

Embracing the Year of Mercy

Reflections for Daily Life



The Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed the Hungry
Give Drink to the Thirsty
Clothe the Naked
Shelter the Homeless
Visit the Sick
Visit the Imprisoned
Bury the Dead

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

Admonish the Sinner
Instruct the Ignorant
Counsel the Doubtful
Comfort the Afflicted
Bear Wrongs Patiently
Forgive Offenses Willingly
Pray for the Living and the Dead

Pictured above is the Vatican logo for the Jubilee Year of Mercy. It depicts Jesus as the Good Shepherd carrying fallen man upon his shoulders. Their eyes are merged, signifying that Christ, as the Word Incarnate, sees with the eyes of man, and man is called to see with the eyes of Christ. The text, "Merciful like the Father," recalls Jesus' command in Luke 6:36, to "be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."



Embracing the Year of Mercy

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Nihil obstat: Very Rev. William A. Dhein, J.C.L.
Censor Librorum

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Bishop of La Crosse
November 15, 2015

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Cover Art:
Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, c. 1661–1669.
Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.
Photo of Pope Francis from Wikimedia-Commons, courtesy *presidencia.gov.ar*.

Graphics and Design:
Alice Andersen Socha
www.yourbookinprint.com

How to Use This Booklet

Embracing the Year of Mercy is offered in the hope that it will make the Jubilee Year of Mercy more joyful and life-changing, both in receiving God's mercy and in showing mercy to others. It is intended to be a daily point of reference with a special focus on living out the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, as Pope Francis has asked us to do.

The 31 reflections, Scriptures and prayers are meant to be cycled through multiple times in the course of the year, but there is no strict pattern that must be followed. The "Daily Examen" at the back of the booklet is provided as a proven method for growing daily as a disciple of Jesus Christ. It can help greatly in preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which Pope Francis has called central to the Year of Mercy.

Finally, we hope the reader finds helpful the three appendices on the meaning of the Holy Door, the names and locations of the pilgrimage churches designated by Bishop Callahan for the Diocese of La Crosse, and the steps for obtaining the Year of Mercy indulgence.

This booklet is the fruit of the work of many hands within the Curia offices of the Diocese of La Crosse. It is offered in the service of Bishop William Patrick Callahan, our pastors, and all who are entrusted to their care. May it help open our hearts to the Mercy of God and to the needs of our neighbor, especially those who are suffering in any way.

For regular updates on the Jubilee Year of Mercy, visit the diocesan website at www.dioc.org/mercy.



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DIocese of LA CROSSE

Office of the Bishop

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"Sing praise to the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endures forever!"

These are the jubilant thoughts found in Psalm 136. This exultation resounds today profoundly reflecting the spirit of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, the Holy Year proclaimed by Pope Francis from the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (8 December 2015) to the Solemnity of Christ the King (20 November 2016). In fact, "jubilee" and "jubilant" come from the same root, expressing joyful celebration, and are part of the Church's deep spiritual and Scriptural tradition.

And so it is with joy that I share with you this compact booklet of prayers and reflections aptly titled "Embracing the Year of Mercy." Written and assembled by members of my diocesan Curia, its purpose is to accompany you day by day and assist you as you lift your mind and heart to the Father of Mercies.

It is my hope that this simple but inspiring booklet will be widely used by parishes and families throughout the Diocese of La Crosse. The daily reflections it contains are brief, well suited to our busy lives. The real-life stories witness in striking ways to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Its pages draw often from the treasures of Sacred Scripture. And it is punctuated by prayers and devotions focused on God's overflowing mercy.

You will also find here instructions on how to obtain the Holy Year indulgence decreed by Pope Francis, as well as a list of the pilgrimage churches I have designated for each deanery.

I envision this booklet being a resource in many settings, from the home to the religious education classroom, to the Bible study group, to the parish council or committee meeting. In every case, my sincere prayer is that it may be an instrument of deeper conversion and discipleship in Christ, opening our eyes that we might also see and love him in our neighbor.

I pray that this Holy Year will find us awake and alert to its many graces. Let me close with some beautiful words of Pope Francis from his letter proclaiming this Jubilee Year of Mercy:

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....Day after day, touched by his compassion, we also can become compassionate towards others.

In this Jubilee Year...may the Church become the voice of every man and woman, and repeat confidently without end: "Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old" (*Ps* 25:6).

The Face of Mercy, nn. 14, 25

My prayers and blessings accompany this booklet for your full and abundant sharing in the mystery of Divine love and mercy. God be with you!

Sincerely, in the Heart of Jesus,

+William Patrick Callahan
Bishop



Pope Francis on the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

On April 11, 2015, Pope Francis officially declared a Year of Mercy (Dec. 8, 2015–Nov. 20, 2016) through his papal **Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy**. What follows are a few select quotes from that document. The headings in bold are not the Pope's words, but have been added for this booklet.

Jesus Reveals the Father's Mercy

“Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him. The Father, ‘rich in mercy’ (Eph 2:4)...has never ceased to show, in various ways throughout history, his divine nature. In the ‘fullness of time’ (Gal 4:4), when everything had been arranged according to his plan of salvation, he sent his only Son into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to reveal his love for us in a definitive way.” (n. 1)

Mercy: Source of Salvation, Joy, Peace

“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 the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.” (n. 2)

Why a Year of Mercy?

“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. For this reason I have proclaimed an *Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy* as a special time for the Church, a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective.” (n. 3)

The Holy Door, Sign of God's Forgiveness

“When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive. I will have the joy of opening the Holy Door on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. On that day, the Holy Door will become a *Door of Mercy* through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope.” (n. 3)

Rediscovering the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

“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. Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. (n. 15)

Let us rediscover these *corporal works of mercy*: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. And let us not forget the *spiritual works of mercy*: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead.” (n. 15)

Reflect

- What struck you as particularly beautiful or insightful from these words of Pope Francis?
- How do you hope to embrace this Year of Mercy?

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Feeding the Hungry

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you...” And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” (Mt 25:34-36)

Blessed Mother Teresa Remembers

In the book, *No Greater Love*, Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta recalled going to the house of a family of nine that had not eaten in days.

She wrote, “I saw the faces of those little children disfigured by hunger... I gave rice to the mother. She divided the rice in two, and went out, carrying half the rice. When she came back, I asked her, ‘Where did you go?’ She gave me this simple answer, ‘To my neighbors; they are hungry also!’ I was not surprised that she gave—poor people are really very generous. I was surprised that she knew they were hungry. As a rule, when we are suffering, we are so focused on ourselves; we have no time for others.”

Another time, Mother Teresa was about to travel to Ethiopia, which was suffering from a terrible drought. As she was preparing to leave Calcutta, she was surrounded by many children. “Each one of them gave something. ‘Take this to the children! Take this to the children!’ they would say... A small child, who for the first time had a piece of chocolate, came up to me and said, ‘I do not want to eat it. You take it and give it to the children.’ This little one gave a great deal... he gave something that was very precious to him.”

On another occasion, she found a famished little child on the street who had not eaten for days.

“So I gave her a piece of bread,” she wrote, “and the little one took the bread and, crumb by crumb, started eating it. I said to her, ‘Eat, eat the bread. You are hungry.’ And the little one looked at me and said, ‘I am afraid. When the bread will be finished, I will be hungry again.’”

But along with hunger for food, Mother Teresa was keenly aware of another hunger. She wrote, “A few nights ago we picked up four people. One was in a most terrible condition, covered with wounds, full of maggots.... I really did all that my love could do for her. I put her in bed and then she took hold of my hand. She had such a beautiful smile on her face and she said only, ‘Thank you.’ Then she died.... She was hungry for love, and she received that love before she died.”

Reflection

How many times have we said, “I’m starving!”? Probably more than we would like to admit. We need to open our eyes and our hearts to those who experience a hunger far more desperate than any we have ever known. And we must not overlook the hunger for love exemplified in the dying woman to whom Mother Teresa ministered with such tenderness.

Application

Does your parish or community have a food pantry for the poor? Is there a “community table” or Catholic Worker House that provides hospitality and meals? Consider volunteering or donating there. Consider giving to charities that feed the hungry, like Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services and Mary’s Meals.

Lord, when your disciples pointed out the hunger of the vast crowd following you, your response was, “You give them something to eat.” Then out of their few loaves and fishes you fed five thousand. May you multiply the ‘little’ of our efforts that we might feed our hungry brothers and sisters. We ask this in your name. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.

Quotations from No Greater Love, by Mother Teresa, New World Library, 1997.



Forgiving Offenses Willingly

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. (Col 3:12-13)

The Pope and the Assassin

On May 13, 1981 great crowds assembled in St. Peter's Square to see the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. Driving through the square as was the custom, the Pope was driven at a low speed to make eye contact and greet the many pilgrims that had come to the Vatican that day. In the crowd, amidst the joy and adulation, Mehmet Ali Agca stood alone in his dark thoughts awaiting the open-topped popemobile to pass his way. As it did so, four shots rang out across the square. The Pope fell back and blood soiled his white garments. He was rushed to the hospital while the assailant was taken into custody.

