



Holy Year of Mercy

December 8, 2015 - November 20, 2016

“Be bearers of the fruits of the Holy Spirit: “love, **JOY**, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” Galatians 5: 22



Children often make up games with little equipment but lots of imagination. *Hopscotch, Tic-Tac-toe, Tag, Hot Potato and Duck-Duck-Goose* name just a few. The game of *Merry* is centuries old and still played in schoolyards across the globe. Two opponents stand face to face and grab each other hands. Both push against each other until the weaker of the two can no longer endure the other’s domination. When the losing contestant yells “*mercy*,” the more powerful player ends the game and is the winner. Like this game, this type of mercy is often experienced in life. Someone with more strength, power or authority pities the less fortunate and relieves their distress or punishment.

This mercy, however, is not of God. God does not pity us. Rather God offers us endless mercy simply for the asking! Why? Because God is love and desires our friendship. Even when we ignore God or fall into the traps of sin, God waits with outstretched and merciful arms for our return. He restores us to the **JOY** of being His disciple.

Pope Francis has called for a Holy Year of Mercy and reminds us that as sinners “*we are weak, but ...the Lord is merciful, the Lord pardons us—this immense grace changes our heart.*” Our Holy Father also challenges us to become missionaries of mercy who share the **JOY** in knowing God’s love and mercy.

What does it mean to be a missionary of mercy? The life of St. Francis Xavier, the patron of missions, is a great example. Francis was a distinguished university professor in Paris. Through the influence of St. Ignatius of Loyola, he became one of the first Jesuits and a missionary to Asia. Francis traveled from India to Japan, preaching and teaching the **JOY** of the Gospel. Living among the poorest of the poor, Francis often went without food and sleep while attending to their physical and spiritual needs. It is said that Francis baptized over 300,000 people. Despite many personal sacrifices and hardships, St. Francis Xavier’s letters were always filled with **JOY** for so many had accepted God’s redemptive love and mercy. St. Francis Xavier’s feast day is December 3.

We don’t need to travel to foreign countries to be a missionary of mercy. We can make sacrifices by putting others needs before our own. Though it may be difficult, the reward is a holy **JOY!**

✠ **JOY** in Action:

Christian **JOY** is more than happiness or gladness. It is being blessed as one who lives according to God’s will. By being kinder to others in word and deed, you will be blessed with a **JOY** that only God can give!

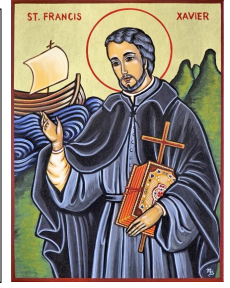
December 6 Second Sunday of Advent	Philippians 1: 4-6, 8-11	What does St. Paul mean when he writes that he prays “with joy in every prayer for all of you?” Do you pray with joy for others?
December 13 Third Sunday of Advent	Zephaniah 3: 14-18	The prophet tells us to be “joyful” for the Lord is in our midst. Do you show this joy to others?
December 20 Fourth Sunday of Advent	Luke 1: 39-45	Elizabeth’s baby “leaped for joy” in the presence of the Lord. How will you remind others that the real joy of Christmas is the coming of the Christ Child?



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BACKGROUND FOR THE RESOURCE

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are based on the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians. Though Paul identifies nine fruits, over time the Church added three more fruits of the Holy Spirit to the list (goodness, modesty, chastity.)

What are the fruits of the Holy Spirit?

We often hear the expression, “Actions speak louder than words.” The fruits of the Holy Spirit are behaviors or attitudes which help us to respond to every day situations and witness to God’s grace working within us. They are signs to others that we are believers and depend on the Holy Spirit to live a faithful Christian life.

The December resource introduces the Holy Year of Mercy while focusing on the fruit of JOY. Pope Francis has designated the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8, 2015) to the Solemnity of Christ the King (November 20, 2016) for the Holy Year of Mercy.

For more information on the Holy Year of Mercy go to:

http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/03/13/pope_franis_homily_with_announcement_of_year_of_mercy/1129218

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia has created a website for the Holy Year of Mercy at:

<http://archphila.org/mercy/>

The Office for Catechetical Formation will post Year of Mercy resources for the classroom throughout the year at: <http://phillyocf.org/resources/>