

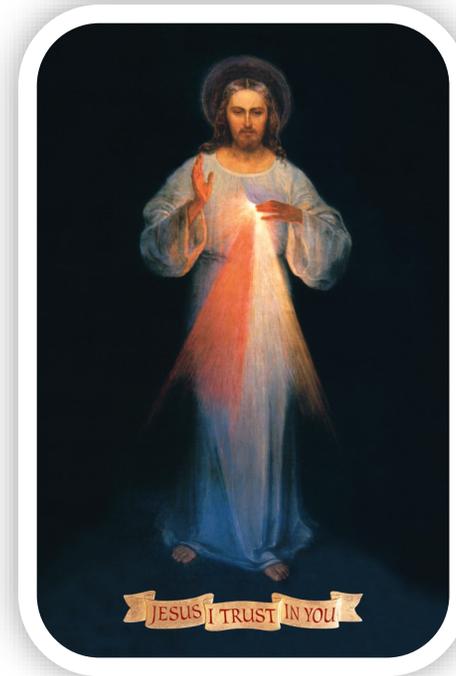


# Jubilee of Mercy

KNOW  
MERCY  
SHOW  
MERCY

33 DAYS OF MERCY

Mercy has been a major theme for Pope Francis



*St. Anthony Marie de Claret 2016*

Here is what you should know to continue celebrating this special event of the **Year of Mercy** in the life of the Church.

**What is the year of mercy?** Popes have the tradition of giving liturgical years a specific theme or emphasis. For example, the Year of Consecrated Life, the Year of Faith, the Year of Priests, etc. Now we have the **Year of Mercy**. The Year of Mercy is something exceptional; this one he declared to be a Jubilee!

## What is a jubilee year?

A “Holy Year” and “Jubilee” are synonymous terms. The concept goes back to the Old Testament when Moses declared every 50th year a jubilee, that is, a holy year to be observed by all of Israel which included the remission of debts, the liberation of slaves, and a rest from the cultivation of the land.

For the Catholic Church, the first Jubilee was proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300. It gradually increased in frequency from being celebrated every half century, to every 33 years, and then to every 25 years as the norm. A Jubilee is “ordinary” if it falls every 25 years, and “extraordinary” when it is proclaimed outside the usual time to commemorate some outstanding event.

After the Holy Year in 1975 under his predecessor, Pope St. John Paul II called for a Holy Year in 1983 (to commemorate the 1950th anniversary of the Year of Redemption, that is, the year 33 A.D. on which Jesus died on the Cross) and again in 2000. The Jubilee of the Year 2000 was the last one celebrated by the Church.

Now, Pope Francis called for this Holy Year (an “extraordinary” Jubilee as it comes before the next one anticipated in the year 2025), calling it a “Jubilee of Mercy”. **The Holy Year of Mercy commemorates the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council.**

A Jubilee Year is accompanied by special celebrations for the entire Church. The most notable of these includes the opening of the Holy Doors, pilgrimages to walk through the Holy Doors, and special indulgences granted to the faithful who participate in the Jubilee.

## Why mercy?

Mercy has been a major theme for Pope Francis. In fact, the motto of his pontificate is *Miserando atque eligendo*, meaning ‘lowly but chosen,’ or more literally in Latin, ‘by having mercy, by choosing him’, or, ‘by showing compassion and by choosing.’ Pope Francis took this phrase from the Venerable Bede’s sermon on Matthew chapter 9, as it was on the Feast of St. Matthew that he first felt the call to the priesthood as a teenager.

Mercy was also a major theme in the pontificate of John Paul II, who Pope Francis recently canonized. It was Pope St. John Paul II who instituted the Feast of Divine Mercy on the octave day of Easter (called Divine Mercy Sunday) for the universal Church in 2000.

## What are the year of mercy indulgences?

1. **Indulgences:** The full or partial remission of the temporal punishment for sins of which the guilt has already been forgiven. **See below** how to receive the indulgences:

- ◆ Make a Pilgrimage to a designated Holy Door (**every Cathedral or in the churches designated by the Diocesan Bishop, and in the four Papal Basilicas**)

- **St. John Paul II** - ushered in devotion to Divine Mercy, canonized St. Faustina, life-time example of love and forgiveness in words and actions.
- **St. Faustina Kowalska** - received visions of Divine Mercy, messenger chosen by Jesus to share with the world.
- **St. Maximilian Kolbe** - spread the light of the faith across the world during a dark era, and showed immense mercy by putting the needs and lives of others before his own.
- **St. John Vianney** - remembered for many things, including spending 16 hours a day in the Confessional, priest who is a great example of the importance of the mercy God extends to us in the Sacraments.
- **St. Paul** - example of receiving great mercy after conversion from former sinful life, wrote often in the New Testament about grace, mercy and salvation.
- **Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati** - With great sacrifice to self, Pier Giorgio lived out the Corporal Works of Mercy by serving the sick and poor.
- **Bl. Mother Teresa of Calcutta**. Her canonization will fall during the Jubilee of Mercy. The Year of Mercy seems like the perfect time for canonizing Blessed Mother Teresa because of her major works of mercy. According to the calendar for this Jubilee of Mercy, Sept. 4, 2016, is the “Jubilee for Workers and Volunteers of Mercy”, which would fall one day before her feast day. “Mother Teresa saw Jesus in all people”. Mother Teresa met Jesus in her personal attention to everyone. She showed the faithful how to never forget Jesus.



## 33<sup>rd</sup> Day: My journey of mercy

Let us read these three thoughts from Pope Francis:

- ◆ Paraphrasing James 2:13, he said: "We have to put mercy before judgment, and in every case God’s judgment will always be in the light of his mercy".
- ◆ "Let us abandon all fear and dread, and let us live the joy of encounter with the grace that transforms all"
- ◆ "You cannot conceive of a true Christian who is not merciful, just as you cannot conceive of God without his mercy. Mercy is the key word of the Gospel... We should not be afraid: We should allow ourselves to be embraced by the mercy of God, who waits for us and forgives everything".

Now, after one month reflecting about mercy, it is time to make our own journey of mercy, let us start: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Our concluding day (Sunday May 08):

- ◇ Blessing or consecration during Mass celebration for those who participated in the 33 days of Mercy
- ◇ If possible Adoration in the afternoon
- ◇ Let us think about short pilgrimage...

**and to confess, with Peter, that He is "the Son of the living God"** (Mt. 16:16). No human sin can erase the mercy of God, or prevent Him from unleashing all His triumphant power, if we only call upon Him. Indeed, sin itself makes even more radiant the love of the Father who, in order to ransom a slave, sacrificed His Son: His mercy toward us is Redemption.