Recuperating from being hit four times by the would-be assassin, the Pope pondered both his predicament and the man who shot him. The date was not lost on the Holy Father, as he remembered that it was the same day in May that Our Lady of Fatima had revealed herself to the three shepherd children in Portugal. Taking his survival as protection from our Blessed Mother guiding the bullets away from killing him, the Pope committed his thoughts and prayers to working out a response towards Agca. Despite the bullets that had ripped through his body, the seeds of forgiveness were already germinating in the Pontiff's soul as he reflected upon the mercy and love of Mary shining down on those shepherd children at Fatima.

On December 27, 1983 Agca received a visitor at prison. It was

Pope John Paul II. The two spoke alone for 21 minutes, the details of which are known to them alone. Throughout the conversation a friendly hand touched Agca on the shoulder. At the end a gesture of peace was made toward him. Despite his wounds, the scandal of being shot as the Vicar of Christ, and the malice that went into a pre-meditated plot of evil, Pope John Paul II forgave Agca of his deed.

Reflection

Though the Pope forgave Agca, he was still guilty of attempted murder in St. Peter's Square. He still had to serve out his prison sentence, but did so knowing that his target did not let the crime endanger the pathway to love and reconciliation. Forgiveness then is the power of love to conquer the injustice of sin. It is the opportunity of victims to act the higher part and reach out in love toward those that hurt them, with the hope that such countenance will cause change for the better, ultimately sparking conversion and forgiveness of their sins by God, the Father of mercies.

Application

Open your heart to forgiveness, rising above the injustice and wanting the good of the other. The world would have us seek retribution for all things, but Christianity offers a paradox instead. We are called to leave retribution to God, and to be ready always to offer mercy and forgiveness.

Lord, you know how unmerciful we can be by not sharing the same love as you give to us. Help us, we pray, to recognize that in forgiving we too are being forgiven by you. May the inspiration of St. John Paul II's forgiveness of Ali Agca encourage us always to be a people of forgiveness. We ask this through our Lord and merciful Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



The Good Samaritan: Model of Mercy

Luke 10:25-37

Then turning to the disciples he said privately, “Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

He said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have answered right; do this, and you will live.”

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.

So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own



beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’

Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” And Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Reflect

- What insights do you gain about God’s mercy from this Scripture passage?
- How would you apply this example of mercy to your own life?

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Giving Drink to the Thirsty

After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), "I thirst." (Jn 19:28)

Did you know?

- 4,500 children will die today from water-related diseases.
- One billion people globally do not have access to clean water.
- Many children walk more than three hours each day to collect dirty water.
- Every 19 seconds a mother loses a child from a lack of clean water.
- 80% of all disease is caused by a lack of clean water.
- Lack of clean water kills more people each year than all forms of violence, including war.
- An American taking a five-minute shower uses more water than the average family in a developing country uses in an entire day.

Remembering Jesse Parker

Jesse Parker was a 17-year-old avid runner, participating in track and cross country at Tomah High School. He loved to run and he loved life. The community still mourns his tragic death in an auto accident on July 4, 2009. Those who knew Jesse recall a kind, thoughtful kid with an easy smile, blonde hair he would toss often, and a prankster who loved to make others laugh. They also remember his deep hope to make a difference.

During his life Jesse impacted many through his compassion for people in need. He planned a life of service as an engineer, working to provide clean water. On one of his last days, Jesse was discussing

his future plans with his mother and said, "I don't need a big title or a lot of money; I just need to make a difference."

With this in mind, the family and friends of Jesse Parker established *Remembering Jesse Parker, Inc.* To date, donations to the charity have helped fund eight clean water projects impacting more than 10,000 people by providing clean water in Haiti, Malawi, Ethiopia, and Uganda. Partnering with Rotary Club, they are planning 14 new wells in rural Uganda over the next two years, bringing clean water to an additional 18,000 people.

Reflection

Living as a Christian means following Jesus' example, cherishing the dignity of every human person, with special care for the poor and the suffering. Water is a life-giving resource that many people around the world don't have. When we work to change that, we respect their essential dignity.

Application

To learn more about Jesse's non-profit, visit www.RunJesse.com. To learn about similar initiatives in our diocese, such as the Kenya Water Project, contact the diocesan Office for Ministries and Social Concerns at ministries@diolc.org. In addition, Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org) has information and lesson plans on water and sanitation projects throughout the world.

Loving God, thank you for the gift of water. Each time we wash our hands, pour water in a glass or water the lawn, may we remember to act and pray on behalf of those who live without it. Each time we bless ourselves with holy water, inspire us, we pray, to live out our baptismal call to love you in our brothers and sisters who thirst for what we take for granted. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Sheltering the Homeless

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the
homeless poor into your house...? (Is 58:6-7)

An Angel of Mercy in New Jersey

Kathy DiFiore knows what it's like to be homeless. After leaving an abusive marriage in her early 30s, she had nowhere to live and went from friend to friend to find shelter. Finally finding a job, she earned enough money to buy a small house.

Even in the midst of her hardships, DiFiore always felt God was near, caring for her. So when she bought her little house, she said to herself, "It's my time to help somebody else." She took out an ad in a local paper that said, "Pregnant? Need Help?" In a short time she had four unwed mothers staying with her. This was the beginning of a ministry she named Several Sources.

Today, Several Sources encompasses five shelters in New Jersey, four of them maternity homes for women in crisis. DiFiore says, "The girls can stay as long as they want. We teach them how to be good mothers, how to be loving and forgiving. We have Bible studies and chastity workshops. When they leave, we make sure they know God in their hearts, so they can teach their babies about God."

In the mid-1980s, the state of New Jersey fined DiFiore \$10,000 and told her she would need to close her first shelter because of outdated regulations that were still on the books. She battled for over a year and finally reached out to Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who was in Manhattan to open an AIDS hospital. Mother Teresa appealed directly to the governor of New Jersey, who then dropped the fine and assured DiFiore her ministry could go on.

DiFiore's fifth facility is a daytime shelter for homeless women. It complements the work of Blessed Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, who run a nighttime shelter until 7:00 each morning. The women can then come to the daytime shelter to bathe, to get clothes, to look for work—in short, to find a way out of homelessness.

DiFiore's ministry of mercy gave rise to an inspiring and highly acclaimed movie in 2014, *Gimme Shelter*, the story of Agnes "Apple" Bailey, a pregnant teen on the run who finds not only shelter, but friendship, healing and hope.

To learn more about the shelters of Several Sources, visit www.severalsourcesfd.org.

Reflection

Probably not very many of us have ever faced true homelessness. Perhaps our experience is limited to seeing (mostly) men alongside the road holding signs that promise to "work for food," or glimpsing cardboard boxes and blankets beneath an underpass. Do we habitually look the other way, or do we see the image of Jesus, who declared that he had nowhere to lay his head?

Application

Consider supporting maternity homes and shelters like those just profiled. Catholic Charities is much involved in sheltering the homeless. Visit www.cclse.org to learn how you can help. Other initiatives are often sponsored by church coalitions, as well as the Salvation Army, depending on the community. Inquire at your parish.

Heavenly Father, you who provide for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, we know that your providence extends all the more to the human person created in your image. We know that you call us to be active participants in that providence. Help us to see and respond with compassion to the plight of the homeless. Amen.

Conclude with Daily Examen, page 70.



Divine Mercy and Pope St. John Paul II

The Mercy of God was central to the pontificate of St. John Paul II. To understand this, one must see his profound connection with a humble Polish nun—Sr. Faustina Kowalska.

In 1931 Jesus appeared to Sr. Faustina in a vision. She saw him clothed in a white garment with his right hand raised in blessing. His left hand was touching his garment in the area of the heart, from which shone two large rays, one red and the other white.

Jesus said to her: “Paint an image according to the pattern you see with the signature: ‘Jesus, I trust in You.’ I desire that this image be venerated throughout the world.... I desire to grant unimaginable graces to those souls who trust in my Mercy.” Jesus entrusted special prayers to Sr. Faustina to share with the world, including the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, printed in the next reflection.

A Time of Trial

Soon the Divine Mercy devotion spread throughout Poland and beyond. But on March 6, 1959, after studying some inaccurate Italian accounts of the visions, the Vatican prohibited spreading the message and devotion. The ban lasted nearly 20 years.

A seminarian in Krakow in the 1940s—a young Pole by the name of Karol Wojtyla—had been deeply affected by the story of Sr. Faustina and the Divine Mercy devotion. From the stone quarry in which he worked during the Nazi occupation, he could see the convent cemetery where Sr. Faustina was buried, and he would sometimes visit her grave on the way home.

Triumph of Mercy

By the 1960s, as Archbishop of Krakow, Wojtyla ordered a complete study of the life and virtues of Sr. Faustina. This concluded with such success that her Process of Beatification was begun in

1968. Finally, in April of 1978, at the request of then-Cardinal Wojtyla and many others, the Vatican lifted the ban on spreading the message and devotion. Six months later, he was elected Pope.

“The Image of My Pontificate”

Pope John Paul II remarked several times that his second encyclical, “Rich in Mercy” (Nov. 30, 1980), was profoundly influenced by insights that came through the experiences of Sr. Faustina. Then in June of 1997, he prayed at her tomb in Lagiewniki, Poland, and spoke from the heart to her Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy:

“There is nothing that man needs more than Divine Mercy.... *It is a message that is clear and understandable for everyone.* Anyone can come here, look at this image of the merciful Jesus, his Heart radiating grace, and hear in the depths of his own soul what Blessed Faustina heard: ***Fear nothing; I am with you always*** (Diary, 586).

