

JUNE 14 2025, FATHER BRANDEN GORDON

## The Lord Is Kind and Merciful

When I was reflecting on today's responsorial psalm—Psalm 103—these words stood out: “The Lord is kind and merciful.” They reminded me of a faith testimony I heard several years ago, one I've never forgotten.

For the purpose of this homily, I'll refer to the young woman who shared this testimony as Anna.

Anna was raised in a devout Catholic family in the United States. Her parents were so committed to the faith that, at one point, they packed up their entire household and moved the family to Latin America for a mission trip. They spent several years there, serving the poor and living out the Gospel in daily acts of love.

During this time, Anna completed her high school education at a respected Catholic school. But when the family returned to the U.S., things began to change. As Anna entered university, the faith she had received so lovingly from her parents began to fade from her life. She slowly drifted from God.

She started living a life of dissipation—partying, impurity, substance abuse—all the things that often masquerade as freedom but lead only to spiritual emptiness. Over time, she realized how hollow her life had become. She was squandering her inheritance—the treasure of the Catholic faith—on things that could never satisfy her heart.

One day, while sitting in class, visibly downcast and distracted, Anna was approached by a friend after the lecture. He was a Protestant Christian. Seeing her distress, he gently asked if she was okay. In that

moment, Anna broke down in tears and confessed that she had made a mess of her life.

Her friend responded with just three words: \*\*“God loves you.”\*\* And in that instant, Anna’s heart was flooded with peace. She realized that no matter what she had done, God still loved her.

Then something unexpected happened. Her friend, not a Catholic, told her, “You should go talk to a priest.” Anna took his advice, went to confession, and experienced a powerful conversion. She left her old life behind and returned to the Father’s house—welcomed not with judgment, but with mercy and joy.

“The Lord is kind and merciful.”

Later, she returned to thank her friend for suggesting she speak to a priest. But to her surprise, he responded, “Me? Suggest that? I don’t even believe in the Catholic Church or the sacraments.” Somehow, God had spoken through him—perhaps even without his knowing. Maybe it was Anna’s guardian angel whispering those words. Only God knows what happened in that mysterious and grace-filled moment.

But one thing is clear: Anna had been spiritually dead, and by God’s mercy, she had been brought back to life.

“The Lord forgives all your iniquities, heals all your diseases, redeems your life from the pit, and crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.”  
(Psalm 103)

This psalm is a profound reminder of the beauty and depth of God’s mercy. Whenever we feel weighed down by our flaws, ashamed of our past, or discouraged by our failings, we should remember the words of Psalm 103—and many other passages in Scripture that proclaim the boundless mercy of God.

As Catholic Christians, we believe that mercy is one of the chief attributes of God. And God's forgiveness comes with only one condition: repentance. That's it.

Repentance is the key that unlocks the treasury of God's mercy.

As the Roman Catechism (the Catechism of the Council of Trent) teaches:

“There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness—provided their repentance is sincere.”

And so, I encourage all of us, myself included, to go to confession regularly—at least once a month. In the confessional, we encounter not shame, but mercy. We experience sacramentally what is so beautifully described in Psalm 103:

“As far as the east is from the west, so far does God remove our transgressions from us. For the Lord is kind and merciful.”