### 31<sup>st</sup> Day: Fourteenth Station: The Risen Lord Sends the Holy Spirit

"... Suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim" (Acts 2: 2-4). The power of the Holy Spirit drives the disciples from the Upper Room into the streets and marketplace. The Spirit compels them to take the message everywhere, in places familiar and unfamiliar, not stopping until they reach the ends of the world. We have been clothed with the same Spirit. We are called to be evangelizers and witnesses, near and far, wherever we go. The Spirit always goes before us, preparing the way and strengthening our hearts to be generous servants of the Risen Lord who ever guides us. Pentecost is an enduring and continuing event. We implore the Holy Spirit to renew the face of the earth by renewing us.

**Prayer:** Father in heaven, through this spiritual journey, you have reminded us of the fullness of the mystery of Your revealed love. See Your people gathered in prayer, open to receive the Spirit's flame. May it come to rest in our hearts and disperse the divisions of word and tongue. With one voice and one song, may we praise Your name in joy and thanksgiving. Grant this through Christ our Lord, and in the power of the Spirit, both now and forevermore. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy:** Through the power of the Holy Spirit we take part in Christ's Passion by dying to sin, and in his Resurrection by being born to a new life; we are members of his Body which is the Church, branches grafted onto the vine which is himself: "God gave himself to us through his Spirit. By the participation of the Spirit, we become communicants in the divine nature... For this reason, those in whom the Spirit dwells are divinized". The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is **conversion**. Jesus said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and the merciful love from on high (CCC 1987 – 1988).



### 32<sup>nd</sup> Day: Some Saints of Mercy

All Saints are recipients of God's radical mercy, but some stand out as examples that can help us model extending and receiving mercy.

Here are some Saints that we can study this Year of Mercy, **but this day** (32<sup>nd</sup> Day of mercy), pick up one or some to know more about him or her and his or her works of mercy:

**cas in Rome, as a sign of the deep desire for true conversion).**

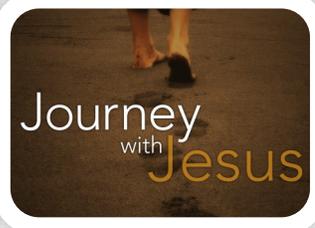
- ◆ Celebrate the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** and to the **celebration of the Holy Eucharist** with a **reflection on mercy**.
- ◆ Profession of faith (Creed)
- ◆ A **prayer for Pope Francis** and his intentions.

**2. Indulgences for the dead:** "Furthermore, the Jubilee Indulgence can also be obtained for the deceased. As we remember them in the Eucharistic celebration, thus we can, in the great mystery of the Communion of Saints, pray for them, that the merciful Face of the Father free them of every remnant of fault and strongly embrace them in the unending beatitude."

"I have asked the Church in this Jubilee Year to rediscover the richness encompassed by the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The experience of mercy, indeed, becomes visible in the witness of concrete signs as Jesus himself taught us. Each time that one of the faithful personally performs one or more of these actions, he or she shall surely obtain the Jubilee Indulgence. Hence the commitment to live by mercy so as to obtain the grace of complete and exhaustive forgiveness by the power of the love of the Father who excludes no one. The Jubilee Indulgence is thus full, the fruit of the very event which is to be celebrated and experienced with faith, hope and charity."

## Let us Begin Our Journey of 33 Days of Mercy

### 1<sup>st</sup> Day: What is Mercy?



**In God,** mercy is an attribute we often call "Divine Mercy". Divine Mercy is God's infinite and burning love for his creatures that provides for our needs and overcomes our miseries. As we can see in the Divine Mercy image, the red and white rays of Jesus' mercy flows to us from the furnace of his Sacred Heart. The most supreme act of God's mercy was the sending of Jesus to die for our sins. On the cross,

when his heart was pierced, blood and water (red and white) flowed from it for the salvation of all mankind.

**In humans,** mercy is "a virtue influencing one's will to have compassion for, and, if possible, to alleviate another's misfortune (Catholic Encyclopedia)" and is closely tied to the virtues of justice and charity.

Thus, we can understand that when we show mercy to others, we are also demonstrating or imitating God's mercy for us. In fact, we can be vessels of God's mercy, and this is exactly what Pope Francis has in mind by calling for the Church to focus on mercy in a special way this year: "It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the *corporal and spiritual works of mercy*."

**Reflection:**

- 1) What means to live God's Mercy?
- 2) Take some time to pray and consider how you continue celebrating the year of Mercy (don't let it pass by without taking advantage of the tremendous graces that are being held out to you from the treasures of the Mercy of God).

**2<sup>nd</sup> Day: Psalms of Mercy**



Read and pray with some of the following Psalms:

- ◆ **Psalm 136:** The hymn praises Israel's God, who has created the world.
- ◆ **Psalm 51:** Prays for the removal of the disorders that sin has brought.
- ◆ **Psalm 86:** An individual lament. The psalmist: poor and oppressed, devoted, rescued... from the depths of Sheol.

**Reflection:**

- 1) How do these Psalms speak to you?
- 2) Make your own prayer (psalm) for this day

**3<sup>rd</sup> Day: The parables of Mercy**



Read and pray with some of the following parables:

- ◆ **Luke 15:1-32** Three stories: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son are commonly identified as the "parables of mercy."
- ◆ **Lk 7:41-43**, the two debtors and their creditor
- ◆ **Lk 10:25-37**, the good Samaritan
- ◆ **Lk 16:19-31**, the rich man and the beggar Lazarus
- ◆ **Lk 18:1-8**, the unjust judge and the persistent widow
- ◆ **Lk 18:9-14**, the Pharisee and the publican in the temple

In each of these parables we become part of the story by shown a disarming truth. This in turn causes us to rethink our everyday relationships. **The three-way relationship: "he, I and other"** structure of these parables links God's mercy to the mercy displayed by human beings.

"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36) is the central architectural beam of mercy in parable form". The parables of mercy involve two categories of people; those who are in the parable and those who hear them and include a range of sinners who Jesus uses to implicate all listeners. By implicating all listeners Jesus dispels the concept that mercy is based on merit not grace.

**Reflection:**

- 1) For you, what is the meaning of, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful"? (Lk 6:36)
- 2) Which parable did you read and what is your conclusion?

**Reflection of Mercy:** Jesus ascended up to heaven, and took us with Him. We share in the divine life and love of God through the sacramental life and through faith, joining to the Mystical Body of Christ as members — one Lord, one faith, one Baptism. We are one with Him. Where we go, He goes, if we are in the state of grace and live our baptismal calling. Where He goes, we go, for He is forever faithful and true.

