

JUBILEE OF MERCY

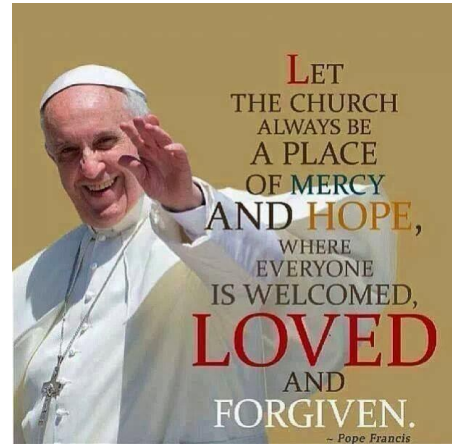


ENCOUNTERING MERCY

About the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy....

The Jubilee Year of Mercy began on 8 December 2015 – and concludes on 20 November 2016.

Pope Francis opened the door of St Peter's Basilica to officially welcome the Jubilee Year. The theme of the Jubilee Year is: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful".



A jubilee year is a special year called by the church to receive blessing and pardon from God. The tradition started 700 years ago and 26 jubilees have been celebrated since. Only three of those (including this Year of Mercy) have been 'extraordinary'.

Pope Francis' official proclamation of this Holy Year is entitled *Misericordiae Vultus* (The Face of Mercy) and explains how in Jesus, in his words and actions, the mercy of God has been revealed.

The Year of Mercy logo

"MERCIFUL LIKE THE FATHER" (LUKE 6: 36)

The almond shape
An important figure in ancient iconography, it represents the union of two circles, that is the two natures of Christ: divine and human.



The motto
The motto of the Year of Mercy is taken from the Gospel of Luke: "Be merciful like the Father"



The colors
Red: blood, life and divinity
White: the light of Christ.
Blue: represents man.
Golden: Adam (and each one of us) is in a process of becoming like God through Jesus Christ.



The gaze
Jesus and the man share one eye. This means that God communicates himself in such a way that man is able to see as He sees.



The concentric ovals
They suggest the movement of Christ who carries humanity out of the night of sin and death.



The Good Shepherd
Jesus is the Good Shepherd who carries Adam (and all of us) on His shoulders.





"GOD'S MERCY IS LIKE THAT: A GREAT LIGHT OF LOVE AND TENDERNESS" (POPE FRANCIS)



“We must remain silent about God if we don’t know how to speak anew the message of God’s mercy to the people who are in so much physical and spiritual distress.”

Cardinal Walter Kasper

A Special relationship with Vatican II

I will open the Holy Door on the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive.

The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way.

The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way.



What is the ‘new way’?

Saint John XXIII opening the Council: “Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity...”

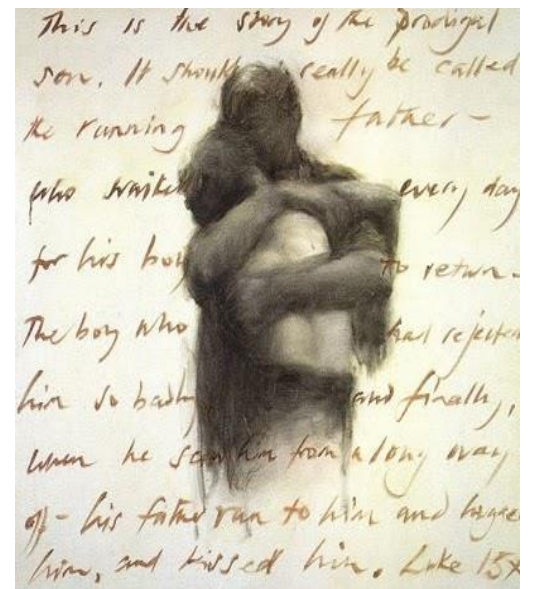
Blessed Paul VI closing the Council: “Charity has been the principal religious feature of this Council... the old story of the Good Samaritan has been the model of the spirituality of the Council... a wave of affection and admiration flowed from the Council over the modern world of humanity... all this rich teaching is channelled in one direction, the service of mankind, of every condition, in every weakness and need.”