“And if this person responds with a sincere heart: *‘Jesus, I trust in You,’* he will find comfort in all his *anxieties and fears*.... The message of Divine Mercy has always been near and dear to me. It is as if history had inscribed it in the tragic experience of the Second World War. In those difficult years it was a *particular support and an inexhaustible source of hope*...which I took with me to the See of Peter and which in a sense forms the image of my Pontificate.”

A Saint, a Feast Day, a Holy Death

On April 30, 2000, the Sunday after Easter, Pope John Paul II canonized St. Faustina Kowalska and proclaimed that this day would henceforth be celebrated throughout the world as Divine Mercy Sunday. That evening he said to a doctor associated with the canonization process, “This is the happiest day of my life.”

Five years later, precisely on the eve of Divine Mercy Sunday, moments after his personal secretary, Archbishop Stanislaus Dziwisz, had finished celebrating the Vigil Mass for the Feast, Pope John Paul II passed from this world into Christ’s merciful embrace.

“St. John Paul II and St. Faustina, pray for me. Jesus, I trust in You.”

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Chaplet of Divine Mercy:

Prayer for God's Mercy, the Fruit of Jesus' Passion

Opening Prayer

You expired, Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls, and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fount of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy, envelope the whole world and empty yourself out upon us.

(Repeat three times)

O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fountain of Mercy for us, I trust in you!

The Chaplet of Mercy is recited using ordinary rosary beads of five decades.

1. Our Father

2. Hail Mary

3. The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

4. On Each of the Five "Our Father" Beads

Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

5. On Each Set of Ten "Hail Mary" Beads

For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.



6. Conclude with Holy God (Repeat three times)

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

Closing Prayer

Eternal God, in whom mercy is endless and the treasury of compassion inexhaustible, look kindly upon us and increase your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might not despair nor become despondent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to your holy will, which is Love and Mercy itself. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Visiting the Sick

I was sick and you visited me. (Mt 25:36)

Do not shrink from visiting a sick man, because for such deeds you will be loved. (Sir 7:35)

Reaching Out: A Ministry of Hidden Service

My mom spent 17 years on oxygen with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) which is a progressive condition that makes it extremely hard to breathe. While she was quite mobile early on, it became harder and harder for her to leave the house. I witnessed her face light up every time the phone rang, just to have someone to talk to for a while. She lived with my dad and my brother, who was brain-injured, and one of my sisters who cared for them all. We kids would take turns and make sure that someone was with them all the time.

I did not live near my mom, so I decided to “pay it forward,” visiting an assisted living facility every week. I see some people in the home just sitting by the window waiting for someone to come. It makes no difference how big their family is, or where they are from—they all want to be loved. They know illness, loss, and loneliness. For a couple of residents there, my husband and I are the only visitors they get. A smile and a “Good morning” bring them joy and warm my heart.

Reflection

We see the Old Testament figure of Job as the embodiment of illness, loss, and loneliness. His experience of suffering only makes sense when contemplated in the light of the cross of Jesus, the supreme act of God’s solidarity with us, completely free and full

of mercy. Jesus embraces in himself especially the suffering of the innocent, for no one was more innocent than he.

When we visit the sick and the suffering, we are not just givers of the gift of mercy, but receivers, too. We can often gain from them the insights of Job. This was highlighted by Pope Francis during his 2015 World Day of the Sick message, titled “I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame” (Job 29:15). He said, “We come to understand how Job, at the end of his experience, could say to God: *‘I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.’* (42:5) People immersed in the mystery of suffering and pain, when they accept these in faith, can themselves become living witnesses of a faith capable of embracing suffering, even without being able to understand its full meaning.”

Application

The Holy Father calls on Christians, and all people of good will, to show mercy and wisdom of heart; to go beyond themselves and reach out to the sick. Consider paying a visit to a nearby nursing home, or volunteering at your parish to visit the sick and the homebound.

Pope Francis’ Invitation to Prayer on the 2015 World Day of the Sick

With lively faith let us ask the Holy Spirit to grant us the grace to appreciate the value of our often unspoken willingness to spend time with these sisters and brothers who, thanks to our closeness and affection, feel more loved and comforted. How great a lie, on the other hand, lurks behind certain phrases which so insist on the importance of ‘quality of life’ that they make people think that lives affected by grave illness are not worth living!

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Praying for the Living and the Dead

We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thes 1:2-3)

Let Us Pray for Each Other!

Toward the end of a remarkable day, it came time for a new Pope to give his first blessing to the world. Yet before he did so, he gave us pause. He said: “Now I would like to give the blessing. But first I want to ask you a favor. Before the Bishop blesses the people I ask that you would pray to the Lord to bless me—the prayer of the people for their Bishop. Let us say this prayer—your prayer for me—in silence.” Only then did Pope Francis bless his people.

There exist in the spiritual life many types of prayer: blessing and adoration, petition and intercession, thanksgiving and praise. When we pray for someone—the people for their Pope, the living for the dead, the friend for his enemy—we exercise that type of prayer called intercession.

Intercessory prayer is “characteristic of a heart attuned to God’s mercy. In the age of the Church, Christian intercession participates in Christ’s [intercession], as an expression of the communion of saints” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2635).

Indeed, it truly is Christ’s power of prayer that enables each of the baptized to pray. Each member of the Mystical Body shares in the priesthood of Christ, and for this reason is in communion with every other cell of the body. With each other we suffer; supported by one another we thrive; interceding for each other we reach the full stature of holiness.

Not even death can break the bond of the Body and the com-

munion of its saints. Our prayer is offered not only for those living today, but for those who have preceded us in death.

St. Augustine acknowledges the power of prayer when recounting the words of his dying mother, St. Monica: “I do not know why I am still here, since I have no further hopes in this world. I did have one reason for wanting to live a little longer: to see you become a Catholic Christian before I died.... [But now] one thing only I ask you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be.”

Reflection

At times, prayer of intercession seems the only comfort we can offer another—or that can be offered to us. Such prayer is a beautiful act of mercy. Human struggles, both great and small, need so much more than effort or willpower to address.

“Work,” says St. Ignatius, “as if everything depends upon you, but pray as if everything depends on God.” Prayer invokes God’s help, but often through the intercession of others in the Mystical Body. Let us pray for one another!

Application

At the conclusion of the preparation of the gifts at Mass, the priest tells us to pray that his sacrifice and ours “be acceptable to God the almighty Father.” When hearing these words, have someone or something specific to offer prayerfully to the Lord. Likewise, and by extension, pray for specific intentions at morning or evening prayers.

Lord Jesus Christ, you willed that we find joy and salvation as members of your Mystical Body. Let us bear in mind those who need our prayers, whether living or dead. Likewise, keep before us the assistance that is ours from our brothers and sisters in this same Body. Together, may we reach beatitude in your eternal presence. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



My Soul Rejoices in the Lord: Mary Praises God for His Mercy

Luke 1:46-55

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm,
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,
he has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.

He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his posterity for ever.”



Reflect

- What insights do you gain about God’s mercy from this Scripture passage?
- How would you apply this example of mercy to your own life?

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Love: The Heart of Mercy

Love is patient and kind.
Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things,
endures all things. (1 Cor 13:4-7)

A Love Story for the Ages

Bill Forward did not set out to be a YouTube sensation. But the three-minute video that chronicles his loving care for his wife, Gladys, who suffers from Alzheimer's, has been viewed well over two million times.

The Australian couple met as young children, but Bill didn't give 'Glad' a second thought until seeing her in a beautiful dress at a church function at the age of 16. "Boom! That was it—I just knew."

Married in 1963, they felt a call to help the underprivileged in India. Bill managed a leprosy hospital and Glad cared for children in local orphanages. They had a daughter and three sons, one of whom they lost shortly after birth. Their missionary service carried them not only to India, but also Romania.

Then in 2004, Bill started to notice worrisome signs in Glad. She struggled with reading, then spelling. Things got steadily worse.

Flash forward to the YouTube video, shot in 2013. It opens with Bill saying, "I don't count it a burden whatever to have to care for her.... I clean her teeth, I shower and dress her, everything. But it's a privilege, I count it a great privilege to care for this one that I have loved all of these years and continue to love."

The camera turns often to Glad as Bill brushes her hair, helps her to drink through a sippy cup, takes her down a stairway lift, and eases her into the special bicycle chair that allows them to ride together along the beach. Her expression is sweet but distant.

As the video draws to a conclusion, Bill says: "God has loved us so unconditionally, and I understand that God has put his love in my heart. And because I realize how much God has loved me, that's how I too can love my lovely wife. She has done so much for me over all of these years and now she can't, but I can, and I can return her love.... She is my Princess and I am her [Prince] William, and we wouldn't have it any other way."

At this she chuckles, and he turns to her—"Would you have it any other way?"—And she speaks her one word of the video: "No." "No, not at all," he says with a smile. "We love each other."

Reflection

Watching the video, one is struck how easy Bill makes it seem to care for his ailing wife who is so limited in her ability to respond. His face and his voice brim with joy. But of course he has spent his entire adult life pouring himself out for people in need. He is practiced in the art of merciful love. He will offer no less to the love of his life. He will keep the promise he made on their wedding day.

