

# AN ANONYMOUS SAINT

## Interpretation of Kyrie Eleison

The prayer 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me', and more briefly 'Lord, have mercy' ('Kyrie eleison') was given to Christians during the epoch of the apostles, and they were instructed to say it constantly. Which is what they did. But what does 'Kyrie eleison' mean? Very little today we know. It is a waste of time and for nothing, alas, that we say 'Lord, have mercy'. The mercy of God is not received. For what is demanded is not understood. It must therefore be understood that the Son and the Word of God became Lord and Master of human nature, from the moment when he was incarnated, when he became a man, when he suffered so many torments, when he was crucified, and when, when his very holy blood spilled, he redeemed man from the hands of the devil. For before being incarnated, he was the Lord of all visible and invisible creatures: he was their creator. As for man and for demons who did not want to accept him as Lord and Master, the Lord of the entire world is not their Lord. For the very good God, when he made angels and men free and gave them reason so that they could have spiritual knowledge and discernment, he did not want, just and true as he is, to take away their liberty, nor dominate them with force contrary to their choice. But he is the Lord and Master of those who want to submit to the power and government of God. Those who refuse, he lets them do as they will, for they are free.

So when Adam, seduced by the rebellious devil, revolted against God and refused to obey his command, God allowed him this liberty and did not want to dominate him by force. But the jealous devil, who deceived Adam in the beginning, does not stop deceiving right to the point where man is made as unreasonable as the animals without intellect, and he would live then like an animal deprived of mind and intellect. God, in his great compassion, had pity for him in the end. He inclined the heaven and descended to the earth. He made himself man for man. With his very pure blood, he delivered him from slavery to sin. Through the holy Gospel, he put him on a road of life pleasing to God, and, according to John the Theologian, he gave us the power to become children of God (c. John 1 : 12). Through divine baptism, he regenerated us. He made new creatures of us. Through the sacraments, every day he nourished and gave life to our soul. In a word, in his extreme wisdom, he opened the way which rendered himself for ever inseparable from us as we are from him, so that the devil would have no place in us.

Those Christians who, after having received from Christ their Master so much grace and such benefits, have let themselves be deceived by the devil anew, who are distant from God by

the medium of the world and the flesh and are dominated by sin and by the devil whose will they do, but they are nevertheless not insensible to the point of not feeling the evil they have suffered, who understand their fault and are aware of the slavery of their condition, but do cannot liberate themselves by their own means and have recourse to God, those, they say: 'Lord, have mercy', so that the Lord, in his great love, enfolds them in his pity and his compassion, so that they receive as the prodigal son did (cf. Luke 15 : 20), so that he gives them divine grace anew, in order to be delivered from sin by grace, distancing himself from demons, to recover their freedom, to be able in this way to live pleasing God, and to keep the commandments. These Christians who say the 'Kyrie eleison' with such an aim want to discover with certainty the compassion of the very good God, they want to receive his grace, so as to be delivered from the slavery of sin and to be saved.

But those who have not a total awareness of what we have described do not know the sickness of being servile to the desires of the flesh and those of the world, and do not allow any time to think on the slavery they suffer. That is not their goal. And if they say the 'Kyrie eleison', it is only by habit. How can they receive the compassion of God, a compassion so marvellous and infinite? It is better not to receive the compassion of God, than to receive it and to lose it again, for the fault is then twofold, as if one put a precious stone in the hands of a child or a peasant who does not know the value of the stone. If they take the stone and they lose it, it is evident that they were not the one who truly lost it, but they one who gave it to them.

To better understand what we are trying to say, consider that he who, in the world, is indigent and poor and desires to receive alms from a rich man, goes to find him and says: 'Have mercy on me', which is to say: 'Have compassion on my poverty, and give me the means to live'. Likewise he who has a debt and a desire that his creditor remits his debt, goes to find him and says: 'Have mercy on me', which means: 'Have compassion on my indigence, and remit the debt that I have to you'. Just so he who has committed a fault, if he desires that the one he has offended pardon him, he goes to find him and says: 'Have mercy on me', which means: 'Pardon the offense I made to you'. Nevertheless the sinner says to God: 'Lord, have mercy', and he does not know what he says, nor why he says it, he no longer knows what the mercy is which he asks from God, nor in what way this mercy he asks for is good. But it is only by custom that he says

'Lord, have mercy'. Therefore he knows nothing. So, how will God give him the mercy he does not understand, and which he despises, and that he will waste by sinning anyway?

The mercy of God is nothing else than the grace of the Holy Spirit, this that we sinners must demand from God when saying continually the 'Kyrie eleison', that is to say: 'My Lord, have mercy on me a sinner, in my suffering, and receive me again in your grace. Give me a spirit of power, so that I have the force to resist temptations of the devil and the bad habit of sin. Give me a spirit of wisdom, so that I can become wise, so that I can arrive at knowing myself and correcting myself. Give me a spirit of fear, so that I can revere you and keep your commandments. Give me a spirit of love, so that I can love you and not travel away from you. Give me a spirit of peace, so that my soul keeps itself at peace, so that I collect all my thoughts and live calm and serene. Give me a spirit of purity, so that it keeps me pure of all dirt. Give me a spirit of gentleness, so that I can be kind to my brothers the Christians and abstain from all anger. Give me a spirit of humility, so that I do not grow in arrogance and do not fill myself with pride.'

He who knows his duty in all these things and who asks them from God in his great love, when saying 'Kyrie eleison', will surely receive what he asks for and obtain the mercy of the Lord and his divine grace. But he who knows nothing of what we have said, and who says the 'Kyrie eleison' only by habit, it is not possible that he will receive the mercy of God. For he has, from the beginning, received from God numerous graces. But he has not recognised them, he has not thanked God for his having given them. He has received the mercy of God when was reborn in holy baptism, when he became an Orthodox Christian. He received the mercy of when he was delivered of so many dangers of the soul and body which he experienced during his life. He received the mercy of God every time he sinned against God and harmed himself under his faults, and meanwhile has not been destroyed, has not been punished as he ought to have been. He received the mercy of God when, in one way or another, he benefited from divine grace and has not known it. But he has forgotten all of this, he was not at all attached to his safety. How then can such a Christian receive the pity of God, when he does not feel it, he does not know that grace which he has received from God as we have said, and he does not know what he is saying, and that he says the 'Kyrie eleison' without aim and without result, merely by force of habit?