The Church’s first truth is the love of Christ. The Church makes herself a servant of this love and mediates it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of oneself. MV 12



The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more.

It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope. MV 10.



For Reflection:

Was there something that you heard or read that is meaningful for you? Share with the person near you.

The Parables of **Mercy**

The three parables in Chapter 15 of Luke: the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son, have been called “the heart of the Gospel”. They celebrate Jesus’ love for the last and least and lost. Jesus lives out of his image of a merciful God. But that joyful love brings him into open confrontation with the religious authorities of his time.

There are two different groups around Jesus as he tells these three parables: one that wants to listen to him and another that wants to complain about him – the outcasts and the outraged. The parables are addressed to them:

The Lost Sheep

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So he told them this parable: Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it....



The Lost Coin

“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The Prodigal Son

I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.” So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him....

the shepherd
the woman
the father
desperately desire to be re-united
with what they have lost that is
so precious to them





Themes of the Year of Mercy: Pilgrimage and the Holy Door

To reach the Holy Door in Rome or in any other place in the world, everyone, according to his or her ability, will have to make a pilgrimage. This will be a sign that mercy is also a goal to reach and requires dedication and sacrifice. May pilgrimage be an impetus to conversion: by crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, we will find the strength to embrace God's mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others. MV 10

The Parables of Mercy and this Holy Year ask us to reconsider what we mean by justice:

The temptation to focus exclusively on justice made us forget that this only the first, albeit necessary and indispensable step... MV 10



If God limited himself to only justice, he would cease to be God, and would instead be like human beings who ask merely that the law be respected. But mere justice is not enough... This is why God goes beyond justice with his mercy and forgiveness. MV 21



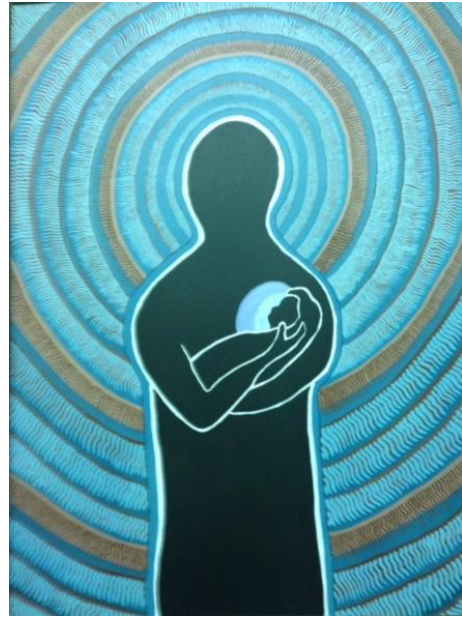
For Reflection
Are there insights you have gained about mercy from considering these stories and reflections? Please share with someone close to you.

Sieger Koder Moses and the Burning Bush

Rich in Mercy

John Paul II, 1980

Hesed: Faithful love, used always in connection with the covenant established with Israel. But even when Israel broke its side of the covenant, hesed revealed its deeper aspect: namely that God's faithful love is more powerful than betrayal, that grace is stronger than sin. God acts kindly towards his people "for the sake of my holy name". (Ez. 36:22). Hesed is not God's response to human merit, but God's faithfulness to God's own nature of merciful love. The fruits of this love are forgiveness and restoration...



Rahamim: In its very root, is a mother's love (reham = mother's womb). This love begins in the deep and original unity that links a mother to her child. It is a completely gratuitous love – not earned or merited but a necessary response of the heart. It is, as it were, a "feminine" variation of the masculine fidelity to oneself expressed by hesed. Rahamim is tenderness, patience and readiness to forgive: "Can a woman forget her baby...or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you" (Is. 49:15). Abridged from Footnote 52



"For his mercy endures for ever". This is the refrain that repeats after each verse in Psalm 136 as it narrates the history of God's revelation... To repeat continually "for his mercy endures forever," as the psalm does, seems to break through the dimensions of space and time, inserting everything into the eternal mystery of love. MV 7

In short, the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a "visceral" love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy.

