



In his biography of St Paul VI, author Peter Hebblethwaite recounts how, in 1976, the saintly pontiff told his secretary, Monsignor John McGee, how he had been deeply influenced by St Augustine's distinction between *misera* (human misery) and *misericordia* (divine mercy). He explained that his entire spirituality was grounded in the interconnection of the two.

That relationship is obvious in a number of Gospel stories, including the account of the meeting of Jesus with a Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob. She was miserable, firstly, because her five husbands had either died or divorced her. Currently she was living with another man. She was seeking love and happiness but still hadn't found what she was looking for. Secondly, because she had a reputation as a *femme fatale*, she came to draw water on her own, in the mid-day heat, in order to avoid the taunts and criticisms of other women.

While at the well she met Jesus. There is symbolic significance in the fact that he was the seventh man mentioned. Seven was the symbolic number for divine completeness and spiritual perfection. She was about to encounter both in Jesus. Instead

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Sanctus

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

After the Consecration

The mystery of faith.

We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

Behold the Lamb of God, ...

Lord, I am not worthy

that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon *(Jn 4:13-14)*

For anyone who drinks it, says the Lord, the water I shall give will become in him a spring welling up to eternal life.

Prayer after Communion

As we receive the pledge of things yet hidden in heaven and are nourished while still on earth with the Bread that comes from on high, we humbly entreat you, O Lord, that what is being brought about in us in mystery may come to true completion.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

of judging, condemning or criticising her, as she would have expected, he affirmed her worth and talked about releasing waters of true and lasting love in her life. As he talked, her misery was transformed in the light of his unconditional mercy. It was as if his words were like a hammer that broke the stone of negativity in her heart, thereby releasing the pent-up waters of benevolent love within her.

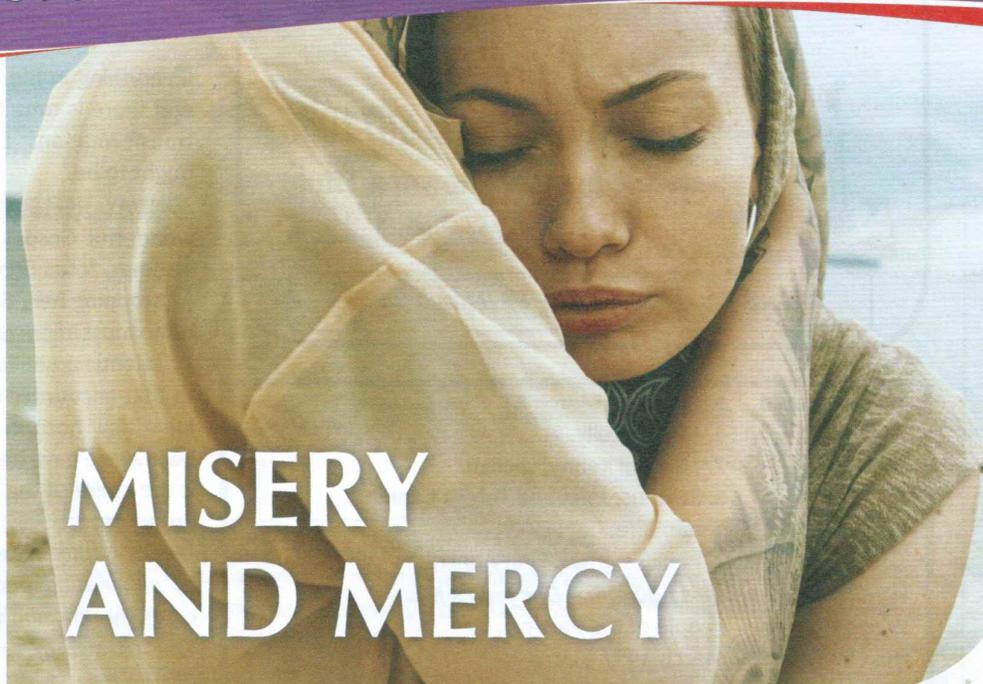
It is significant, surely, that when this inner transformation took place, self-absorption gave way to a desire to go and tell her fellow Samaritans about Jesus. Having heard and experienced the good news of God's love for her, she

wanted to share that same good news with others. We are told that her evangelisation was effective. The Samaritans not only invited Jesus to stay in their village, 'Many more believed because of his message, and they said to the woman, "We believe now, not because of what you said, but because we ourselves have heard him, and we know that he really is the Saviour of the world."'

Instead of repressing your feelings of misery, acknowledge and embrace them in the belief that they will be transformed by a liberating experience of divine mercy and love.

— Pat Collins

MISERY AND MERCY



Reflection

Contemplate the weariness and thirst of Jesus sitting by the well at noon.

Lesson

The living water Jesus is offering is much more than abundant water gushing up from a well.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are presented today as someone whose word reaches out to all people without exception.