The entry of Jesus into Heaven is revealed very clearly in the Divine Mercy Image. In the image, we see Jesus entering the Upper Room where the disciples have gathered on Easter Sunday. He has passed through the locked door and is showing them the wounds in His hands, feet, and side - He is as a Lamb who was slain. He is dressed in the garments of the priest, come to offer sacrifice to the living God. From His Pierced Heart pour forth rays of red and pale, signifying the Blood and Water which flowed from His side, through which we receive the graces of Baptism and the Eucharist, which constitute the Church, the household of the living God, and restore us to life and a communion of love with the Trinity. He comes to offer us peace, and goes to God to intercede on our behalf. His is the path right out of a fallen world still descending further into darkness and sin, leading right up to the throne of God the Father, **rich in mercy**. Come, let us worship.

**30<sup>th</sup> Day: Thirteenth Station: Mary and the Disciples Keep Vigil in the Upper Room for the Spirit's Advent**



"When they entered the city, they went to the upper room where they were staying.... All [the apostles] devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His brothers" (Acts 1: 13a, 14). Throughout the history of the Church, there have been apostolic movements dedicated to prayerful contemplation, and others resulting in transforming action. As we have crossed the threshold into a new millennium, we look to the "Upper Room" as a symbolic place where we return over and over again, so that we can become "contemplatives in action." As persons who are both prayerful and energetic in service to the Gospel, we must always keep vigil for the advent of the Risen Lord, with the flame of faith alive in our hearts. Only the Lord can refresh our spirits and renew us in the ministries that flow from our Baptism and Confirmation.

**Prayer:** Father most holy, see Your Church gathered here in prayerful worship like the first disciples and Mary in the Upper Room. Grant that we may accomplish, in the joy of the Holy Spirit, all that You give us to do in the world. May we gladly share in Christ's sufferings so as to rejoice when His glory is revealed. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy:** Mary, **Mother of Mercy** ...let us entrust ourselves, the sufferings and the joys of our life, the moral life of believers and people of good will, and the research of moralists, to Mary, Mother of God and Mother of Mercy. Mary is Mother of Mercy because her Son, Jesus Christ, was sent by the Father as the revelation of God's mercy (Jn 3:16-18). Christ came not to condemn but to forgive, to show mercy (Mt 9:13). And **the greatest mercy of all is found in His being in our midst and calling us to meet Him**

mission" to the disciples to reach out to the ends of the earth. We realize that we are the recipients of this faith-filled mission: our ancestors embraced the faith of the apostles, who were the original witnesses of the resurrection. The greatest response we can give to such a legacy is our dedication to a new evangelization of our contemporary culture. We must allow the Risen Lord to reinvigorate our whole way of living, helping us to re-evaluate every aspect of our lives with the values of the Kingdom of God.

**Prayer:** God of all creation, whose mighty power raised Jesus from the dead, be present to this community of disciples whom You have called to the hope of a glorious inheritance among the saints. Strengthen us in the power of the Spirit to go and make disciples of all nations, to obey everything that Jesus Christ has commanded us, and to know that He is with us always until the end of the age, interceding on our behalf, living and reigning with You in the power of the Holy Spirit, now and forevermore. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy: The Power of the Kingdom.** Jesus' explicit commands to do works of power (or power ministry) teaches us, **First**, that He gave the disciples "authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness" (Matt 10:1). Then he sent them to "heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons" (Matt 10:8). In other words, He gave them the power to do works of mercy. On this short-term training mission, they were commissioned to preach the kingdom, demonstrate the power of the kingdom, and face persecution. The disciples are to teach by word and example the righteousness which surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees and to heal the sick and cast out demons. Note the comparative: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (John 20:21). At the very least this implies that preaching and healing are to characterize the ministries of Jesus' followers. Jesus not only commands His followers to do works of power, works of mercy, He also calls them to discern between true and false power practitioners.



#### 29<sup>th</sup> Day: Twelfth Station: The Risen Lord Ascends into Heaven

"So then the Lord Jesus, after He spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took His seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs" (Mark 16: 19-20). The Scriptures do not portray the Ascension as a day of sadness. While still looking up at the skies, the disciples were consoled by the continuing presence of the Lord. They return to the familiar surroundings of the Upper Room, with Mary, the mother of the Lord, to pray in anticipation of their mission. In this "original novena," we continue to implore the Risen Lord to be the center of our lives and to keep us focused as a jubilant pilgrim people.

**Prayer:** Eternal God, clothe us now with Your power. With the eyes of our hearts enlightened, may we come to understand the immeasurable greatness of Your power at work in us who believe. In that strength, may we boldly pronounce the Good News of our salvation to everyone. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**



#### 4<sup>th</sup> Day: The Corporal works of Mercy

The Corporal Works of Mercy are intended for helping us get through this vale of tears within the structure of Social Justice as upheld and taught by the Apostolic Catholic Church from Peter through our days. To extend humanistic help means nothing if God is not front and center the reason for our extending help to others out of love for Him. All else is in vain and often performed out of vanity rather than sincerity. Let us start knowing more about the works of mercy:

##### FIRST: To Feed the Hungry

Traditionally this work is seen as merely providing food for the poor, but in a new perspective we see that Christ reminded us that the most important food, the Bread of Life, is The Word of God with Christ as Its Teacher and Example. What good is giving mere physical nourishment to those poor in money if one ignores providing the nourishment of God's Word and Christ's example to those poor in the diet of that Word and example?

Seen in this context, Social Justice does not merely require that one give bread but, rather, that one serve as a cook and waiter providing those hungry for God's Word and Christ's example with the nourishment they need. What value does feeding the body do if one starves the soul? Those who promote abortion, for example, as a form of social justice or who excuse this evil on the grounds that they are otherwise feeding the poor are now seen as fools who serve the temporary body while starving the eternal soul. Anything which fills the belly of this earth while starving the eternal soul is nothing but an imaginary tease, a fraud, and a deception to perdition!

##### Reflection:

- 1) Do you think that this work of mercy is to ask only for food for the poor or it is about something else?
- 2) What do we as Catholics do to practice this work of mercy?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**



#### 5<sup>th</sup> Day: The Corporal works of Mercy

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are actions we can perform that extend God's compassion and mercy to those in need. The Corporal Works of Mercy are these kind acts by which we help our neighbors with their material and physical needs

## SECOND: To Give Drink to The Thirsty

Once again, we find that one can live much longer without food than without the water so needed by the physical body. We are told that the body is mostly water, and that it will not survive very long deprived of that water. If food is the Word of God and the example of Christ, then water is the Holy Spirit by which we bathe our souls in the Essence of God and are made ready for our missions and purpose in life. While we must hear and spread that Word and that example mentioned above, our efforts will be empty unless they are bathed in that Holy Spirit that guides us and fills us with the refreshing energy and passion so vital to living and sharing that Word and that example. This society's social justice is an exercise in accounting rather than a passionate plea to once again join the fervor and sincerity found in The Holy Spirit with the Word of God and the example of Christ which define Heaven's dogma of social justice!