Who is my neighbour?

Jesus answers the lawyer's question not with the legal definition he wanted but with a story about **how to be a neighbour**: one who places no barriers to responding with love and care to another's suffering.



There are many twists in this story – which would have infuriated some of Jesus' listeners. The Samaritan was a despised neighbour; a 'good' Samaritan was unthinkable.

Our loyalties, beliefs and prejudices may cause separation and division. Kindness recognises the other to be kin and kindred.

By the end of his life, Jesus is seen to extend the boundaries of love to include all people. The Gospel challenge, as illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan, is to extend the boundaries of compassion even to include our traditional enemies as our teachers and to use our hurt to notice and help those who are in need. For Jesus the map of love has no boundaries. Denis McBride, The Parables of Jesus, p.166

For Reflection:

What holds us back in giving and receiving kindness?

Please share with the person near you.

Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviours that are shown in daily living. MV9

It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the *corporal and spiritual works of mercy*. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy. (MV 15)

THE WORKS OF MERCY

THE SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

Moreover, we will be asked if we have helped others to escape the doubt that causes them to fall into despair and which is often a source of loneliness; if we have helped to overcome the ignorance in which millions of people live, especially children deprived of the necessary means to free them from the bonds of poverty; if we have been close to the lonely and afflicted; if we have forgiven those who have offended us and have rejected all forms of anger and hate that lead to violence; if we have had the kind of patience God shows, who is so patient with us; and if we have commended our brothers and sisters to the Lord in prayer.

MV 15

The Spiritual Works of Mercy have long been a part of the Christian tradition, appearing in the works of theologians and spiritual writers throughout history. Just as Jesus attended to the spiritual well-being of those he ministered to, these Spiritual Works of Mercy guide us to "help our neighbour in their spiritual needs". The seven Spiritual Works of Mercy are listed below. After each work of mercy there are also suggestions and words of advice for living them out in our daily lives. Think of how you might live them out...

COUNSELING THE DOUBTFUL

Everyone has moments of doubt in their faith journey. Nevertheless, we should always remember that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and turn to him along our way.

- Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may eventually become wise" ([Prov 19:20](#))
- Has someone asked you for advice? Orient your response to Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life
- Follow Christ with the witness of your life so that others may see God's love revealed in your actions
- Accompany a friend who is struggling with believing to join a parish group for service or faith formation, share a book you found useful in dealing with your friend's faith concern, and worship at Sunday Mass

INSTRUCTING THE IGNORANT

Learn about our faith and be open to talking with others about our beliefs. There is always something more to discover about our faith.

- Go on a service trip or short term mission trip. No time? Donate to support someone on their service trip

- Volunteer to help with religious education programs at your parish
- Invite someone to go to mass with you this weekend
- Know your faith! Research to find out more about the Catholic faith and how to live it.

ADMONISHING THE SINNER

Do not judge, but be supportive in helping others find their way and correct their mistakes. Together we can learn to walk more closely with Christ.

- In humility we must strive to create a culture that does not accept sin, while realizing that we all fall at times
- Don't judge, but guide others towards the path of salvation (see [Mt 7:1-2](#))
- When you correct someone, don't be arrogant. We are all in need of God's loving correction.
- We should journey together to a deeper understanding of our shared faith
- "Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye" ([Mt 7:5](#))



COMFORTING THE SORROWFUL

Be open to listening and comforting those who are dealing with grief. Even if we aren't sure of the right words to say, our presence can make a big difference.

