

This photo always gets me. This boy's father has presumably died in combat serving in the Marine Corps. Another Marine, likely one of the fallen's comrades, presents a flag to the boy in memory of his father's ultimate sacrifice of giving his life. The message of the presentation is extraordinarily bitter-sweet: "Remember the greatness of your father and his sacrifice while mourning his loss."

Mercy, while not always comfortable, can be the balm for our suffering; the redemptive actions of our Lord alleviate us of our sins and shortcomings. And we cannot accept mercy and move forward if we don't first look the past in the eye (in the boy's case, the death of his father; in our case, the severity of our sins).

Once we face the truth, we can accept the Lord's mercy and attempt to move on. It's never easy, for us or for the boy in the picture. The Marine's presentation of the flag helps the boy confront the truth of his father's passing, but also marks a new beginning. A new beginning of taking on more responsibility in the absence of his father. Our new beginning is taking on more responsibility as we continue to grow in our identity as sons and daughters of the father.

By John McGlynn