As Matthew Kelly points about this work of mercy, we are all thirsting for something. Something that not even water can quench.

- **We are thirsting emotionally:** for good marriages, the love of a parent, attention, an honest friend, validation, and happiness.
- **We are thirsting intellectually:** for knowledge, continuous learning, meaningful work, and thought-provoking conversations.
- **We are thirsting spiritually:** for wisdom, purpose, and a deeply personal relationship with Jesus.

We live in a world full of people who are thirsty, waiting for - wanting, needing - someone to satisfy their thirst. **You and I are called to give drink to the thirsty**, whether those people are living in developing countries or in our own homes.

### Reflection:

- 1) What does it mean to extend God's compassion and mercy to those in need?
- 2) We are all thirsting not necessarily for water. But, for what else are we thirsty?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**

## 6<sup>th</sup> Day: The Corporal works of Mercy



**Mercy** is said to be a virtue influencing one's will to have compassion for, and, if possible, to alleviate another's misfortune. It is the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas that although mercy is as it were the spontaneous product of charity, yet it is to be reckoned a special virtue adequately distinguishable from this latter.

the Risen Lord eats with the Disciples, sharing with them the meal and His presence). Let us take his example to heart, and likewise endeavor to develop this same character quality. What a wonderful trait of Christian character is mercy. Jesus brought this to his disciples' attention, when he told them and us, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7). We must learn to be 'merciful' even as God is merciful. In proportion to our willingness to be merciful toward others, will God be merciful to us.



## 27<sup>th</sup> Day: Tenth Station: The Risen Lord Forgives Peter and Entrusts Him to Feed His Sheep

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?'... Peter was distressed that Jesus had said to him a third time, 'Do you love Me?' and he said to Him, 'Lord, you know everything, You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.... Follow Me'" (John 21: 15, 17b, 19b). The Risen Lord directs His attention to Peter whose embarrassing three-fold denial was still ringing in his heart. The questions posed by Jesus help Peter to find reconciliation and to embrace his new mission to tend and feed the sheep. Their encounter reminds us that forgiveness is always available, even for the most serious of mistakes we can make. This warm embrace of forgiveness strengthens our resolve to be reconcilers and healers in the Spirit of Jesus. Only love can overcome guilt and deception. Only love and forgiveness can make us whole.

**Prayer:** Father, fill our hearts with the fire of Your love and the desire to ensure justice for our brothers and sisters. By sharing the good things You give us, may we secure justice and equality for every human being, an end to all division, and a human society built on love and peace. Grant this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy:** Dear brothers and sisters, being the Church, to be the People of God, in accordance with the Father's great design of love, means to be the leaven of God in this humanity of ours. It means to proclaim and to bring the God's salvation to this world of ours, so often led astray, in need of answers that give courage, hope and new vigor for the journey. **May the Church be a place of God's mercy and hope**, where all feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live according to the good life of the Gospel. And to make others feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged, the Church must be with doors wide open so that all may enter. And we must go out through these doors and proclaim the Gospel (Pope Francis).



## 28<sup>th</sup> Day: Eleventh Station: The Risen Lord Sends the Disciples into the World

"Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28: 19- 20). From the mountaintop, the Risen Lord gives the "Great Com-

life we share with Christ and help us to grow as Your people toward the fullness of eternal life with You. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy:** The meaning of Mercy as practiced in the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy (Misericordiae Vultus, 15). 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; 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. 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. St. Augustine said: “observe, my brothers and sisters, how all the good works which we perform in our lives are really an expression of being merciful. For example, you offer some bread to a hungry man, offer sympathetic kindness from the heart; don’t do it contemptuously, or you’ll be treating a fellow human being like a dog. So when you perform a work of mercy, if you’re offering bread, feel sorry for the hungry; if you’re offering drink, feel sorry for the thirsty; if you’re handing out clothes, feel sorry for the naked; if you’re offering hospitality, feel sorry for the stranger and traveler; if you’re visiting the sick, feel sorry for the people who are ill; if you’re burying the dead, feel sorry for the deceased”.



### 26<sup>th</sup> Day: Ninth Station: The Risen Lord Eats with the Disciples on the Shore of Tiberias

“Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish you just caught.' So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come, have breakfast.' And none of His disciples dared to ask Him, 'Who are You?' because they realized it was the Lord” (John 21: 10-12). After the crucifixion, the apostles returned to their former way of life. Out on the familiar Sea of Galilee, these expert fishers find themselves ineffective and baffled because not even a single fish was caught. From the shore, the Risen Lord guides them and directs their nets until they are filled to overflowing. As He prepares breakfast for them, He nourishes their hearts and promises them that they can also be fed by making disciples in His name. He calls them to an entirely new way of fishing—fishing for people.

**Prayer:** Father in heaven, author of all truth, a people once in darkness has listened to Your Word and followed Your Son as He rose from the tomb. Hear the prayer of this newborn people and strengthen Your Church to answer Your call. May we rise and come forth into the light of day to stand in Your presence until eternity dawns. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy:** Mercy is a wonderful virtue and we see it demonstrated repeatedly in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ (just we have an example in this station when

### THIRD: To Clothe the Naked

This society pretends to cover its evils with a wardrobe of materialism, secularism, modernism, feminism, sodomy, and other paths to perdition. In the spirit of **The Emperor’s New Clothes** everyone marvels at the superficial trappings of this wardrobe in both the secular and ecclesiastical sectors while ignoring the absurd spiritual nudity and moral nakedness that we all exhibit from time to time. True social justice is not just about throwing some clothes on the physically naked, but rather in striving to dress ourselves in the purest garments as often as we can such that we will be ready for the Groom’s arrival. What good do the finest, most expensive clothes do when they cover the vile leftover of sin? What good is accomplished by clothing hundreds and thousands of lost souls without likewise providing them with the chance to wear the garments etched by the Eternal Tailor?

#### Reflection:

- 1) How can we alleviate another’s misfortune?
- 2) What is the difference or relation between mercy and charity?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**



### 7<sup>th</sup> Day: The Corporal works of Mercy

Pope Francis gives us guidelines to understand **mercy** in the context of the Jubilee Year. The opening words are, “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy” (MV 1). Truly, the Incarnate Son, through taking on human flesh, reveals to us the mercy and love of God the Father. Pope Francis indicates the purpose of the Jubilee Year when he says, “At times, we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father’s action in our lives” (MV 3).