- Lend a listening ear to those going through a tough time
- Make a home cooked meal for a friend who is facing a difficult time
- Write a letter or send a card to someone who is suffering
- A few moments of your day may make a lifetime of difference to someone who is going through a difficult time

FORGIVING INJURIES

Forgiving others is difficult at times because we do not have God's limitless mercy and compassion. But Jesus teaches us that we should forgive as God forgives, relying on him to help us show others the mercy of God

- Let go of grudges
- Saying sorry is something we learn as kids, but how often do we really mean it? Forgiveness transforms hearts and lives
- Participate in the Sacrament of Penance
- Pray for those who have caused us hurt

BEARING WRONGS PATIENTLY

Do not be bitter about wrongs done against you. Place your hope in God so that you can endure the troubles of this world and face them with a compassionate spirit.

- Frustrated with someone? Step away from the situation, take a few deep breaths, pray the Our Father, asking God for patience
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PRAYING FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

Prayer is one of the most powerful ways we can support others. Joining together in prayer for the living and the dead entrusts us all into God's care.

- Request a mass intention for a friend or family member who is going through a tough time
- Request a mass intention for a friend or family member who has passed away
- Keep your own book of prayer intentions, writing down the names of those who you are keeping in your prayers
- Ask a friend or family member if there is anything you can pray for them about
- Through prayer, entrust your cares and concerns for those around you to God



THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

The Corporal Works of Mercy are found in the teachings of Jesus and give us a model for how we should treat all others, as if they were Christ in disguise. They "are charitable actions by which we help our neighbours in their bodily needs". They respond to the basic needs of humanity as we journey together through this life.

The seven Corporal Works of Mercy are listed below. After each work of mercy there are also suggestions and words of advice for living them out in our daily lives. How might you follow Jesus in this way

FEED THE HUNGRY

There are many people in this world who go without food. When so much of our food goes to waste, consider how good stewardship practices of your own food habits can benefit others who do not have those same resources.

- Having delicious food? Donate to a food drive so everyone can have something to eat.
- Research, identify and contribute financially to organisations that serve the hungry.
- The next time you make a recipe that can be easily frozen, make a double batch and donate one to your local food pantry or soup kitchen.
- Try not to purchase more food than you are able to eat. If you notice that you end up throwing groceries away each week, purchasing less groceries would eliminate waste and allow you to donate the savings to those in need.

GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ do not have access to clean water and suffer from the lack of this basic necessity. We should support the efforts of those working towards greater accessibility of this essential resource.

- We take it for granted that we have access to clean water. Donate to help build wells for water for those in need
- Organize a group of children involved on a sports team (e.g. soccer) or a summer camp. Invite them to collect bottled water to distribute at a shelter for families. If parents can be involved, ask them to accompany their children in delivering the water to the families.
- Do the same for youth and young adult groups.
- Make an effort not to waste water. Remembering to turn off the water tap when you are brushing your teeth or washing dishes can help, especially in regions suffering from drought.

SHELTER THE HOMELESS

There are many circumstances that could lead to someone becoming a person without a home. Christ encourages us to go out and meet those without homes, affirming their worth and helping them seek a resolution to the challenges they face.



- See if your parish or diocese is involved with a local homeless shelter and volunteer some time.
- Donate time or money to organizations that build homes for those who need shelter.
- Many homeless shelters need warm blankets for their beds. If you can knit or sew that would be an extra loving gift.
- There are millions of children and families who are on the move, fleeing from war, illness, hunger and impossible living conditions, and searching for peace and safety. Engage parish groups of children, youth, young adults, and families in doing some research on the causes and challenges that these families face to survive. Contact Catholic Social Services, or diocesan offices of peace and justice for help with your research. Seek ways to provide shelter for the homeless locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.

VISIT THE SICK

Those who are sick are often forgotten or avoided. In spite of their illness, these individuals still have much to offer to those who take the time to visit and comfort them.