Application

It seems obvious what the application should be in our own lives, doesn't it? As a help in overcoming the selfishness that holds us back, this video is very good medicine. To see it, search the Internet on the words, 'What is love? Bill and Glad Forward.'

Jesus, Loving Savior, help us to see with your eyes and to love with your heart. Help us to begin with those closest to us, whom we sometimes easily forget. But then let our love—rooted in your love—spread wide, especially to the suffering and the forgotten. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Comforting the Afflicted

Find Your Own Calcutta

God is the source of all compassion and encourages us in all of our own afflictions. He is the source of all mercy. Sometimes he uses others to deliver his compassion and encouragement. We see this in Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She is an inspiration and example to us all.

There are many people who traveled to Calcutta to work alongside Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity to console and encourage the poorest of the poor. Mary Poplin was one such person. She traveled to Calcutta in 1996 and worked there for two months. Mary says, “Mother Teresa once told me that God did not call everyone to serve the poor or to be poor like them. In fact, he called some to be wealthy and powerful, which is why she could minister to the poorest woman on the streets and to Princess Diana. But she added, ‘God does call everyone to a Calcutta, you have to find yours.’”

Reflection

Much of Jesus’ ministry was to those who were in need of consolation; raising the son of the grieving widow, healing the leper, befriending the outcast, welcoming the stranger and alien. Blessed Mother Teresa gave us an example of this. “Find the sick, the suffering and the lonely right there where you are.... You can find Calcutta all over the world, if you have the eyes to see.”

Application

We need to find our own Calcutta. We need to encounter Jesus hidden in the faces of those around us who are sorrowful so that we may be able to encourage them with the encouragement we receive



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from God. These acts of compassion do not need to be great acts, but small acts with great love. A smile to a cashier who might be having a bad day, a phone call to someone who is homebound or ill, a handwritten note to a student in college.

Sometimes we might not know what to do. What do I say to the person who was just diagnosed with a serious illness or what do I do for the person who just lost a loved one? Sometimes our prayers and the gift of our presence are what are needed. Blessed be God who encourages us so that we might encourage others.

All the quotes in this reflection were taken from Mary Poplin’s *Finding Calcutta*, published in 2008 by IVP Books.

O Holy Spirit, comforting the sorrowful is a Christian duty and a work of mercy. Give me eyes to see others in need. Inspire me that by word, attitude and deed I might try to brighten the days of others and make their burdens easier to bear. Help me remember when helping someone in sorrow that I am helping Christ Himself. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Litany of the Sacred Heart:

Prayer to the Heart of Christ, Font of Mercy

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38)



Lord, have mercy. *Lord, have mercy.*

Christ, have mercy. *Christ, have mercy.*

Lord, have mercy. *Lord, have mercy.*

Christ, hear us. *Christ, graciously hear us.*

God the Father of Heaven, *Have mercy on us.* (Repeat after each invocation.)

God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

God, the Holy Spirit,

Holy Trinity, One God,

Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father,

Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mother,

Heart of Jesus, substantially united to the Word of God,

Heart of Jesus, of Infinite Majesty,

Heart of Jesus, Sacred Temple of God,

Heart of Jesus, Tabernacle of the Most High,

Heart of Jesus, House of God and Gate of Heaven,

Heart of Jesus, burning furnace of charity,

Heart of Jesus, abode of justice and love,

Heart of Jesus, full of goodness and love,

Heart of Jesus, abyss of all virtues,

Heart of Jesus, most worthy of all praise,
 Heart of Jesus, king and center of all hearts,
 Heart of Jesus, in whom are all treasures of wisdom and knowledge,
 Heart of Jesus, in whom dwells the fullness of divinity,
 Heart of Jesus, in whom the Father was well pleased,
 Heart of Jesus, of whose fullness we have all received,
 Heart of Jesus, desire of the everlasting hills,
 Heart of Jesus, patient and most merciful,
 Heart of Jesus, enriching all who invoke you,
 Heart of Jesus, fountain of life and holiness,
 Heart of Jesus, propitiation for our sins,
 Heart of Jesus, loaded down with disgrace,
 Heart of Jesus, bruised for our offenses,
 Heart of Jesus, obedient to death,
 Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance,
 Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation,
 Heart of Jesus, our life and resurrection,
 Heart of Jesus, our peace and our reconciliation,
 Heart of Jesus, victim for our sins,
 Heart of Jesus, salvation of those who trust in you,
 Heart of Jesus, hope of those who die in you,
 Heart of Jesus, delight of all the Saints,

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, *spare us O Lord.*

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, *graciously hear us O Lord.*

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, *make our hearts like yours.*

Almighty and eternal God, look upon the heart of your most beloved Son and upon the praises and satisfaction which he offers you in the name of sinners; and to those who implore your mercy, in your great goodness, grant forgiveness in the name of the same Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you forever and ever. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



The Prodigal Son is Embraced by the Merciful Father

Luke 15:11-32

And [Jesus] said, “There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.’ And he divided his living between them.

Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living.

And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise 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 as one of your hired servants.”’

And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to make merry.

Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.’

But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!’

And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”



Reflect

- What insights do you gain about God’s mercy from this Scripture passage?
- How would you apply this example of mercy to your own life?

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Visiting the Imprisoned

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, *in prison and you visited me.* (Mt 25:34-36)

The Monk and the Murderer

James Malicoat was on Death Row in Oklahoma for the brutal beating death of his 13-month-old daughter. Brother Vianney-Marie Graham, a contemplative monk of Clear Creek Monastery in Hulbert, Oklahoma, who had long been praying for death row inmates, received permission from his superior to write to him and eventually to visit him in prison.

Malicoat didn't know why he killed his daughter, Tessa. He had been beaten as a child. He didn't know for sure who his father was. He was married but had been living with another woman, the mother of his child, when Tessa died of her injuries in 1997.

During one of his visits, Brother Vianney-Marie asked Malicoat, "Do you talk to Tessa?" The inmate's look of shock and emotion told him the answer was yes. "What do you say?" the monk asked him. "Tessa, do you forgive me?" Malicoat replied.

Brother Vianney-Marie looked for opportunities to talk about the mercy of God, but Malicoat warned him not to push religion too hard. The monk kept praying and building their relationship over three years. Little by little, Malicoat's heart opened.

Weeks before Malicoat's execution, Brother Vianney-Marie learned that the inmate's family minister would not be able to be present. Malicoat agreed to allow the monk to come with a priest instead.

Brother Vianney-Marie seized this opportunity to explain the Sacrament of Confession, aware that this would be an emergency in which Malicoat's confession could be heard if only he believed.

The fateful day came and Malicoat sat slumped, exhausted and

terrified. Did he want to confess to the priest? No, he said, he didn't want to burden Fr. Larkin with the horrible things he had done.

In agony, the monk stepped aside and prayed, leaving the priest to chat with Malicoat. At last, looking over his shoulder, he saw Fr. Larkin's hand raised in absolution over the condemned man.

Brother Vianney-Marie's last words to Malicoat were, "I don't think you're my friend, you're my brother." That evening he painfully witnessed his execution. A few days later he received a letter Malicoat had mailed two days before his death. He had written, "You will see, prayer is never in vain."

(Condensed retelling of "The Monk and the Murderer," by Annie Calovich, with permission.)

Reflection

How many of us are able to see Christ in the incarcerated—however faded and darkened his image may be? Do we remember that he identifies even with these "least of our brethren?" Christ died for them too, and they deserve to hear the good news of his merciful love and the invitation to become part of his people. Might God be calling you to visit them, showing care and bringing hope? At the very least, remember to pray for them.

Application

Those who might be interested in prison ministry should contact their parish as a first point of reference, or the Office for Ministries and Social Concerns at ministries@diolc.org. Or they may wish to visit the website of Dismas Ministry, devoted to Catholic prison ministry, at www.dismasministry.org.

Heavenly Father, help us to see our incarcerated brothers and sisters as your beloved children, whom you fashioned in their mothers' wombs. Have mercy on them, hear their prayers, give them the grace of new life in you. We pray also for their family members. Encourage and strengthen them. Provide for their needs. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



The Merciful Savior Forgives the Repentant Thief

Luke 23: 33-43

And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified [Jesus], and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left.

And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments.

And the people stood by, watching; but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!”

The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him vinegar, and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!”

There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”

And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”



Reflect

- What insights do you gain about God’s mercy from this Scripture passage?
- How would you apply this example of mercy to your own life?

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Admonishing Sinners

Then my brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:19-20)

Speaking the Truth in Love

During the eighteenth century in Europe, reason was pitted against faith, in what was called the “Enlightenment.” The French Revolution became so hostile to religion that it turned churches into temples of reason alone and sought to uproot the Catholicism of the French people. Against this painful backdrop, Fr. John Vianney restored a small village to fervor and ultimately drew countless more, from all over the world, back to the practice of their faith.

John was born near Lyons, France, and was seven when the city was overrun by revolutionary troops. It was a dangerous time. The family went to Mass in secret and more than a hundred priests were martyred. John’s parents sheltered priests in their home.

At twenty-six, John enrolled in the seminary in Lyons. He struggled with his studies but was ordained at the age of twenty-nine. In the words of the bishop, “the Church wants not only learned priests but, even more, holy ones.” That is what he saw in John.

