

Loved Forever: A Guide to Living the Year of Mercy

Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness (Pope Francis).

Year of Mercy

Pope Francis has declared 2015 - 2016 a Jubilee Year of Mercy. He hopes that the year will be “steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God! May the balm of mercy reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present in our midst!” (*Misericordiae vultus*)

God’s mercy is his defining characteristic. After humanity’s first parents sinned against him, the Father immediately started preparing them for the Savior, Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ death on the Cross, God showed the extent of his mercy to the human race.

“Merciful like the Father,



therefore, is the ‘motto’ of this Holy Year. In mercy, one finds proof of how great is God’s love. “He gives his entire self, always, freely, asking nothing in return. He comes to our aid whenever we call upon him.”

The Pope’s desire is not only for each member of the Church to realize the

abundant mercy and love God has for them, but to extend that mercy even to “the fringes of society.” He calls the Church to “open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help!”

Issue 1

Kick-off Letter

In Each ‘Loved Forever’:

- A reflection based on a spiritual work of mercy
- Ideas for a wide range of age-appropriate activities based on that work of mercy
- Ideas for how to start conversation on that work of mercy

For more information, see Pope Francis’ Declaration of the Year, *Misericordiae vultus*, in English, “The Face of Mercy”

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html

What’s a Jubilee Year?

A Jubilee Year is a special tradition within the Church that has its roots in ancient Israel. In the Old Testament, a Jubilee Year was proclaimed every 50 years to be a year of the Lord’s favor, and during that time slaves were released, and

land and property were redeemed. Today, Jubilee Years are every 25 years, with Extraordinary years proclaimed for special events or needs.

2015 is an Extraordinary Jubilee Year. The typical

events of a Jubilee Year will be celebrated. The primary of these is the opening of the Holy Doors, both at all the major churches in Rome and at the cathedral of every diocese, that the faithful may pass through the door and “experience the love of

God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope” (Pope Francis).

This Jubilee Year will be celebrated December 8th, 2015 — November 20th, 2016.

What Are the Works of Mercy?

The Works of Mercy are “charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbors in their bodily and spiritual needs” (CCC 2447). They are a call to us from Heaven to “Be merciful, as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36).

Pope Francis wants the Church to reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy during the Year of Mercy as “a way to reawaken our conscience.” He notes that they are the measure by which we can tell if we have been living as disciples of Christ.

The corporal works of mercy are the ways in which we are to be charitable to the bodily needs of our neighbors. The spiritual works of mercy are the ways in which we care for our neighbor’s spiritual needs.

The Corporal Works of Mercy:

- ◆ Feed the hungry
- ◆ Give drink to the thirsty
- ◆ Clothe the naked
- ◆ Welcome the stranger
- ◆ Heal the sick
- ◆ Visit the imprisoned
- ◆ Bury the dead.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- ◆ Counsel the doubtful
- ◆ Instruct the ignorant
- ◆ Admonish sinners
- ◆ Comfort the afflicted
- ◆ Forgive offences
- ◆ Bear wrongs patiently
- ◆ Pray for the living and the dead

What is “Loved Forever”?

“Loved Forever” is a do-it-yourself catechetical tool for families and other lay members of the Catholic Community for the Year of Mercy. It gives ideas for incorporating themes of Mercy into the every day life of the family during this year, so that it may truly be a “year of the Lord’s favor” (Isaiah 61:2).

Each issue will concentrate on one of the seven spiritual works of mercy. These are the works usually forgotten in our culture, which prefers doing things that can be seen over caring for others’ spiritual lives.

Each issue will offer a brief reflection on the works of mercy and then provide

“This is the opportune moment to change our lives! This is the time to allow our hearts to be touched.” (Pope Francis)

vide activity, discussion, and prayer ideas geared toward a variety of ages.

Let Us Pray

Dear Jesus,

You are the face of the Father’s mercy. Through your incarnation, death, and resurrection, we have come to know the love you have for us. Help us during this Year of Mercy to truly reflect on the meaning of being merciful to our brothers and sisters and to act for your glory in all things. Amen.

Action Points

- Share with your family what you have learned from this issue and why you are excited about this Jubilee year
- Pray for the grace to be able to receive God’s mercy in a new way this year
- Pray for the ability to be God’s mercy to everyone this year

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