### FOURTH: To Shelter the Homeless

Our True Church is our only Home on earth, and Heaven is our only Home in eternity. The grandest mansions and the finest estates mean nothing if they house souls homeless of God. One can build a thousand homes for the needy yet keep this society morally and spiritually homeless. A home may protect us from the elements of nature, but a homeless soul cannot protect us from the elements of hell. Furthermore, how can anyone pretend to house the poor while condoning ripping the unborn from their home within the mother’s womb? Social justice must house the soul before it can house the body.

#### Reflection:

- 1) Pope Francis says: “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy”, what does this

- mean for you?  
 2) Is our home a shelter of those who need us?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**

### 8<sup>th</sup> Day: The Corporal works of Mercy



We are called to show the warmth, love, and acceptance of Jesus to those in need. He calls us to love and serve others. The Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy are acts of justice and love in which we can participate to help build up God's kingdom.

#### FIFTH: To Visit the Sick

We are all sick whenever we sin, and this sickness is far more dangerous than any physical ailment could ever be. Visiting the sick is not merely about going to hospitals or visiting people on their sick bed. It is about being there for anyone tempted to sin or vulnerable to the lies of this society. The devil's virus of perdition is strong and we all need help to fight it, first through prayer and faith but also through supporting and guiding each other.

Those who visit hospitals while ignoring spiritual illness in themselves or others are making a mockery of what truly makes us healthy. Likewise, any hospital or clinic that pretends to cure physical ills while inflicting spiritual ones is nothing but a vehicle of the devil!

#### Reflection:

- 1) How do we answer Jesus's call to love and serve others?
- 2) Do we include in our daily prayer and actions those who are sick?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**

### 9<sup>th</sup> Day: The Corporal works of Mercy



Pope Francis believes that the Christian Gospel calls us to imitate Jesus, who reached out especially to the marginalized, the outcasts in society, the lost sheep. This is how Francis sees those in prison. He sees the value and dignity God created in them and his heart goes out to them. The pope wants to hold these outcasts of society in



### 24<sup>th</sup> Day: Seventh Station: The Risen Lord Breathes Peace and Gives the Power to Forgive

"Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you'... The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, so I send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained'" (John 20: 19b, 20b-23). Even though the doors of the Upper Room were bolted shut, the Risen Lord pierced through all fear and united the hearts of the disciples with the gift of peace. Deep inner peace is the root and source of the peace and joy that the world cannot give. The Risen Lord calls us to seek peace always through a non-violent commitment to conflict resolution and thus transform the world, relationship by relationship.

**Prayer:** God of peace, violence and cruelty can have no part of You. May those who are at peace with one another hold fast to the good will that unites them; may those who are enemies forget their hatred and be healed. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy:** 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 one's self. Consequently, wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident. In our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy and Peace.



### 25<sup>th</sup> Day: Eighth Station: The Risen Lord Strengthens the Faith of Thomas

"Thomas...was not with them when Jesus came.... Thomas said, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in His hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into His side, I will not believe'...Jesus came...and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then He said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see My hands, and bring your hand and put it into My side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe'...Blessed are those who do not see and yet believe" (John 20: 24- 29). The story of Thomas is important because it is through Thomas' example that we realize that doubt can be a part of faith. Too easily we call him "Doubting Thomas," and forgetting that after examining the nail marks, he fully embraced the Risen One as his Lord and Savior. Thomas' doubt was transformed into a lively faith. We too, are called to believe, knowing full well that our faith may be tested by doubt and fear. As disciples who desire an ever-deeper faith, we are patient and understanding with those who are struggling, searching and seeking like Thomas.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father and God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for He is alive and has become the Lord of life. From the waters of death You raise us up with Him and renew Your gift of life within us. Increase in our minds and hearts the risen

neys, wishing to set our hearts on fire in generous service to all people in need, near and far. The gift we have received is the gift we share. Humbly, we set out on the various roads of our lives to respond to all the hungers of the human family.

**Prayer:** You are truly blessed, O God of holiness: You accompany us with love as we journey through life. Blessed too, is Your Son, Jesus Christ, who is present among us, and whose love gathers us together. As once He did for His disciples, Christ now opens the Scriptures for us and breaks the bread. May the Eucharist we celebrate guide us to the fullness of Christ's life. We pray in the power of Christ's Spirit, forever and ever. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy:** We need constantly to **contemplate the mystery of mercy.** It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to a hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness. Let us find ways to **contemplate the mystery of mercy** (for example when we share the bread = table at home and the Holy Eucharist).



### 23<sup>rd</sup> Day: Sixth Station: The Risen Lord Appears to the Community of Disciples

“Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Touch Me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have,’ And as He said this, He showed them

His hands and His feet” (Luke 24: 38-40). The disciples on the road to Emmaus quickly returned to the other disciples in Jerusalem with "burning hearts." Their despair had been reversed and they were eager to convince the others that Jesus was alive. Jesus the Christ is always eager to gather the community of disciples at the table of faith and to show them that He has risen with His wounds glorified. All our wounds will one day be glorified. We seek to understand how the Risen Lord invites us to be "wounded healers," recognizing now that the Lord desires us to be ambassadors of reconciliation, while we ourselves are being forgiven and healed.

**Prayer:** God of unchanging power and light, look with favor and mercy on the entire community of Your Church. Bring lasting salvation to the human family, so that the world may see the fallen lifted up, the old made new, and all things brought to perfection, through Him who is our origin, our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns forever and ever. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy:** Without a witness to mercy, life becomes fruitless and sterile, as if sequestered in a barren desert. 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.

his heart and ours when we celebrate the Body and Blood of Christ in the large community on the Parkway. “The way of the Church is precisely to leave her four walls behind and to go out in search of those who are distant, on the ‘outskirts’ of life.” And as though to underline the outreach idea, “I prefer a Church that is bruised, hurting, and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church that is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.”

### SIXTH: To Visit the Imprisoned

To the extent that we are imprisoned by our human weakness and imperfect nature and the resulting sin, visiting the imprisoned merely means that we extend our charity and love of others from being there for each other to helping each other free ourselves from the trap of sin. We can also be chained by confusion, deception, and distortions served by this society or a lukewarm Church. True social justice demands that we help others free themselves from such chains and that we not chain others to spiritual prisons even as we pretend to be freeing them of physical prisons or having compassion for their plight. Those who really know their faith can be a tremendous help to those incarcerated, for you could say they have a captive audience and since God often allows man to hit rock bottom before building him back up, prisoners know best what that means and could very well be willing catechumens to learn more about the true Faith and the font of Divine Mercy - the Sacrament of Penance.

