



## InnerView

### With Kathleen Beckman, Catholic Lay Evangelist, Author, Retreat Director, and President of the FOUNDATION OF PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

#### ***What led you to write your latest book, *God's Healing Mercy*?***

I gratefully credit SOPHIA INSTITUTE PRESS for inviting me to write a book related to the JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY. Among many books about Divine Mercy we hoped to distinguish ours by focusing on the healing power of God's mercy. Based on extensive retreat work the book is organized for personal reflection or a group retreat. Each chapter closes with scriptural exercises and a saint "profile in mercy." The first chapter, titled, "Rays of Mercy on You: Healing from Unforgiveness to Forgiveness," presents forgiveness from several Catholic lenses to make a strong case for releasing the *poison of unforgiveness*. Since I've personally struggled with forgiveness, especially after the murder of my loved one, I strove to provide evidence of the un-failing healing power of forgiveness and its relationship to the Sacraments of Confession and Eucharist.

#### ***How can your book aid people during this YEAR OF MERCY?***

The book begins with a quote from Pope Francis, "Do we believe that Jesus can heal us and bring us back from the dead?" It is a question of faith. The JUBILEE is an extraordinary occasion of grace; a real opportunity for good, growth and gentleness. I encourage readers to live this year intensely, expect big

things of God, pray for the miracles needed in every part of our lives. In international retreat work I see many healing miracles—physical and spiritual. The book contains the recent testimony of a young priest friend whose legs were crushed in a motorcycle accident requiring months of hospitalization. Surgery was scheduled to amputate one leg due to a stubborn leg ulcer that wouldn't heal. A parishioner brought Father a vial of St. Andre Bessette blessed oil from Canada's St. Joseph Oratory. The night before the surgery, Father poured the oil on his wound and prayed for a miracle. The next morning the leg was completely healed; no need for amputation. What if Father did not step out in faith? The book relates stories of healing to encourage us to keep stepping out in expectant faith; to ask, seek, and knock on the door of Christ's heart that is the wellspring of mercy.

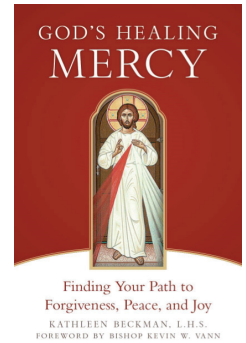
#### ***Throughout the book, you highlight saints who have overcome deep-seated wounds and became mighty vessels of God's merciful love. How can we look to these models of mercy and incorporate their teachings into our own lives?***

The end of each chapter features a saint "profile in mercy" wherein we see the triumph of merciful love. These examples are meant to inspire us to exercise mercy especially when

it's contrary to our natural inclination. The saint profiles were my favorite part of the book research. I was deeply touched by Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, a Vietnamese prisoner of war who was tortured by his captors. In His Eminence's words, "When I began to discern between God and God's works, when I chose God and His will and left everything else in His hands, and when I learned to love others, especially my enemies as Jesus loved me, I felt a great peace in my heart. I will live the present moment and fill it with love." That's the glory of mercy lived! The stories inspire us to let God stretch us also and to radiate His mercy.

#### ***When discussing concupiscence, you discuss the relationship between shame, guilt and condemnation in relation to sin. How can individuals overcome the shame of past sins?***

In the chapter titled, "Healing from Shame to Mercy," I quote St. John Paul II who explained the concupiscence and shame that resulted from the Fall and Original Sin: "The words in Genesis 3:10, 'I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself,' provide evidence of man's first experience of shame before his Creator—a shame that could also be called 'cosmic'." Shame touches the nerve of self in a painful way; more piercing than condemnation



is the feeling of shame. Mercy is a healing prescription for shame, guilt, condemnation. God's love convicts the soul of sin. His mercy forgives the repentant sinner. When we confess and repent, Divine Mercy cures the wound of shame with the balm of forgiveness. It transforms shame into humble gratitude as our self image is ordered to the truth of the Father's love.

### ***How can the faithful respond to Pope Francis' challenge to "open wide the doors of mercy"?***

There is continuity with the last three popes who proclaim the message of Divine Mercy. Opening "wide the doors of mercy" requires self-emptying love. This is a challenging reality. In the first chapter I focus on the greatest gift of Divine Mercy: the forgiveness of sins for which Christ shed His Precious Blood. Having received God's mercy we are empowered to make a sincere gift of self to others. The works of mercy are necessary for authentic discipleship and all of them require self-sacrifice. I devote two chapters to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

I have the joy of working with a priest who, for years, was Bl. Teresa of Calcutta's spiritual director. Whenever this priest asked Mother how he should pray for her, she always replied, "Pray that I get out of God's way." If we strive for deeper trust (get out of His way) nothing will block us from moving forward in the great adventure that is Catholicism. The works of mercy are God's works, but our "yes" is required.

### ***Why are families integral to this YEAR OF MERCY? How can prayer change an atmosphere***

### ***and protect a family by helping them to maintain its close relationship with Christ?***

The second chapter, "Rays of Mercy Upon Families" contains a section on releasing the power of prayer for the family. I quote John Paul II's *Letter to Families*: "How indispensable is the witness of all families who live their vocation day-by-day; how urgent it is for families to pray and for that prayer to increase and to spread throughout the world... Do not be afraid of the risks! God's strength is always far more powerful than your difficulties!"

Love is risky. Family is risky. Family is at the heart of the great drama of salvation. It is necessary to release the power of prayer for the family. Where does the power come from? It derives from a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ. It is the action of God and of man springing forth from the Holy Spirit (cf. CCC, 2564). According to author Peter Kreeft, the shortest, simplest, and most powerful prayer in the world is the word *Jesus*. Kreeft explains, "All our energy and effort is not strong enough to heal our own souls, but God's word of power is. That Word is so powerful that by it God made the universe out of nothing, and by it he is doing the even greater deed of making saints out of sinners. That word is Jesus Christ." True conjugal and familial love is fire tested. The prayer Christ taught Saint Faustina, "Jesus, I trust in You," helps families to release faith instead of fear into their home.

### ***What can consecrated religious and institutes of consecrated life learn in this regard?***

Consecrated religious and institutes of consecrated life radiate the

loving face of the Father of Mercy. Their vocations require many hidden sacrifices and secret challenges that try the soul. But what they provide for humanity is immeasurable. God knows we need them. He sustains them as the praying heart of the Church pumping the power of prayer to the members of His Body. While many believers sleep, they keep a prayer vigil like the night-watchman for the Lord.

When the diocesan *ensor librorum*, a Norbertine priest, reviewed the book for the imprimatur, he expressed appreciation for Chapter Six, "Rays of Divine Mercy On Various Vocations: Healing from No to Yes." This chapter examines the healing power of saying yes to the Father's will in imitation of Jesus and Mary. It focuses on vocational fidelity without duplicity and the problem of negativity to God's will. As we know, our vocation is not meant to be the fulfillment of all human desire. God alone fulfills. The vocation is where our salvation is worked out amidst trials, tests, consolation and desolation.

I also write about Mother Teresa and the healing power of her loving smile for the poor. The joy that we see on the faces of consecrated religious reveals the secret of their communion with God. We are filled with hope because of their prophetic witness to joy.

### ***How can one learn more about your book and obtain a copy?***

*God's Healing Mercy* is available at Catholic book stores, on Amazon or at [SophiaPress.com](http://SophiaPress.com). For orders of 10+ copies, please contact Aja McCarthy, Director of Marketing at SOPHIA PRESS at 603-641-9344 (office), 603-494-2030 (cell) for deep discounts. ☪