions and made a general recapitulation of Christ's desire for reciprocity in mercy. This book has also shown that there is mutuality of mercy in Redemption. John Paul II told us that Jesus Christ was not only the Redeemer, but he was also the one who stands at the door and knocks at the heart of every human person. According to J. M. Miller, this means that Jesus seeks people's love; he was manifesting the desire for solidarity in mercy.²¹

Individually and collectively the recipients of mercy are challenged to put on the mind and heart of Jesus in commitment to mercy. Following John Paul II's explanations discovered within our research, a response to Jesus' demand for the life of mercy will not be possible unless one is endowed with what John Paul II himself called the «Person-Gift». This calls to mind the affirmation of St. Augustine, where Augustine basing his thoughts on Paul's teaching, asserted that there is nothing we have that we did not receive (cf. 1Co 4,1-16). This

²¹ DM, n. 8, in AAS 72 (1980), 1205-1206.

²² Cf. J. M. MILLER, «Editor's Introduction», 105.

is a way of saying that a life of mercy as demanded by Christ is possible only because it is given as a gift. It is a response that is possible when the Holy Spirit, the eternal source of every gift that comes from God, is bestowed on a person.²⁵ The Holy Spirit is the absolute basis behind all spirituality. In this sense, our investigation has led us to the discovery that the spirituality of mercy of John Paul II was a gift received. It was his faith-response to God's mercy incarnated by Jesus' life and action, which culminated in his passion, death and Resurrection. The work he has allowed us to discover how John Paul II had put into practice the gift he had received. He manifested his response to mercy by his total commitment to mercy exemplified in his teaching and living of it, in declaring the Second Sunday of Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday, in consecrating the world to Divine Mercy, and in canonising St. Faustina and promoting the Divine Mercy way, in consecrating the New Shrine of Divine in Krakow, Lagiewniki, etc. The result of our study has also shown that John Paul II had called on the Church and the world to witness to mercy by professing, proclaiming, and by living it. John Paul II also was committed to mercy by praying for it, in earnest desire that the world be imbued by this mercy and by entrusting all to Mary, the Mother of mercy, who had understood and shared this mercy in an exceptional way.

The result of our investigation has brought us to the desired awareness:

We have seen that, for John Paul II, mercy meant «the boundless love of God, who, confronted with human sin, restrains the sentiment of severe justice and, allowing himself to be moved by the wretchedness of his creatures, spurs himself to the total gift of self, in the Son's Cross».²⁶ For John Paul II mercy is a special need: «There is nothing man needs more than Divine Mercy that love which is benevolent, which is compassionate, which raises man above his weakness to the

²⁵ Cf. Del'Val, *no. 10, 22-23, Spirit*, 312-313; cf. A. DILLIES, *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II*, 26; J. R. SHEETS, «The Spirituality of Pope John Paul II», 112.

²⁶ JOHN PAUL II, «Christ's Peace is triumph of divine mercy», *Angelus address*, OM (E), 13th April, (1994), 1.

infinite heights of the holiness of God».²⁵ I have revealed from my investigation that for John Paul II, mercy is the interior form of love, the *Agape*, the love that is capable of reaching every prodigal son, every human misery, and above all every form of moral misery, sin. When ever this love-mercy occurs, the person who is the object this mercy does not feel humiliated, rather he or she is found again and restored to value.²⁶

Basing our conclusions on Trinitarian and soteriological treasures, we come to the understanding that the spirituality of mercy of John Paul II has its root in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. We have discovered that the spirituality of mercy of John Paul II was his faith-response to Jesus' imperative to be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. John Paul II insisted on mercy because it was the way to imitate and participate in the mercy God has shown to humanity through Christ. Human mercy, in its own part, is to recognise the humanity or dignity of every individual, as a person created in the image and likeness of God. In his effort to actualise mercy in his own life, John Paul II also called on the Church and all humanity to be committed to mercy, which Jesus expressed as consisted in the love of God and love of neighbour (Mt 22,38; 5,7). According to John Paul II, the Church has the duty of introducing the mercy revealed in Christ into all corners of personal and social life.

I have established the fact that John Paul II recognised mercy «as a perfection of the infinite God, is also infinite».²⁷ This means that God's readiness to receive the prodigal children who return to his home is inexhaustible. In our research, we have demonstrated that for John Paul II, an authentic knowledge of God as merciful is a constant and inexhaustible source of conversion to this God. In other words, conversion to God means that one has discovered God's mercy. According to John Paul II, Conversion was not only a momentary interior act, but a permanent attitude, a state of mind which required

²⁵ ID., «I, Papa Pellegrino al Santuario della Divina Misericordia, a Cracovia», in *Culto alla Divina Misericordia*, Tipografia Vaticana, Roma 2001, 59.

²⁶ Cf. DM, n. 6, in AAS 72 (1980), 1197-1198.

²⁷ DM, n. 13, in AAS 72 (1980), 1220.

that the individual live in a state being continually converted to this God of mercy. It involved living in a state of conversion, it meant living in *status conversionis*.²⁸ John Paul II therefore, invited all people to be committed to the spirituality of mercy as an adequate response to the God of mercy.

My survey has shown John Paul II noting that the practice of mercy among persons operates at the level of a shared encounter. For him, this meant that the relationship of mercy between peoples is never «a unilateral act or process», rather it involves the two parties: Both the giver of mercy and its receiver meet in the experience of the dignity proper to the individual. Those who practice mercy discover their own humanity or dignity because they recognise the human dignity of the other. Likewise, those who receive mercy discover their own dignity or humanity because it is valued and, at the same time, they, too, are inspired to be merciful to others. They are also moved towards forgiveness, which, in practice, is indispensable if the world is to radiate mercy. For John Paul II, society will become more human only when it is introduced into all the mutual relationships, the moment of forgiveness and mercy.²⁹ My investigation has also shown John Paul II calling the Church and the people saying that to arrive at the practice of mercy among persons, it is necessary that the individual and the people turn their gaze constantly at the Saviour, the model of mercy. Through our study, we have discovered that for John Paul II, mercy is important as the answer to the misery of our times.

The life and practice of mercy require that the individual and people live in continual conversion - in a state of conversion. Our research has shown that for John Paul II, a turn to our God of mercies is the appropriate way of living a worthy human life. John Paul II, therefore, appealed to all people to turn to their Creator, for this is the only attitude that is able to give true meaning to their person and their existence.

Finally, I hope that our study of the spirituality of mercy in the life and teachings of John Paul II will inspire many to put on the mind and heart of Christ as people who are first recipients of this mercy.

²⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

²⁹ DM, n. 14, in AAS 72 (1980), 1225.