

Reflection on the Jubilee Year of Mercy

On December 8, 2015, Pope Francis has invited all people of good will to enter into a Jubilee Year of Mercy. In his announcement of this Jubilee, Pope Francis says that the whole Church “will be able to find in this Jubilee the joy of rediscovering and rendering fruitful God’s mercy, with which we are all called to give comfort to every man and every woman of our time. Do not forget that God forgives all, and God forgives always. Let us never tire of asking forgiveness” (<http://bit.ly/1JmpqBp>). The following topics and quotes found in *Misericordiae Vultus* are an invitation to explore how you can be Christ’s hands and feet by performing acts of love, justice, peace, and, of course, mercy.

Jesus’s Life as the Manifestation of God’s Mercy

“His person is nothing but love, a love given gratuitously. The relationships he forms with the people who approach him manifest something entirely unique and unrepeatable. The signs he works, especially in favour of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion” (#8).



The Church’s Call to Bring the Message of the Gospel, the Mercy of Christ, to All People

“Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy” (#10).

“...wherever the Church is present, [...] mercy [...] must be evident. In our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy” (#12).



The Practice of Pilgrimage

“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 as the Father has been with us” (#14).

Reflecting on the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

“How many are the wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich! During this Jubilee, the Church will be called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care” (#15).

The Importance of Lent in Celebrating and Experiencing Mercy

“The season of Lent during this Jubilee Year should also be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God’s mercy. How many pages of Sacred Scripture are appropriate for meditation during the weeks of Lent to help us rediscover the merciful face of the Father!” (#17).

The Relationship Between Justice and Mercy

“These are not two contradictory realities, but two dimensions of a single reality that unfolds progressively until it culminates in the fullness of love. Justice is a fundamental concept for civil society, which is meant to be governed by the rule of law. Justice is also understood as that which is rightly due to each individual. [...] justice is conceived essentially as the faithful abandonment of oneself to God’s will” (#20).

The Common Theme of Mercy that Connects Christianity to Judaism and Islam

“As we have seen, the pages of the Old Testament are steeped in mercy, because they narrate the works that the Lord performed in favour of his people at the most trying moments of their history. Among the privileged names that Islam attributes to the Creator are “Merciful and Kind” (#23).

Reflection Questions

- What would authentic mercy in our world look like? Think of all the communities you are a part of: family, faith, friends, neighborhood, state, nation, world, etc. Who are the faces in these communities seeking the healing balm of mercy?
- How do you see justice and mercy working together to create a just and merciful world?
- Think of one act of mercy that you can bring to our broken world. How can this become part of your daily prayer, work or school routine, etc.?
- Pick a quote from this reflection. What message spoke to you from this quote? How can these words serve as a compass in your life, daily actions, and relationships?



Prayer of Pope Francis for the Jubilee

Lord Jesus Christ,
 you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,
 and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.
 Show us your face and we will be saved.
 Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money;
 the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things;
 made Peter weep after his betrayal,
 and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.
 Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us,
 the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman:
 "If you knew the gift of God!"

You are the visible face of the invisible Father,
 of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy:
 let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.
 You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness
 in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error:
 let everyone who approaches them feel
 sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of
 us with its anointing,
 so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of
 grace from the Lord,
 and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm,
 may bring good news to the poor,
 proclaim liberty to captives and the op-
 pressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus,
 through the intercession of Mary, Mother of
 Mercy;
 you who live and reign with the Father and
 the Holy Spirit
 for ever and ever.
 Amen.

Source: <http://bit.ly/1h5YUjq>