Fr. Vianney was assigned as the Curé (pastor) of Ars, a village which had become indifferent to God thanks to the Revolution. He visited each family and began catechizing the children. His example of humility, gentleness, patience and cheerfulness and his long hours of prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament caught the people’s attention. He unhesitatingly admonished those who were participating in the principal vices of the village—drunken and debauched dances, immodest dress, and obscene and blasphemous

speech. Due to his commitment to prayer and courageous leadership, the local taverns eventually closed. He also called the villagers to faithful attendance at Mass and Sunday rest. The people began to obey the saint in their midst.

Fr. John Vianney spent up to eighteen hours a day in the confessional, reconciling people to God. One man, François Dorel, brought his dog to Ars to hunt. Fr. Vianney said, “If only your soul could be as beautiful as your dog!” François knew the good Curé saw his soul truly and decided to go to confession then and there. Hundreds of thousands of people made their way to Fr. Vianney’s confessional and followed his wise counsel for the amendment of their lives. He has been named the patron saint of priests.

Reflection

Relating the truth about how a behavior is harmful is a loving act because it seeks to help an individual attain their greatest good and happiness—a relationship with God—while finding interior joy, peace and fulfillment in life. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, “The greatest kindness one can render to any person consists in leading him from error to truth.” By contrast, a misplaced notion of tolerance can be genuinely harmful to others. Charitable correction, “admonishing the sinner,” is an act of love of God and neighbor.

Application

After prayer and prudent reflection, let us not remain silent when we meet with wrongdoing. Let us be guided by the Holy Spirit to speak the truth in love at the proper time about a sinful behavior.

Jesus, through the intercession of St. John Vianney, please give us the courage, the words and the timing to offer the truth in love to someone who is ensnared by sin. May he or she find the path to true freedom and joy in you. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Jesus Forgives the Woman Caught in Adultery

John 8:2-11

Early in the morning [Jesus] came again to the temple; all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them.



The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?” This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.

And as they continued to ask him, [Jesus] stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw

a stone at her.” And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.

But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.

Jesus looked up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.”

Reflect:

- What insights do you gain about God’s mercy from this Scripture passage?
- How would you apply this example of mercy to your own life?

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Clothing the Naked

St. Martin of Tours

Martin of Tours was born about 315 in Pannonia, a Roman province which is now Hungary. Although Christianity was then legal, his parents were suspicious of this new sect. Martin, yearning for the truth, secretly turned to the local church at age 10 and begged to begin instruction in the Faith as a catechumen.

At age 15, Martin was pressed into military service and, like his father, became an officer. He was on garrison duty at Amiens on a bitterly cold night when, as he approached the gates, he saw a beggar, poorly clad. Martin, with compassion, took his sword and cut his cloak in two, giving half to the beggar. He was jeered and ridiculed for this act. That night, Martin dreamed that he saw Jesus wearing the half-cloak he had given the beggar. Jesus said to the angels and saints that surrounded him, “See! This is the cloak that Martin, yet a catechumen, gave me.” The next morning he went to be baptized and confirmed at age 18 and became “a soldier of Christ.”

Reflection

Martin was known for his strength in standing up for truth, refuting heresy, and destroying pagan shrines. His example, however, is full of humility and compassion. After all, when Martin saw his cloak, not on the beggar but on Christ himself, he saw the truth. Any clothes, any single thing that we give to another person we are giving to Christ himself.

One of the worst feelings is being so cold that it chills to the bone. So cold that feet, hands and face go numb. This kind of cold

is what the homeless feel all winter long. Martin, as a military officer, was no doubt trained to work in adverse conditions, including extreme cold. He undoubtedly knew what it was like to feel unbearably cold and looked with compassion on the beggar.

Application

What better way to honor St. Martin than by living in that spirit of his? Martin gave away half his cloak: we can go through our wardrobes and select any clothes, coats, and shoes that are superfluous—and if we would really exemplify Martin we should give more than what can be spared. We can immediately give these items to someone in need, either directly or indirectly through a charitable organization. It is important to remember, though, that Martin gave the cloak he was actually wearing, that is to say, something that was fit to be worn. The idea is not to give away merely old clothes, but garments in such condition that we ourselves would be willing to wear them.

Blessed St. Martin of Tours, obtain for us a spirit of love and compassion for our neighbor, especially for those who are most in need. Obtain for us the grace to love all people as brothers and sisters with a pure and self-denying heart. May we, like you, one day enjoy the blessed vision of God forever and ever. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Bearing Wrongs Patiently

For one is approved if, mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently? But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. (1 Pt 2:19-21)

Ignatius and the Lions

The times of Christ and the apostles were turbulent ones. In the ancient Roman world life could be seen as expendable especially if one ran afoul of the state or the edicts of the emperor.

Some seventy years after the Resurrection of our Lord, during the reign of the emperor Trajan, an imperial edict was issued to impose worship of the Roman gods on all people within the empire. Knowing full well many Christians would resist this injustice, a reign of persecution began against the Church. Rather than be tortured or brutally murdered by crucifixion or other acts of barbarity, many Christians denied their faith and Savior to save their own lives. Others embraced martyrdom rather than renounce Christ.

Bishop Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of the Apostle John, publicly refused to comply with the edict and was summarily sentenced for execution. Instead of cowering in fear before a godless tyrant, Ignatius used his time patiently in prison to write letters of hope, doctrine and purpose to Catholics throughout the world.

The Roman Empire in this time was so decadent that it was considered an enjoyable pastime to watch others' suffering. Rather than imposing and executing sentences of punishment in closed quarters, the Roman authorities used the Coliseum to make them a public spectacle and a cause for revelry.

When we think of the Coliseum we often think of gladiatorial combat, but many Christians met their fate there not by the sword, but by being eaten alive by wild animals. This was Ignatius' fate, but he embraced it with serenity, resting in the grace of God.

Reflection

When we bear wrongs patiently we act as Christ does. When we reflect on the Crucifixion we see an innocent man dying and bearing the wrong committed against him.

The injustice of the Cross is made more powerful in that Christ embraced it and asks us to embrace it, too. We should have no desire for revenge against others for wrongs suffered on their account. Hard as these are to bear, our renunciation of vengeance may bring them the grace of conversion.

This does not mean grave situations like domestic or sexual abuse should go unrecognized or unreported, or that justice is unimportant—quite the contrary. But it does mean renouncing a spirit of hatred and revenge. In imitation of the merciful Christ on the cross, we are called to love and pray for those who wrong us.

Application

Ignatius met his end with lions tearing at his flesh. For all that suffering his goal was clear. May his words inspire us to bear wrongs patiently, mercifully praying for those who persecute us.

Prayer of St. Ignatius of Antioch

Now I begin to be a disciple. And let no one, of things visible or invisible, envy me that I should attain to Jesus Christ. Let fire and the cross; let the crowds of wild beasts; let tearings, breakings, and dislocations of bones; let cutting off of members; let shatterings of the whole body; and let all the dreadful torments of the devil come upon me: only let me attain to Jesus Christ.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Joseph Forgives His Brothers

Paraphrased summary of Gen 37-46

Jacob had twelve sons. To show his love for Joseph, the son born in his old age, Jacob gave him a coat. This made the brothers jealous of Joseph. When he was seventeen, Joseph had dreams of eleven stars bowing down before him. Joseph told his brothers about these dreams, which made them angry and bitter.

As the brothers were pasturing their father's sheep, they saw Joseph coming across the field. They said, "Let us kill him, and see what becomes of his dreams!" Reuben suggested they simply throw him into a pit and leave him there. In the end, they decided, the next day, to sell him to merchants in a passing caravan, for thirty pieces of silver.

Then the brothers put animal blood on Joseph's coat. They took the coat to their father so that Jacob would think Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. Jacob wept bitterly and refused to be consoled.

Joseph was taken to Egypt by the merchants, where he was sold to Potiphar, a captain in the king's army. The Lord gave success to everything that Joseph did, so the master gave Joseph full charge over his household. However, as a result of false accusations, Joseph was thrown into prison.

One night, the Pharaoh had two dreams. His wise men could not decipher them. Pharaoh's official remembered that Joseph had perfectly interpreted a dream two years before, and it had come true. So Pharaoh called for Joseph.

With God's help, Joseph interpreted the dreams in a prophetic way, alerting Pharaoh to expect seven years of abundant crops followed by seven years of famine. He ended by saying, "Let the Pharaoh choose a wise man to rule over Egypt by gathering corn during the seven years of plenty, so the people will have food during the famine."

Pharaoh appointed Joseph as this wise ruler over the land of Egypt. Joseph stored up grain during the seven years so there was enough for Egypt and to sell to foreigners.

During the famine, ten of Joseph's brothers came from Canaan and bent very low before him. He remembered how they had bowed down to him in his boyhood dreams. He had Simeon put in prison and sent the other brothers home with as much grain as they could carry, saying, "Bring Benjamin to me, and I will set Simeon free."

When they ran out of corn, the brothers again set out for Egypt, this time bringing Benjamin with them. Joseph welcomed them with a banquet and had their sacks filled with grain. But he insisted that Benjamin remain. His brother Judah cried, "Take me as your servant! Jacob will die of grief if Benjamin does not return." At these words Joseph began to weep and said, "I am Joseph your brother." After the shock of seeing that it was Joseph, they embraced him.

