Introduction: The confusion of our time

We live in an age where the word *"mercy"* has become omnipresent in religious and cultural language. It's preached from pulpits, printed on banners, sung in worship songs. And yet, more and more often, what is presented is a **cheap, unconditional, automatic mercy**, as if it were just another human right—requiring no effort, no conversion, no need for repentance.

But this is not the Mercy of God revealed in Sacred Scripture, nor the one taught by Tradition and the saints.
Divine Mercy is infinite, yes. But it is not blind or naïve. It is a mercy that expects a response from man: **sincere repentance**.

Now more than ever, we must return to this essential truth of the Gospel:
THERE IS NO MERCY WITHOUT REPENTANCE.
To deny this is to do a grave disservice to the human soul and to the Heart of Christ.

I. **What Is the Mercy of God?**

Mercy is one of the most beautiful and consoling characteristics of God's love. It is His **loving will to heal, forgive, and raise up the fallen sinner.** It is the tender face of divine justice—not its opposite, but its perfect complement.

St. John Paul II wrote in *Dives in Misericordia*:

> *"Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather manifests its profound and authentic fullness."*

God, in His mercy, **does not ignore sin**: He confronts it, forgives it, and transforms it… **if the sinner repents.**

Christ did not come to say, "do whatever you want."
He came to say: **"Go, and sin no more" (John 8:11).**

II. **The History of a False Mercy**

From the earliest centuries, the Church has fought against two extremes:

- **Rigorism**, which denied forgiveness to repeat sinners,
- and **laxism**, which downplayed the need for inner conversion.

Today, we face a new version of this laxism:
A **"mercy without repentance"** that turns the love of God into an excuse to stay the same, without change, without the Cross, without grace.

But the Magisterium, the Fathers of the Church, and the saints have all been clear:
God's forgiveness is not automatic. Love does not override free will. Heaven is not cheap.

III. **Repentance: The Key to Mercy**

The key word is **"metanoia,"** used frequently in the Gospel. It means: **a change of mind, conversion, a complete turning around.**

When St. Peter preached at Pentecost, the people asked:
"What must we do?"
And he answered, clearly and directly:

> *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38).*

Repentance, then, is the **conscious and free act by which a person recognizes their sin, sincerely regrets it, and decides to change with God's help.**

Mercy does not act without this "yes."
God respects our freedom too much to force it.

IV. **Mercy Without Repentance: A Betrayal of the Gospel?**

Preaching an "automatic mercy" is comfortable, popular, and soothing… but it is **a betrayal of the Gospel.**

Jesus forgave the adulterous woman… but **only after she was exposed and repentant.** He forgave the Good Thief… **after he confessed his crimes and humbly asked, "Remember me" (Luke 23:42).**

Mercy without repentance does not save: it numbs.
It's like telling a sick person they don't need medicine, only a smile.
It's like comforting the sinner without telling them that sin kills the soul.

V. **A Practical Guide: How to Live True Repentance**

1. **Recognize Sin**

The first step is breaking free from the culture of self-justification.
"Everyone does it" is not an excuse.
The Holy Spirit gives us the grace to see ourselves truthfully.

Practical tip: Examine your conscience sincerely and humbly every night.

2. **Feel Sorrow for Offending God**

It's not enough to say, "I made a mistake." Christian repentance is born of love:
"Lord, I've failed You. Forgive me."

Practical tip: Meditate in front of a Crucifix. Look at the price of your sin… and of your redemption.

3. **Go to Confession Regularly**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is not optional.
Jesus instituted it to restore and cleanse us.

Pastoral tip: Go at least once a month. Prepare well, speak honestly, and have a firm purpose of amendment.

4. **Repair the Damage**

Whenever possible, apologize, return what was stolen, undo scandal.

Spiritual tip: Offer fasting, almsgiving, or acts of charity for those harmed by your sins.

5. **Change Your Life**

Repentance without conversion is fruitless.
It's not enough to say, "I feel bad." You must act.

Practical tip: Set concrete goals. If you fall, get back up. Never get used to the mud.

VI. **What If I Struggle to Repent?**

God knows that not every heart repents at the same pace.
Sometimes pride, ignorance, or deep wounds prevent us from seeing clearly.

But if you ask for the grace of repentance… God will grant it.

St. Teresa of Ávila said:

> *"Ask even if you don't feel like it. Even if you feel nothing. Ask with faith… and God will soften your heart."*

Repentance does not always begin with an earthquake. Sometimes it's a tiny crack… through which the light enters.

VII. **What Happens If I Don’t Repent?**

Here lies the hardest, yet most necessary truth:
He who does not repent cannot receive mercy.

God does not send souls to hell: **the soul excludes itself if it persists in sin.**

The Catechism says:

> *“God’s mercy does not remove the necessity of conversion, without which there is no forgiveness” (cf. CCC 1864).*

Jesus will not force your heart. If you choose not to repent, **He will respect your decision… though it breaks His heart.**

VIII. **The Message for Our Time**

In a world that trivializes evil, silences sin, and mocks confession, we need more than ever **prophets of repentance**.

- Parents who teach their children to ask God for forgiveness.
- Priests who preach truth, even when it hurts.
- Faithful Christians who are not afraid to say: “I was wrong… and I need to go to Confession.”

The Church is not a feel-good refuge, but a hospital for healing the soul.
And **there is no healing without a diagnosis. No forgiveness without repentance.**

Conclusion: The Mercy That Saves

God is not waiting for you to be perfect.
He’s waiting for you to repent.

“The Lord does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he turn from his ways and live” (Ezekiel 18:23).
That is His Mercy—not an automatic pass to Heaven, but **an outstretched hand… waiting for you to take it.**

Christ died for you. And if you repent, **His Blood will erase your sin as if it never existed.**
But if you do not repent… you will have rejected Him.

TODAY is the day to return to Him.
TODAY is the time to confess, to weep, and to change.
And when you do, you will see that the God of Justice…
is also the God of Mercy beyond measure.