



The term mercy is used very often in most of the palautian writings: *The struggle of the soul with God, Solitary life, Catechism of Virtues and the Month of Mary* are some of them where this term is repeated. The word “mercy” is used 133 times and “merciful” twice. The term compassion is used 27 times as synonym for mercy.

1. The God of mercies



For Francisco Palau mercy characterizes God and his action. At all times he acts in a “merciful way” (Struggle 236, 10). He refers to Him on various occasions as “God of mercies and God’s mercy” (School 394 and 422). Acknowledges God as a Father who with compassion and mercy takes away our sins. The book *Struggle of the soul with God* is a good example of his blind confidence in the mercy of God. In *My Relations*, though the term barely appears, its meaning is found abundantly, especially in the itineraries where he expresses the gratuitous love of God experienced intensely through his Beloved the Church (Cf. *My Relations* 22, 33; 10, 14-18; 8, 17-24).

God for him is the only source of mercy and compassion. From Him originate good thoughts and charity towards others: “We are miserable people (says in *Struggle of the soul*) incapable of doing anything good and the good that we have comes from you. You are the source of all goodness, and the Supreme Being to communicate. You certainly do not desire the death of the sinner, as assured by a prophet, but that he be converted and live (Ez 18,23). It is not your will to lose us, but to save us. You do not like to refuse us any grace which we need, but to give them to us in abundance (Struggle 187, 31).

Francisco Palau had a very powerful experience of divine mercy. He ensures that “neither one’s own faults and miseries nor the multitude of sins are sufficient motive to be desperate of the mercy of God. It is precisely because we are what we are, fragile, weak, miserable, sinners that God offers his grace, forgiveness and mercy. Our miseries are the stairway which leads us to God, the supreme goodness” (Catechism 357-358). Because in forgiveness “God’s mercy shines” (Struggle, to the reader 2, p.25)

2. How did Francisco Palau live mercy?

For Francisco Palau mercy is love in action. With his great practical and evangelical sense writes: “Good will is not enough, a heart that has compassion for the miseries of others is not enough; charity is work, and these are guided in its terrain by beneficence (kindness)...”.(Month of Mary, 554, 2).

We lack sources about his childhood and early youth but we find some information in the record books of his entrance to the seminary, novitiate. The dates of his profession are registered in the conventual minutes. It is important to know that particular information about Francisco Palau is preserved and that was his compassion towards an elderly religious priest of his community to whom he helped to escape from the convent burnt by the revolutionaries on 25th July 1835, risking his own life. The last days of his life were marked by the same passion of attending the needs of others regardless of his own health and well-being. This way in 1872 he died as a victim of fever while attending the inhabitants arriving from plague-ridden areas like Huesca, Calasanz,.



In the midst of all these events his entire life was dedicated to others, practicing one by one all the works of mercy keeping in mind the exhortation of St Paul to the Colossians: «Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. » (Col 3, 12-13).

All we know is that Francisco Palau exercised mercy during his life. He always offered forgiveness and excused where possible not with condemnation but being aware of reciprocal forgiveness and mercy. "The Lord bestows his blessing and life forever". It was very clear for him that without practicing reciprocal forgiveness and mercy one cannot live in harmony and peace either in the family or in any other community, because: "God is the Prince of peace and lives in hearts united by love".

He manifested his love to his brothers with heroic gestures. For his spiritual sons and daughters he imposed a rule of conduct guided by exquisite charity and love following this program: "I neither have nor will ever have for you in my life without a heart of a father; I do not have temptations against you, because my love for you fills completely my heart and it does not have room for

temptation; you will find me always at peace, always friendly, always in good humor".¹

He remained invariably the same: "I will not spare any sacrifice and will do all I can... rest assured that I will not neglect you and will make the best of all the occasions that will be presented in order to realize the designs of God over you":², writes to Juana Gratias after the failure of the first attempts of Foundation. He was always ready to do any sacrifice caring his sons and daughters. «I would very gladly make this trip albeit walk» to hear your worries and brighten your mind. This permanent disposition is clear in many expressions: «the father who guides you will neither fail nor neglect you, and is ready for whatever sacrifice God may ask him for your sake »³.

Out of many examples that we find in his life and in his writings what is highlighted is the depth and finesse of his

¹ Cta 117, 4.

² Cta 19, 7.

³ Cta 73, 4.

sentiments, his merciful heart even to the great enemies of the Church: “How often blindness! We are filled with indignation against those whom we consider are the prime causes of such ravage. Wicked ones!, we say they are holy but are full of fury,...Wicked! Burning away our churches and convents! You bewildered us! We cannot believe that there can be

such wicked men in the world.. But a soul that is truly enlightened by the light of the Holy Spirit thinks and says the same, although in a very different way. Not to provoke anger against them, before having compassion, and seeing them as men through their own fault and pride abandoned by God” (STR 74, 14).

In short, what better image we have to imitate the merciful love of God as father and mother than the motherhood: “Be a true mother to your neighbours, whether they are good or bad. Put them in your heart, as the hen protects her chicks under her wings (Mt 23, 37), and risks her own life to defend them from the claws of the hawk, so you must consider them as your true sons, and cover them with the wings of your heart”⁴.

Seeming to him little a life for this necessity he began the Missionary Carmel. So, he kept on teaching, healing, welcoming, accompanying, consoling, liberating, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, finally implementing love with prayer and total attention to the needs of others, prolonging in history the merciful attitude of Christ, reflection of the love of the Father.



⁴ *Writings-STR.12*