When Jacob heard that his son Joseph was alive, he could barely believe the news. He took his family and went to Egypt, where Joseph gave them rich land in which to settle.



Reflect

- What insights do you gain about God's mercy from this Scripture story?
- How would you apply this example of mercy to your own life?

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Giving Hope

We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. (Rom 5:3-5)

Hope for the Hopeless

Blessed Miguel Pro was born on January 13, 1891 in Guadalupe, Mexico. As a child he was very mischievous while at the same time very much in tune with his relationship with God. Miguel could have achieved great success in the world, but instead he decided to dedicate himself to serving Christ and entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1911.

In 1914 Mexico faced intense anti-Catholic persecution, and Miguel and the other seminarians had to flee the country. Miguel went to California, then to Spain, and he was ordained to the priesthood in Belgium in 1924. He had severe stomach problems, so his superiors allowed him to return home to Mexico, even though the persecution was still ongoing. Priests had gone into hiding and churches had closed their doors. Any kind of ministry seemed hopeless, but it was not hopeless for Fr. Miguel Pro (Padre Pro), because his hope was in the Lord. His life was in God's hands to use as He willed.

Padre Pro would dress in various disguises such as a rich man or a beggar to go into different parts of the city to minister to the people. Once inside their homes, he would say Mass, baptize infants, and celebrate marriages. Miguel not only brought the Sacraments to the people, he also brought hope.

One day, Fr. Pro was seized by government forces. He was falsely accused of an assassination attempt on the former Mexican president, imprisoned and sentenced to death.

While on his way to be executed, the young priest gave hope to the people by publicly forgiving his executioners and using his last words to pray. Padre Pro was led to the place of execution. When the firing squad was ready, he stretched his arms out in the form of a cross and cried out, "¡Viva Cristo Rey!" ("Long live Christ the King!") He died on November 23, 1927, but the hope he gave the people of Mexico spread, and it continues to inspire people all over the world today.

Reflection

Fr. Miguel Pro would not allow his hope in God to be crushed by persecution. He went forward in courage to minister to the people. He was to them a sign of the merciful love of Christ, and he was even willing to die for them as Jesus died for us.

As followers of Christ, we too are called to place our trust in him and never lose hope, no matter what trials we may face. A hopeful spirit inspired by God is contagious. It is an expression of mercy in that it consoles and encourages others in their own trials and sufferings.

Application

Think of the people in your family or parish or community who feel discouraged or alone. Be a witness to them of the mercy of God who bends down to bring comfort and strength—to bring hope. Perhaps they are in a nursing home or hospital. Perhaps they are homebound, or homeless. Love them, help them see that they are cared for and not forgotten, and hope will be reawakened.

Lord, give us the words to say to those who are without hope. Help us to know how to lead them to you, who are the source and the reason for all hope. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Burying the Dead

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus “took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.”
(John 19:38-42)

Let the Children Come to Me

The new life of a child brings with it joy, hope for the future and unity among generations of family and friends. It is all the more painful, then, when a family experiences the loss of a little one, either before birth or in infancy.

Recognition of this pain prompted Patti Pflugradt of Marshfield, Wisconsin, to start with her husband, Don, a special ministry she called *Gifts of Love*, beginning in 2010.

For these tiny deceased children, hats, gowns and blankets are sewn, knitted, or crocheted to clothe their bodies for proper burials. In addition, small, hand-crafted and lined caskets are created for them.

These works of compassion come from many places. Women and men, young and old, Christians of all denominations all contribute in their own way. *Gifts of Love* has even teamed up with incarcerated men and women for the crafting of garments and caskets, giving new meaning and purpose to the lives of these inmates.

The Church also *prays* for all who have died, of any age, and comforts those who experience their loss. For parents experiencing the death of an infant, she asks God to “comfort them with the knowledge that the child for whom they grieve is entrusted now to your loving care” (*Order of Christian Funerals*).

Praying for the dead (which is also a Work of Mercy) and burying the dead are acts that comfort grieving families, express and strengthen faith, and show respect and care for the dead. This is especially true for the least among us—the infant and those who otherwise may have no one to care for them.

Reflection

Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. In life and in death they are God’s and are meant to glorify him. As we await the reunion of body and soul at the end of time, we are called to pray for the salvation of the deceased and to care for their mortal remains, which are to be reverently entombed in a grave, columbarium, or mausoleum. We can then visit them, remember them, and pray for them with the hope that we will be with them again in heaven.

Application

All liturgies are public celebrations—no invitation is needed. Offering liturgical prayers—at the Vigil, the Funeral Liturgy, or the Rite of Committal (burial)—is the most appropriate way to care for the deceased. Whether family, friends, acquaintances, or unknown, all are united in Christ’s Body and benefit from one another. Consider attending funerals whenever possible, as an expression of compassion and mercy.

Lord Jesus Christ, by your own three days in the tomb, you hallowed the graves of all who believe in you and so made the grave a sign of hope that promises resurrection even as it claims our mortal bodies. Grant that our brothers and sisters may sleep in peace until you awaken them to glory, for you are the resurrection and the life. Then they will see you face to face and in your light will see light and know the splendor of God, for you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

—Prayer of Blessing the Place of Committal

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Thanking God for his Mercy

Psalm 136

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever...
Give thanks to the LORD of LORDS,
for his mercy endures forever;

Who alone has wrought marvelous works,
for his mercy endures forever;

Who in wisdom made the heavens,
for his mercy endures forever;
who spread the earth on the waters,
for his mercy endures forever.

It was he who made the great lights,
for his mercy endures forever;
the sun to rule in the day,
for his mercy endures forever;
the moon and the stars in the night,
for his mercy endures forever.

The firstborn of the Egyptians he smote,
for his mercy endures forever.
He brought Israel out from their midst,
for his mercy endures forever;
with mighty hand and outstretched arm,
for his mercy endures forever.

The Red Sea he divided in two,
for his mercy endures forever;
he made Israel pass through the midst,

for his mercy endures forever;
He flung Pharaoh and his force in the Red Sea,
for his mercy endures forever.

Through the desert his people he led,
for his mercy endures forever.
Nations in their greatness he struck,
for his mercy endures forever.
Kings in their splendor he slew,
for his mercy endures forever:....

He gave their land as a heritage,
for his mercy endures forever;
a heritage for Israel, his servant,
for his mercy endures forever.
He remembered us in our distress,
for his mercy endures forever.



And he snatched us away from our foes,
for his mercy endures forever.
He gives food to all living creatures,
for his mercy endures forever.
To the God of heaven give thanks,
for his mercy endures forever.

Reflect

- What insights do you gain about God's mercy from this Scripture passage?
- How would you apply this example of mercy to your own life?

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.

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Instructing the Ignorant

But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?
(Romans 10:14-15)

A Spiritual Father Teaches Street Boys

Nineteenth Century Italy was caught up in wars for unification and in the industrial revolution. Children were the chief victims, many living without care or supervision. God sent John Bosco to assist these young people. He was a priest with boundless energy, unfaltering faith, and an extraordinary love for children.

John was born near Turin, Italy. His father's death when he was two left the family in poverty. From the age of five, he felt a desire to teach about Jesus. With determination, he set out to acquire the skills he needed to attract the young, going to circuses to learn the skills of tightrope walking, acrobatics and juggling.

The first inkling of his vocation came in a dream at the age of nine. He dreamt he was in a crowd of children who were swearing and fighting, whom he tried and failed to stop with his fists. Jesus appeared to John and told him that he could help the boys by being kind, teaching them to hate sin and to love purity. Mary then appeared, changed the children from wild beasts to lambs, and told John he must do the same.

This would be his vocation, then—to work with the young. And in this work John used especially his gift for storytelling and his sense of humor.

After his ordination to the priesthood, John—now called Don Bosco—was preparing to celebrate Mass when he saw a boy rudely ejected by the sacristan for balking at serving Mass. Overhearing this, Don Bosco had the boy brought back and spoke kindly to him.

He invited the young lad, Bartholomew Garelli, to stay and learn more about God, and he encouraged him to return. The boy brought nine friends the next Sunday. These became the first members of a “festive oratory” that soon numbered more than a hundred tough and petty street criminals. They came for Sunday Mass, instruction and play. The oratory eventually grew to 550 children and included workshops to train apprentices as mechanics, tailors, printers and carpenters.

Don Bosco developed a method based on “reason, religion and kindness.” He practiced a “preventive education” to teach virtue and to prevent evils rather than to mend them. He instilled moral values and taught a sense of duty and personal responsibility. Everyone who worked with his children had to earn the students’ trust and give a clear personal witness of love of God.

Reflection

Through our baptism, each of us is called to hand on our Catholic faith to others, especially the young. We may not have an education degree, but neither did St. John Bosco. The Holy Spirit will give us the words to speak from our heart. Daily prayer will strengthen our love for Christ and our understanding of the Faith.

Application

When opportunities arise, share your faith with others, and speak with kindness and patience. Never stop learning. Remember to take time to read a Catholic book that will strengthen your understanding of the truth. Seek out your parish youth minister and ask if you can help in any way.

Jesus, through the intercession of St. John Bosco, please give us a holy love for young people. Help us to rely on “reason, religion, and kindness” in guiding youth to encounter you and to accompany them to become your committed disciples. Amen.