#### Reflection:

- 1) Do we feel that we are imprisoned by our human weakness and imperfections?
- 2) How can we become free from the trap of sin?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**



### 10<sup>th</sup> Day: The Corporal works of Mercy

In the Creed we profess that we believe in the resurrection of the body, and that fundamental truth shapes our rich Catholic tradition of funeral rites. We read in the Catechism: “The bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity, in faith and hope of the Resurrection. The burial of the dead is a corporal work of mercy; it honors the children of God, who are temples of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 2300). “Particularly during the Year of Mercy, Catholics are called to recognize their own need for God's mercy, the greatness of God's love seen in the death and resurrection of Christ and the obligation to assist others by communicating God's love and mercy through words and deeds”, Pope Francis said.

## SEVENTH: To Bury the Dead

Confession should be about killing sin and burying that sin in the past. Just as we should respect the dead and learn from their successes and failures, so too we must respect the power of sin and the devil and learn from our own falls. This, however, does not mean that we must allow ourselves to be enslaved or tormented by our past sins. God Almighty, in His Supreme Wisdom and Mercy, has given us the vehicle to bury our sins while learning from them. This society pretends that there is no sin to bury and thus promotes that sin to grow and keep tormenting us. True social justice demands that we create a path to fresh starts toward salvation, not that we lead others on the wide road to perdition under the guise of serving their earthly needs.

### Reflection:

- 1) Do we really believe that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?
- 2) How do we honor our bodies?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**



## 11<sup>th</sup> Day: The Spiritual works of Mercy

### FIRST: To Admonish the Sinner

“Who am I to judge?” These are probably the most famous words of Pope Francis. And of course the Holy Father is right. Our Lord himself teaches: “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Mt 7:1). Even he, to whom the Father has given the authority to judge (Jn 5:22) says, “I judge no one” (Jn 8:15). If even God, who is justice itself, sends rain on the just and the unjust (Mt 5:45), who are we sinners to withhold our love from another person because of their failings? God does not love us because we are good; we are good (and become better) because God loves us. Our final word of admonishment should be a word of unconditional love.

One cannot perform the works of mercy without being willing to admonish the sinner and warn them out of true charity for the sake of their soul. Of course, one must do this with compassion and love, but one cannot let that compassion and love be seen as the drivel of tolerance that is preached today. **Christ** did not hug those seeking to stone **Mary Magdalene** nor joke around with the money merchants in the Temple. Likewise, despite what some Catholics would like to believe, He did not wink at Mary Magdalene and tell her to just be herself either. Too often we are told that we are not fit to judge others and this is true, but this does not mean that we cannot warn them, teach them and guide them and leave the judging to God. Beware anyone who tells you not to judge when you try to help



## 21<sup>st</sup> Day: Fourth Station: The Risen Lord Appears on the Road to Emmaus

“...It happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus Himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.... And He said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into His glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them what referred to Him in all the scriptures” (Luke 24: 15, 25-27). The Emmaus road is the story of the Christian life. These disciples were walking away from Jerusalem and the apostolic faith community in defeat and dejection. They had lost hope. We too, have moments of despair and desolation. The Risen Lord Jesus accompanies us along the road, even when we are moving in the wrong direction. Only the Lord can “break open” the Word in order to help us understand the stories of our lives, especially suffering, and read them in harmony with the pattern of the Scriptures. Only the Lord can rekindle our energy and our resolve to devote ourselves to what is most important in life.

**Prayer:** Lord God, as disciples on our pilgrimage, we implore Jesus Christ: stay with us, Lord. Open our hearts to true conversion and, as we have known the Lord in the breaking of the bread, so make us witnesses of a new humanity, renewed, reconciled and at peace in Your love. Send us as heralds of the repentance and forgiveness You offer to all in the name of Jesus, who lives and reigns with You, forever and ever. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy:** *Merciful like the Father*, therefore, is the “motto” of this Holy Year. **In mercy, we find proof of how God loves us.** He gives his entire self, always, freely, asking nothing in return. He comes to our aid whenever we call upon him. What a beautiful thing that the Church begins her daily prayer with the words, “O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me” (Ps 70:2)! The assistance we ask for is already the first step of God’s mercy toward us. He comes to assist us in our weakness. And his help consists in helping us accept his presence and closeness to us. Day after day, touched by his compassion, we also can become compassionate towards others.



## 22<sup>nd</sup> Day: Fifth Station: The Risen Lord is Recognized in the Breaking of the Bread

“...They urged Him, ‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.’ So He went in to stay with them. And it happened that while He was with them at table, He took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that, their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, but He vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while He spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?’” (Luke 24: 29-32). The encounter on the road leads to the table, the breaking of the bread and the total gift of self. Recognition of the Risen Lord is always linked with the Eucharist. At the heart of our Christian life is this meal of Word and Eucharist which we celebrate every Sunday. The Risen Lord presides over all our jour-

foretold: that first He must die and then rise. May the Risen Lord breathe on our minds and open our eyes that we may know Him in the breaking of bread, and follow Him in His risen life. Grant this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy:** Christ died and rose once for all, and for everyone, but the power of the Resurrection, this Passover from slavery to evil to the freedom of goodness, must be accomplished in every age, in our concrete existence, in our everyday lives. How many deserts, even today, do human beings need to cross! Above all, the desert within, when we have no love for God or neighbor, when we fail to realize that we are guardians of all that the Creator has given us and continues to give us. **God's mercy can make even the driest land become a garden, can restore life to dry bones** (Ez 37:1-14) (*Urbi et Orbi Message of Pope Francis*).



## 20<sup>th</sup> Day: **Third Station: The Risen Lord Appears to Mary Magdalen, Apostle to the Apostles**

"She turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?' She thought He was the gardener and said to Him, 'Sir, if you carried Him away, tell me where you laid Him, and I will take Him.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni,' which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, 'Stop holding on to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and tell them, 'I am going to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.' Mary of Magdalen went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and what He told her" (John 20: 14b-18). In the fourth gospel, Mary Magdalen is given the mission to carry the good news of the resurrection to the apostles and the disciples. Mary had been in the company of Jesus and His followers, and is given the privilege to announce the hope of new life. She is known over the centuries as "the apostle to the Apostles." Jesus called her by name, gave her the eyes of faith, and called her to give a unique personal witness to her friends in the faith community.

**Prayer:** God our Father, You will that all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of Your truth. Send workers into Your great harvest that the Gospel may be preached to every creature. May Your people, gathered together by the word of life and strengthened by the power of the sacraments, advance in the way of salvation. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy:** This is the invitation which I address to everyone: Let us accept the grace of Christ's Resurrection! **Let us be renewed by God's mercy**, let us be loved by Jesus, let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too; and **let us become agents of this mercy**, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish. And so we ask the risen Jesus, who turns death into life, to change hatred into love, vengeance into forgiveness, war into peace. Yes, Christ is our peace, and through him we implore peace for all the world (*Urbi et Orbi Message of Pope Francis*).

another return on the path to salvation, for he who warns you is working on a commission from the devil.