- Give blood
 - Spend time volunteering at a nursing home – Get creative and make use of your talents (e.g. sing, read, paint, call Bingo, etc.)!
 - Take time on a Saturday to stop and visit with an elderly neighbor.
 - Offer to assist caregivers of chronically sick family members on a one-time or periodic basis. Give caregivers time off from their caregiving responsibilities so they can rest, complete personal chores, or enjoy a relaxing break.
 - Next time you make a meal that can be easily frozen, make a double batch and give it to a family in your parish who has a sick loved one.
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VISIT THE PRISONERS

People in prison are still people, made in the image and likeness of God. No matter what someone has done, they deserve the opportunity to hear the Word of God and find the Truth of the message of Christ.

- See if your parish, or a nearby parish, has a prison ministry and if so, get involved.
- Volunteer to help out or donate to charities that give Christmas presents to children whose parents are in prison.



BURY THE DEAD

Funerals give us the opportunity to grieve and show others support during difficult times. Through our prayers and actions during these times we show our respect for life, which is always a gift from God, and comfort to those who mourn.

- Send a card to someone who has recently lost a loved one. Make your own card and use some of these prayers.
- Visit the cemetery and pray for those you have lost.
- Spend time planning your own funeral mass, read through the Order of Christian Funerals and find our hope in the Resurrection.

GIVE ALMS TO THE POOR

Donate money to organizations that have the ability to provide support and services for those in need. Do research and find organizations that put people in need first, rather than profit.

- Skip the morning latte and put that money in the collection basket at church.
- Find a charity that is meaningful to you and volunteer your time or donate.
- This Lent, give up eating out at restaurants. Pack your meals and donate the extra money to charities.
- Participate in Project Compassion

Adapted from the United States Conference of Bishops website

Distinguished Jewish philosopher Abraham Heschel makes a distinction between the human being and being human: while we are all human beings, being human is something we become or fail to become. Humanity is not a given: "The degree to which one is sensitive to other peoples' suffering, to the humanity of the other, is the index of one's own humanity. It is the root for social living..." AJ Heschel "Who is Man?"

Lord when did we see you hungry? Matthew 25:44

In each of these “little ones,” Christ himself is present. His flesh becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us. Let us not forget the words of Saint John of the Cross: “as we prepare to leave this life, we will be judged on the basis of love”.MV 15



Fritz Eichenberg: Jesus of the Bread line Woodcut print

We hunger and thirst

to be wanted and to be loved
to be affirmed and encouraged
to live in peace and know justice

We are naked

when everyone knows our failure
when we are exposed in our weakness
when we lose our good name

We are strangers

when we feel like the permanent outside
when we are excluded because of our
colour/race/religion/gender or other difference
when we are ignored

We are sick

when we are burdened by anxiety or loss
when sadness is upon us
when we are broken hearted or depressed

We are imprisoned

when we are shut inside our own loneliness when
we feel hemmed in by life and misfortune
when we are unemployed.

From Denis McBride, The Parables of Jesus

The Holy Year of Mercy concludes on 20th November, 2016: the feast of Christ the King. *When Pilate asks whether Jesus is a king, Jesus distinguishes his kingship as 'not of this world'. His own people missed his coming because they were not looking for a humble servant whose life was poured out for those no one else valued. The Year of Mercy asks us to be open to the real power of God's Kingdom.*



The Kingdom

It's a long way off but inside it
There are quite different things going on:
Festivals at which the poor man
Is king and the consumptive is
Healed; mirrors in which the blind look
At themselves and love looks at them
Back; and industry is for mending
The bent bones and the minds fractured
By life. It's a long way off, but to get
There takes no time and admission
Is free if you...
present yourself with
Your need only and the simple offering
Of your faith, green as a leaf.

*From R.S.
Thomas, Collected
Poems 1945-1990*





Bless us Lord
With your own empathy
that we may see, hear, know
and respond as you do.

May we have the reverence to take off our shoes before the
sacred ground of the other.

And be transformed as we encounter you in those
who in your mercy you hold close to your heart.

Amen