Conclude with Examination of Conscience, page 70.



Comforting the Afflicted

And he has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Cor 12:9)

Saint Dymphna

Dymphna was born in Ireland in the 7th century. Dymphna’s father Damon, a petty king of Oriel, was pagan, but her mother was a devout Christian. At the age of 14, Dymphna consecrated herself to Christ. Shortly thereafter, her mother died. Damon had loved his wife deeply, and after her death his mental health sharply deteriorated. King Damon began to desire to wed his daughter, because of the strong resemblance she bore to her mother. Repelled by the suggestion, Dymphna asked for forty days to consider her choice, and then promptly fled the country along with her confessor and two trusted servants. They sailed towards the continent, eventually landing in what is present-day Belgium, where they took refuge in the town of Geel.

Once settled in Geel, Dymphna built a hospice for the poor and the sick of the region. Her father eventually traced and followed her to Belgium. Ordering his soldiers to kill her confessor, he tried to force Dymphna to return with him to Ireland, but she resisted. Furious, Damon drew his sword and struck off his daughter’s head. Tradition holds that she was 15 years old.

Shortly after Dymphna’s death there came reports of people who visited her tomb being cured of mental illnesses. In 1349 a church honoring St. Dymphna was built in Geel. By 1480, so many pilgrims were coming from all over Europe, seeking treatment for the mentally ill, that church accommodations were filled to overflowing and the townspeople began taking them into their own homes. Thus

began a tradition for the care of the mentally ill that has endured for over 700 years and is still admired today. At its peak in the 1930s, over 4,000 ‘boarders’ were housed with the town’s inhabitants.

Reflection

St. Dymphna is patroness of those afflicted with mental and nervous disorders and countless people have been helped by her intercession. Moreover, she clearly inspired the people of Geel to make their town a center of mercy for their care.

By far the most common form of mental illness today is depression. It tends to rob the person of the ability to enjoy life and to lead them to isolation. Spouses and friends are often the first to realize the person is “just not the same.”

Application

Besides prayer, the most merciful thing you can do for someone suffering from depression—or some other mental illness—is to help them seek treatment from a good health care professional who is respectful of faith. If you feel comfortable, offer to attend the visit with them. The emotional support you can provide is invaluable. Remember these feelings are very real for the person afflicted and you should never tell them to just “snap out of it.” If the person tends to isolate, help by inviting them to do something together. You may be refused at first, but it’s okay to ask again and again. They need your loving support.

We beg you, Lord, to hear the prayers of St. Dymphna on our behalf. Grant all those for whom we pray patience in their sufferings and trust in your divine will. Please fill them with hope, and grant them the relief and cure they so much desire. We ask this through Christ our Lord who suffered agony in the garden. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Psalm 51

David begs God for his Mercy

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your merciful love;
according to your great compassion,
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me completely from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.



My transgressions, truly I know them;
my sin is always before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned;
what is evil in your sight I have done.
So you are just in your sentence,
without reproach in your judgment.

O see, in guilt I was born,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
Yet, you delight in sincerity of heart;
in secret you teach me wisdom.
Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be pure;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear rejoicing and gladness,
that the bones you have crushed may exult.
Turn away your face from my sins,
and blot out all my guilt.

Create a pure heart for me, O God;
renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence;
take not your holy spirit from me.

Restore in me the joy of your salvation;
sustain in me a willing spirit.
I will teach transgressors your ways,
that sinners may return to you.

Rescue me from bloodshed, O God,
God of my salvation,
and then my tongue shall ring out your justice.
O LORD, open my lips
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

For in sacrifice you take no delight;
burnt offering from me would not please you.
My sacrifice to God, a broken spirit:
a broken and humbled heart,
O God, you will not spurn.

In your good pleasure, show favor to Sion;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
Then you will delight in right sacrifice,
burnt offerings wholly consumed.
Then you will be offered young bulls on your altar.

Reflect

- What insights do you gain about God's mercy from this Scripture passage?
- How would you apply this example of mercy to your own life?

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.

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Faith: Moving Beyond the Pew

And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, "Save, Lord; we are perishing." And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?" (Mt 8:24-27)

Get In the Wheelbarrow

Charles Blondin was one of the world's most famous tightrope walkers. From an early age, when he first saw one perform, he was fascinated by the daring feat and began to practice.

Once Blondin perfected the tightrope walk, he incorporated other tricks with it, such as carrying objects and people with him across the tightrope. Then he had the idea to cross Niagara Falls on a tightrope and in 1859 his dream came true.

Blondin and his team strung a rope from one side of Niagara Falls to the other. Crowds of people gathered and watched with amazement as he became the first tightrope walker ever to achieve this feat.

The story goes that Blondin later put a wheelbarrow on that tightrope and asked, "Who thinks I can push this wheelbarrow across Niagara Falls?" The crowd cheered in admiration. Blondin pushed the wheelbarrow across the falls and came back.

Now the crowd was in a frenzy of applause. He said to them, "Tell me again, if you think I am the greatest tightrope walker in the world!" They cheered even louder. He replied, "If you think I am the greatest, then someone get into my wheelbarrow and I will push you across the falls." The crowd went silent, no one dared.

Reflection

So many people believe in Christ, pray to him, and adore him. We say, "Jesus, I trust in you." Then there is that moment when he asks us to move beyond our comfort zone and "get into the wheelbarrow."

At that moment, what do you do? Maybe you are afraid, or maybe you feel you don't deserve to let him move you. Are you able to truly trust him and give him everything? Do you understand his mercy that redeems you? Remember, the disciples saw Jesus perform miracles and knew who he was, but in the storm even they were afraid.

Sometimes as Catholics we want to stay comfortably in the pew with our faith. We can be afraid to let Christ lead us boldly out into the world to share him there. It is through God's mercy that we experience faith in Christ, and it is an act of mercy to share him with others.

Application

Find a project or group in your parish that you are comfortable working with and take some steps simply to be involved. You don't have to "jump in the wheelbarrow" right away. Let Christ walk you towards the wheelbarrow step by step. Some ways to get involved are to listen to the announcements after Mass, read the bulletin, check out the parish website, or talk with the pastor. Then move yourself a little further in your involvement, expanding beyond your comfort zone, boldly trusting in Christ.

Lord, help us to allow your grace to become fruitful in us, so that we are an active part of the living Church, letting you lead us where you need us to go. We pray always to be mindful of the needs of others and we ask the courage to help meet those needs—especially the need for you. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Counseling the Doubtful

[They] said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off...” So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:37-41)

A Saint Counsels his Daughter and Lays down his Life

Thomas More lived in England during the tumultuous period of the late 1400s. He went to daily Mass and was conscious of the impact reception of the Eucharist made on his life, arming him for spiritual combat and illuminating his mind and his judgment.

Thomas was made Lord Chancellor of England. He was one of King Henry VIII’s most trusted advisors but the king did things that Thomas could not ignore in good conscience. King Henry asked the Pope for an annulment from his wife Queen Catherine to marry Anne Boleyn. When the Pope refused to declare null what he judged to be a valid sacramental marriage, Henry separated from the Catholic Church in Rome and named himself “Protector and Supreme Head of the Church of England.” King Henry required the clergy to swear an oath acknowledging him as head of the Church of England. Thomas resigned as Chancellor and refused to take the oath because he could not compromise his fidelity to Christ’s Body the Church. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London.

Thomas’ oldest daughter Meg doubted that her saintly father was doing the right thing. She wanted to find a way for him to escape this terrible predicament. Meg was finally able to visit her father in the Tower. Thomas counseled her with these words: “We are

united in our prayers. That is something no amount of separation can take away from us. And you must not be sad, because I certainly am not. It is so peaceful here. God seems very close. If life seems a little dreary and difficult now, remember that no hardship can last long in this short life of ours. Think what a tiny thing the greatest suffering and sorrow must be compared with the tremendous never-ending happiness in the next world!”

Meg found clarity and truth in her father’s words. Her intense pain at his eventual execution was accompanied by the peace of understanding that he had acted rightly.

Reflection

To counsel the doubtful means to assist someone who is uncertain in evaluating a belief or a proposed course of action that has spiritual consequences. Our ability to perform this work of mercy depends on our commitment to prayer and daily Christian living, and our resulting attunement to the Holy Spirit. We cannot give what we do not have.

Application

In our families and communities there will be many opportunities for providing wise moral and spiritual counsel in times of uncertainty. Let us be committed to daily prayer, to regular Confession and reception of the Eucharist, to reading God’s word in Sacred Scripture, and to seeking ongoing formation in the teachings of the Church. Then we can be sure the Holy Spirit will assist us as we seek to help others.

Heavenly Father, through the intercession of St. Thomas More, help us to draw close to you, so that we might be able lovingly to assist others in making good and upright decisions on the path to heaven. Amen.

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



Zechariah Sings in Praise of God's Mercy

Luke 1:57-79

Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son. And her neighbors and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John."

And they said to her, "None of your kindred is called by this name."

And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John." And they all marveled. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God.

And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying,

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited and redeemed his people,
and has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
that we should be saved from our enemies,
and from the hand of all who hate us;
perform the mercy promised to our fathers,
and to remember his holy covenant,
the oath which he swore to our father Abraham,

to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our
enemies,
might serve him without fear,
in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
through the tender mercy of our God,
when the day shall dawn upon us from on high
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of
death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace."