### **Reflection:**

- 1) Is it our final word of admonishment a word of unconditional love?
- 2) The word for mercy in Latin is **misericordia**, from the words for misery and heart. It might be defined as "compassion with the pity that it entails and fidelity with love as a requirement." How does this definition of mercy fit with your own experiences of both giving and receiving mercy?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**



## 12<sup>th</sup> Day: **The Spiritual works of Mercy**

### **SECOND: To Instruct the Ignorant**

We are not called to impart information, but to "make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pt 3:15). We are to share with others the heart of the Gospel, which Pope Francis describes in this way: "In this basic core, what shines forth is the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead" (*Evangeli Gaudium* 36). We cannot share what we do not have. This work of mercy obliges us to deepen our knowledge of and love for our Catholic faith.

Given the premise of the first spiritual work of mercy (to admonish the sinner), it becomes evident that in watching each other's back we must become teachers for each other. One of the greatest lies perpetuated by this society is the notion that tolerance is a virtue and therefore one cannot respect others if one does not accept them as they are and excuse what they do. In the footsteps of Christ and **Saint John the Baptist**, we each have a duty to speak out against wrong and evil. Sometimes we will need to use gentle tact and other times a loud yell will be needed, but in both cases the objective will be to instruct.

Our own salvation may very well be judged by how many people we brought with us to Paradise. By our actions and words, we will either bring many to salvation or to perdition. The third possibility is that we will only bring ourselves to the Feast offered by God, in which case we will surely have ignored love of others in the exclusive service of love of self. Simply put, we must see our role as salespeople for God and our own merit may be judged by how many customers we sell on Christ. Unlike the perverted education of this society, our lessons must be firm guides toward God and salvation and not diluted anomalies justifying a move away from God and toward self.

**Reflection:**

- 1) We read before: "we cannot share what we do not have. Do we know and love our Catholic faith and teach it with a deep understanding?"
- 2) How can we gain our salvation?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**

## 13<sup>th</sup> Day: The Spiritual works of Mercy

### THIRD: To Counsel the Doubtful



The word "doubt" comes from the Latin *dubium*, a word suggesting "two ways": a fork in the road. We find ourselves wavering between alternatives, and we need to discern which path to take. When the matter is not clear, it is a good idea to ask how others see the question. But if we are going to counsel the doubtful: we ought to be humble enough to seek advice ourselves. If we consult others when making decisions, we will have a feel for how to give advice to others in a positive way. We will be supportive, not pressing; insightful, not intrusive. Some counsel is a matter of human prudence. But there is also a God-given counsel, a gift of the Holy Spirit, who guides by a sort of supernatural intuition. We are to share with others this spiritual gift, enabling them to discern whether a decision brings them closer to God or farther away from him.

If there is one given in this world, it is that we as imperfect humans will from time to time experience doubt and confusion. We will all get lost on the road and need directions and guidance. True Catholicism requires that we watch each other's back and help each other back on the road to salvation. It is in this regard that many pastoral leaders are seriously lacking, for they not only have resigned their role as guides to salvation, but have become sources of perdition instead. In so doing they place the faithful in a precarious position of either seeking salvation "solo" or following the wolf to grandma's house. When pastoral or religious leaders distort social justice into promotion and tolerance of evil and sin, we become the wolves instead of the shepherds.

**Reflection:**

- 1) What does this Spiritual Work of Mercy mean?
- 2) How can we live this work of mercy?
- 3) In what practical ways can we counsel the doubtful?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and

weekdays of the Easter Octave (known as "Bright Week" among the Eastern churches), and throughout the Fifty Days of the Easter Season. The Via Lucis reflects upon the final chapters of each of the four gospels, which narrate the appearances of the Risen Lord from Easter to Pentecost. Fourteen "Stations of Light" have been identified. The Official Vatican prayerbook for the Jubilee Year 2000, *Pilgrim Prayers*, includes a Via Lucis along with the traditional Via Crucis. It is hoped that these resources will help the Christian community, which has so passionately identified with the Crucified Lord in the Via Crucis, walk boldly into the light of the Third Millennium with the Risen Christ!

### First Station, Jesus Rises from the Dead

"The angel of the Lord said to the women: 'Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for He has been raised just as He said'" (Matthew 28: 5b -6a). On the first day of the week, at the dawning of the new creation, Jesus arose from the dead. No one saw the event, yet like the apostles, we are called to be witnesses of this central faith event. The light and power of Christ's death and resurrection has become the pattern for our living. May we recognize Christ's dying and rising in our midst.

**Prayer:** This is the day, Lord God, that You have made! Raising Christ from the dead, and raising us with Christ, You have fashioned for Yourself a new people. As we hear the word that brings salvation, make our hearts burn within us. Through the presence of every friend and stranger, reveal to us the face of the One who had first to suffer, but who has entered now into glory, Jesus Christ, our Passover and our Peace, living and reigning with You, forever and ever. **Amen.**

**Reflection of Mercy:** Most of all, I would like it to enter every heart, for it is there that God wants to sow this Good News: Jesus is risen, there is hope for you, you are no longer in the power of sin, of evil! Love has triumphed, **mercy has been victorious! The mercy of God always triumphs!** We too, like the women who were Jesus' disciples, who went to the tomb and found it empty, may wonder what this event means (*Lk 24:4*). What does it mean that Jesus is risen? It means that the love of God is stronger than evil and death itself; it means that the love of God can transform our lives and let those desert places in our hearts bloom. The love God can do this! (*Urbi et Orbi Message of Pope Francis*).

## 19<sup>th</sup> Day: 2nd Station: The Disciples Discover the Empty Tomb



"Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed" (John 20: 8). The empty tomb was not a proof of the resurrection, but rather a silent witness of the greatest event of our faith. Seeing the empty tomb, the disciples were motivated to seek the Risen Lord at work in their midst. They saw and believed in the continuing presence of the Lord of love. All the empty and lonely places of human life are precisely where the Lord wishes to work and be revealed.

**Prayer:** God our Father, creator of all, today is the day of overwhelming joy. The Lord appeared to those who had begun to lose hope and opened their eyes to what the Scriptures



## 17<sup>th</sup> Day: The Spiritual works of Mercy

### SEVENTH: To Pray for the Living and the Dead

When we accompany our actions with prayer we will receive the discernment we need to carry them with sensitivity, respecting the unique needs of each individual. More importantly, when instructing us to carry out such works Our Lord said, "When you did it to one of these least ones, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). Prayer reveals the presence of Christ in others, and this will help us approach them with reverence and not as some problem to be solved. Prayer enables us in some mysterious way to touch the hearts of others and it dissolves the barriers of time and space. We are asked to pray for the living and the dead, a reminder that prayer unites us to the whole human family.