Reflect

- What insights do you gain about God's mercy from this Scripture passage?
- How would you apply this example of mercy to your own life?

Conclude with the Daily Examen, page 70.



The Daily Examen

Developed by St. Ignatius in “The Spiritual Exercises,” the purpose of this meditation is to recognize gratefully the hand of God in all aspects of our daily lives, to see the ways we have fallen short, to ask his forgiveness, and to seek to cooperate more fully with his grace. In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, let us examine ourselves especially in the light of God’s mercy toward us and consider whether we are acting with love and mercy toward others.

STEP ONE – PLACE YOURSELF in the presence of God and make the Sign of the Cross.

STEP TWO – EXPRESS GRATITUDE. God constantly bestows gifts of grace upon us. Through these gifts, we recognize his personal love for us. Review the graces and blessings, whether pleasant or painful, that you have received from the Lord today. Thank him.

STEP THREE – PRAY FOR THE GRACE to be able to see and recognize your failings. Ask the Blessed Mother for her help.

STEP FOUR – EXAMINE THE DAY. This examination should review the day from start to finish with regard to your thoughts, words and actions. Briefly recall the circumstances of your shortcomings and sins. Where have you failed to cooperate with God’s grace? Be specific.

STEP FIVE – ASK GOD’S PARDON. Ask for God’s mercy and pardon for your failings. Tell him of your sorrow; promise, with his help, to avoid these offenses in the future and to be more generous in his service.



STEP SIX – LOOK TOWARD TOMORROW. Think of how you might collaborate more lovingly with God’s plan. Ask for the grace to do his will instead of your own, placing everything before him.

STEP SEVEN – CLOSE with an *Our Father*.



What is the ‘Holy Door’ for the Jubilee Year of Mercy?

Or, better, *Who* is the Holy Door? Like most things Catholic, the Holy Door is a sacramental expression of Jesus. As he himself says, “I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9). In reality, *Jesus is the door*.

In all church buildings, the door is among the first signs that should lead us to encounter Christ. The door of a church, in its “construction, design, and decoration should stand as a symbol of Christ” (*Book of Blessings*, n.1216).

Encountering Jesus—whether in prayer, in the sacraments, the sacred Scriptures, or in the architecture—is the starting point of conversion, a change to a life of joy and grace. Passing through the church door “symbolizes passing from the world wounded by sin to the world of the new Life to which all men are called” (CCC, n.1186). Through our encounter with Christ, we become like him: we become saints. Thus, to pass through a holy door of a holy place is a prayer, and the door even comes to symbolize what we hope to be, Christ’s saints, “those who have followed the path of holiness that leads to the dwelling place of God” (*Book of Blessings*, n.1216).

During the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, from December 8, 2016 (the Immaculate Conception), through November 20, 2016 (Solemnity of Christ the King), Cathedrals, Shrines, and Basilicas in Rome and throughout the world will have a specially designated Holy Door. For pilgrims to these sites, “the Holy Door will become a *Door of Mercy* through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope” (Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, n. 3).

Like any church entrance, the Jubilee Holy Door of Mercy is to be an encounter with Christ. Yet in this Jubilee Year, Christ’s face is especially merciful, for “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy” (Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, n.1). As Pope Francis explains, “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” (n. 14).

The Holy Door of the Cathedral and of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe will be opened on Sunday, December 13, 2015, and closed again on Sunday, November 13, 2016. During this time, our entrance into the church through the Holy Door ought to be a prayer and encounter with Jesus, who is Mercy Incarnate, and who bestows the Father’s mercy on all sinners, great and small. Upon leaving the church, our passage through the Holy Door is an impetus to show mercy to others and a grace to lead others through the Door of the Church into a life of joy in the Blessed Trinity.



Holy Doors and Pilgrimage Churches Designated by Bishop William Patrick Callahan for the Year of Mercy

“...In communion with our Holy Father and in the spirit of pastoral solicitude for the Christian faithful entrusted to my care, I, William Patrick Callahan, Bishop of La Crosse, in accordance with the Papal Bull for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy designate the center door of Saint Joseph the Workman Cathedral, and the eastern door of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, both in La Crosse, as Holy Doors for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.”

“In addition to the Cathedral of Saint Joseph the Workman and the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in order that as many of the faithful as possible may take part in a pilgrimage, one church in each of the remaining twelve deaneries of the Diocese of La Crosse is hereby designated as a place of pilgrimage during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.”

(Excerpted from Bishop William Patrick Callahan’s *Decree on the Designation of Holy Doors and Pilgrimage Churches for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in the Diocese of La Crosse.*)

Holy Door Sites (Contacts in italics)

Cathedral of St. Joseph the Workman, La Crosse (La Crosse Deanery), *Parish Office 608-782-0322.*

Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, La Crosse (La Crosse Deanery), *Shrine Office 608-782-5440.*

Pilgrimage Churches (Contacts in italics)

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pine Creek (Arcadia Deanery), *Holy Family Parish, Arcadia 608-323-7116.*

Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jim Falls, (Chippewa Falls Deanery), *Parish Office 715-382-4422; Sue Felmlee 715-382-4164; Bob Shakal 715-382-4581.*

Sacred Heart of Jesus, Spring Valley (Durand Deanery), *Parish Office 715-778-5519.*

Sacred Heart of Jesus, Eau Claire (Eau Claire Deanery), *Parish Office 715-832-0925.*

Sacred Heart of Jesus, Marshfield (Marshfield Deanery), *Parish Office 715-384-3213.*

Sacred Heart, Wauzeka (Prairie du Chien Deanery), *St. Wenceslaus Parish, Eastman 608-874-4151.*

Sacred Heart, Lone Rock (Richland Center Deanery), *Parish Office 608-983-2367.*

Sacred Heart, Polonia (Stevens Point Deanery), *Parish Office 715-592-4221.*

Holy Rosary, Owen (Thorp Deanery), *St. Bernard-St. Hedwig Parish, Thorp 715-669-5526 or Holy Rosary Parish, Owen 715-229-2258.*

Sacred Heart of Jesus, Cashton (Tomah Deanery), *Parish Office 608-654-5654.*

Sacred Heart, Cassel (Wausau Deanery), *Parish Office 715-443-3675 or Shauna Szymanski 715-560-1941 or Nancy Litzer 715-443-2701.*

Sacred Heart of Jesus, Nekoosa (Wisconsin Rapids Deanery), *Parish Office 715-886-3422.*



The Jubilee Year of Mercy Indulgence

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the words of absolution proclaim that “God, the *Father of mercies*, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins.” But in addition to the *eternal punishment* for sin, which is remitted by the Sacrament of Reconciliation, there remains a *temporal punishment* for sin, due to our unhealthy attachment to the things of this world rather than to God himself.

We are purified from this second consequence of sin in Purgatory to the degree that we have not been sufficiently purified on earth. We may also be assisted by the Church’s practice of indulgences. As defined by Pope Paul VI, “An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain defined conditions through the Church’s help when, as a minister of redemption, she dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions won by Christ and the saints” (*Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, n. 1). For more on this teaching, see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1471-1479.

For the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis has decreed, in a letter to the President of the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization, the possibility of a special plenary indulgence. “Plenary” means “full”—the remission of all temporal punishment due to sin.

Several Ways to Gain the Indulgence

One of the ways the Year of Mercy Indulgence can be gained is through pilgrimage to the Cathedral of St. Joseph the Workman or to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, where, on Dec. 13, 2015, special “Holy Doors” for the Year of Mercy will be opened. Jesus calls himself “the door” and says, “If any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9). To pass through the Door of Mercy is thus a prayer and communion with

Jesus. In addition to passing through the Holy Door at the Cathedral or Shrine, the Jubilee Indulgence may be gained by visiting one of the twelve pilgrimage churches designated by Bishop Callahan for the Diocese of La Crosse (see page 75).

Along with the journey to a Holy Door or other pilgrimage church, there are five standard conditions required to obtain a plenary indulgence:

- Receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation (as near in time as possible to the pilgrimage);
- Participating in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and receiving Holy Communion (as near in time as possible to the pilgrimage);
- Making a profession of faith (i.e., Apostles’ Creed or Nicene Creed);
- Praying for the Holy Father and for his intentions;
- Having complete detachment from sin, even venial sin (if this detachment is lacking, the indulgence is partial, not full).

Pope Francis declared that those whose physical condition does not allow them to make a pilgrimage can gain the indulgence by “living with faith and joyful hope this moment of trial, receiving communion or attending Holy Mass and community prayer, even through the various means of communication.” The incarcerated can receive the indulgence at a prison chapel. In each of these cases, the five conditions numbered above must also accompany these acts.

The indulgence can also be obtained by performing one of the Corporal or Spiritual Works of Mercy (along with fulfilling the five conditions), which are listed on the title page of this book and illustrated throughout.

Like all indulgences, the Year of Mercy indulgence can be applied either to oneself or to the souls of the deceased. The Jubilee Year indulgence, when coupled with the forgiveness offered by the Sacrament of Penance, is a beautiful encounter with Jesus and the Father of mercies.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, patient and full of love, have mercy on us!

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