The value of prayer, in descending order, is praying to God, then praying for others, and lastly praying for oneself. If one prays for the living, one is showing immediate mercy, humility, and selflessness that will surely be rewarded by a Wise God. If one prays for the dead, one is showing an awareness of our universal ultimate destiny and therefore the kind of humility and appreciation that guides us toward that Heavenly Prize as well.

While we may have no idea if our prayer is being answered specifically, we can take consolation that it is helping tremendously for God sees and heeds the effects of our efforts. More things are received by prayer than the world can imagine. And the key is that while we are doing our part in the Communion of Saints by praying for those in the Church Militant and Church Suffering, our prayers never fall on deaf ears in the Church Triumphant who are more than willing to intercede on our behalf. In praying for both those alive and those who have passed on, we unite this world to the next and recognize that we will all pass through the veil and we better have our eternal passports in order. Prayer is the perfect preparation.

#### Reflection:

- 1) What is the value of one prayer?
- 2) Why do you pray for the departed?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**



## 18<sup>th</sup> Day: The Way of Light (The Via Lucis)

The Via Lucis, the "Way of Light" also known as the Stations of the Resurrection, this devotion parallels the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary just as the Via Crucis complement the Sorrowful Mysteries. These stations were discovered in the Catacombs of St. Callistus in Rome. The Via Lucis is particularly suited for Easter Sunday, for the

in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**



## 14<sup>th</sup> Day: The Spiritual works of Mercy

### FOURTH: To Comfort the afflicted

It is said that friendship doubles our joy and divides our grief. That's true: good news becomes better when we can share it, and the burden of sorrow is lighter when there is more than one person to carry it. This is the straightforward counsel of St. Paul: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Rom 12:15).

Sadness and tragedy are all part of life, and the notion that tragedy and misfortune instruct is swallowed most easily when one is not the one suffering the pain. Again, we cannot be true Catholics unless we are there to embrace those suffering in some way. Being a true Catholic means that we reject the idea that "he who cries, cries alone" because following Christ implies seeking discomfort to comfort and not seeking comfort to avoid. How can we dare to ask God's comfort when we readily deny that comfort to others?

**The scriptures say:** "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, for that is the end of every mortal, and the living should take it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; when the face is sad, the heart grows wise. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of merriment" (Ecclesiastes 7:2). "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land" (Matthew 5:4).

#### Reflection:

- 1) Are there particular persons in my Domestic Church (my family), as parent, sibling, widow or single, who struggle with suffering? Am I open to let God use my weaknesses to help another? Can I reach out to be an agent of love for them?
- 2) Take a silent walk to a crowded area and observe the cripples in life. Reflect on their gifts. Thank God for your gifts.

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**

## 15<sup>th</sup> Day: The Spiritual works of Mercy

### FIFTH: To Bear Wrongs Patiently

Patience is not just a matter of temperament, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit (see Gal 5:22), so it is something we must pray for and strive to put into practice. Like other virtues, it is a trait that improves with practice. Patience is rooted in a reality at the core of our faith: the Passion of Christ. Patience and passion come from a Latin word meaning to suffer or endure. Patience is by its nature a passive quality, a matter of putting up with something. But Christ has turned the word passion from the passive to the active voice: his Passion was ultimately something not done to him, but something he did: "No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (Jn 10:18). What transformed Christ's suffering into something positive was love: love for the Father and love for us.

This is one of the most difficult tasks for many. Ultimately, the ability to bear wrongs patiently is based on having such a trust in God that one leaves justice to Him and believes that any wrong inflicted on us is a test and must carry some saving grace. The Psalms are a wonderful salve for understanding this and remembering Christ's words to turn the other cheek in bearing all wrongs patiently. "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do" (Colossians 3:12-13).

Patience is a virtue that many who are too impatient need to practice because they hold grudges that weigh them down in their spiritual journey and prevent them from being true exemplars of all God wills us to be. Yet, at the same time, we must also take great care that no one calumniates us and charge us of a serious crime that is untrue for that can have grave consequences with one's reputation and that is something that should be closely guarded. God is looking for prudent soldiers who choose their battles wisely and know their foe.

#### Reflection:

- 1) Are there persons in my ministry with whom I struggle because of their tendency to perform painful actions? Can I become a font of loving grace by bearing these wrongs patiently?
- 2) In what areas in my Domestic Church (my family) do I cause others stress because of my sinful actions? How can I make my Domestic Church more Christ-like?
- 3) How have you seen God's patience for you on your journey?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**



## 16<sup>th</sup> Day: The Spiritual works of Mercy

### SIXTH: To Forgive all Injuries

We are celebrating a Jubilee year, which in the Old Testament was a time when all debts were written off. It is not easy for us to forgive, but we must do it. Our Lord states categorically: "If you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours" (Mt 6:15). Jesus is very precise in what he demands. How often should we forgive? Peter thought he was generous in suggesting seven times, but Jesus responded, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven" (Mt 18:22). The stumbling block for many of us in this work of mercy comes in the adverb: forgive offenses willingly. In the prayer that Jesus taught us, we ask God to forgive us our trespasses "as we forgive those who trespass against us". That is probably a prayer we would not want answered literally: so often we bestow forgiveness with gritted teeth.

Easily one of the most difficult tasks of being a true Catholic is washing the slate clean of all resentments and hurts. Like Christ, we must be willing to allow the tide of love to wash away the footprints of injury inflicted by others, for salvation is found in looking toward God and not back to past injuries. Again, forgiveness does not mean twisted tolerance or mindless acceptance of evil and sin but rather a willingness to see the wound and yet allow that wound to heal. This society cannot see that wound to the soul and will inevitably lose eternal salvation if they do not truly understand, see it and do something about it. They will consider you weak if you forgive, but to God it is a sign of strength and those who are consumed with pride will either pretend true forgiveness is not there or even wave it as a symbol of honor for human respect rather than doing it for God.

When we are tempted not to forgive, we should never forget that Christ forgave even from the Cross. "When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Luke 23:33-34). All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ (Eph 4:31-32).

#### Reflection:

- 1) Why do we not forgive?
- 2) Why must we forgive?
- 3) Jesus said that the way we treat others will be the standard by which we ourselves will be judged (Mt 25: 31-45). If you were to be judged today, what would Jesus find in your life? What can you do to change?

**Prayer:** Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible. Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. May we always be willing to do the good that is before us. Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds. May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized. And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. **Amen.**