



"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Mt 5:7)

If you were asked to define mercy, wouldn't you find it difficult to give a clear answer?

So at the threshold of this extraordinary jubilee of mercy, let us try to explain what the Lord's mercy is for us, in order to nourish our prayer and our prayers of intercession with everything that this virtue comprises for each of us.

One of the three Hebrew words used in the Bible to translate "mercy" is the "womb." God's mercy is a nurturing womb, implying a physical response and demonstration that mercy is felt in the centre of one's body. What father or mother has not felt that knowing that their child is sick or lost? Mercy therefore appears as a profound attachment of one person to another and in particular, of God to man. In our life, God suffers with us. Our misfortune, our suffering and our condition as sinners overwhelm him.

In a great movement of love for us, he shows us his tenderness, helps us concretely in our lives, shows us his "mercy," forgives our failures, weaknesses and sends us his Son. In the New Testament, Jesus invites us to do the same towards our brothers: *"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."* (Lk 6:36) It is one of the conditions for eternal life.

During this quarter may our prayer of intercession be truly a prayer of mercy. We could indeed call it that because it demonstrates so clearly our tenderness towards our brothers who suffer or our thanksgiving by carrying all their intentions through Jesus towards his father, our Merciful Father.

Gérard & Marie-Christine de Roberty

Spiritual Letter

God is merciful. The whole Bible ceaselessly shows his acts of mercy: he hears the needy cry, he thinks of the poor and weak... Furthermore, he saves his people, Israel, from slavery in Egypt, allows them to pass through the Red Sea to enter the land of freedom, showing thereby that he wants all people on earth to be free and live in freedom, peace and dignity. But God has done even more! He not only accomplished merciful gestures, he gave us his Son, his Only one! There is no greater mercy. In his Son, he gave us everything: *"God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world guilty, but to save the world through him."* (Jn 3:17)

If the incarnation is the greatest mercy, if the Son of God lives in us, our intercession is first and foremost the intercession *"of Christ in us."* He wants to save the world using us. The Son of God makes the words of mercy appear in our hearts and on our lips. He incites in us merciful attitudes and gestures towards others. Progressively, we ourselves become men and women of mercy. The shepherd who seeks his lost sheep is Jesus, but it is also us who

work to deliver others from their evil. The father of the Prodigal Son is God, but God also opens our arms to receive those whom guilt and remorse work upon, in order to bring them to true repentance by showing gratuitous love.

Abraham is the father of all believers. With faith, he interceded for Sodom's salvation, that city so full of all forms of evil. Has there been intercession any greater than that? Yes, because he stops at ten. "*Lord, what if you find ten there?*" He said, *'If I find ten there, I will not destroy it.'*" (Gen 18:16-33) He cannot go any further because he cannot force God's decision. There is one person who went further, just one, Jesus, the only Just one. He can ask his Father for everyone's salvation because he is his Son. Because of him, and only because of him are we saved, from the first Adam to the last one.

Therefore it is through Christ, with Christ and in Christ that we can ask for mercy for everyone, for sinners and for great sinners. The Lord saves, meaning that he forgives, purifies and helps the sinner discover his evil so that he repents and repairs the evil done. The Lord saves the sinner by arousing in him the love that so lacks. If God did not act in this way, his mercy would be without justice, without respect for victims and, for the sinner, without a true return to life, without conversion.

Our intercession has no limits. It is said of Maximilian Kolbe that he watched the Nazi persecutors enter the prison where he was dying of hunger, "*not with a desire for bread, but with a desire to free them from evil.*" The Psalmist said it well, "*Love and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss.*" (85:11). "*... Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*"

Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.
Spiritual Counsellor to the Intercessors

THE LOGO AND MOTTO OF THE JUBILEE YEAR SPEAK OF MERCY



The *logo* and the *motto* together provide a fitting summary of what the Jubilee Year is all about. The motto *Merciful Like the Father* (taken from the Gospel of Luke, 6:36) serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of the Father who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to give love and forgiveness without measure (cfr. Lk 6:37-38). The logo – the work of Jesuit Father Marko

I. Rupnik – presents a small *summa theologiae* of the theme of mercy.

In fact, it represents an image quite important to the early Church: that of the Son having taken upon his shoulders the lost soul demonstrating that it is the love of Christ that brings to completion the mystery of his incarnation culminating in redemption. The logo has been designed in such a way so as to express the profound way in which the Good Shepherd touches the flesh of humanity and does so with a love with the power to change one's life. One particular feature worthy of note is that while the Good Shepherd, in his great mercy, takes humanity upon himself, his eyes are merged with those of man. Christ sees with the eyes of Adam, and Adam with the eyes of Christ. Every person discovers in Christ, the new Adam, one's own humanity and the future that lies ahead, contemplating, in his gaze, the love of the Father. The scene is captured within the so-called *mandorla* (the shape of an almond),

a figure quite important in early and medieval iconography, for it calls to mind the two natures of Christ, divine and human. The three concentric ovals, with colors progressively lighter as we move outward, suggest the movement of Christ who carries humanity out of the night of sin and death. Conversely, the depth of the darker color suggests the impenetrability of the love of the Father who forgives all.

Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation

MERCY ACCORDING TO POPE FRANCIS

Pope Francis dedicated his first Angelus, after his election, to the theme of mercy. *"...feeling mercy, (...) this word changes everything. This is the best thing we can feel: it changes the world. A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just. We need to understand properly this mercy of God, this merciful Father who is so patient.... Let us remember the Prophet Isaiah who says that even if our sins were scarlet, God's love would make them white as snow. This mercy is beautiful! I remember, when I had only just become a bishop in the year 1992, the statue of Our Lady of Fatima had just arrived in Buenos Aires and a big Mass was celebrated for the sick. I went to hear confessions at that Mass. And almost at the end of the Mass I stood up, because I had to go and administer a First Confirmation. And an elderly woman approached me, humble, very humble, and over eighty years old. I looked at her, and I said, "Grandmother" — because in our country that is how we address the elderly — do you want to make your confession?". "Yes", she said to me. "But if you have not sinned...". And she said to me: "We all have sins...". "But perhaps the Lord does not forgive them". "The Lord forgives all things", she said to me with conviction. "But how do you know, Madam?". "If the Lord did not forgive everything, the world would not exist". I felt an urge to ask her: "Tell me, Madam, did you study at the Gregorian [University]?", because that is the wisdom which the Holy Spirit gives: inner wisdom focused on God's mercy. Let us not forget this word: God never ever tires of forgiving us! "Well, Father what is the problem?". Well, the problem is that we ourselves tire, we do not want to ask, we grow weary of asking for forgiveness. He never tires of forgiving, but at times we get tired of asking for forgiveness. Let us never tire, let us never tire! He is the loving Father who always pardons, who has that heart of mercy for us all. And let us too learn to be merciful to everyone."*

Pope Francis, Angelus, 17 March 2013

THE JUBILEE OF MERCY

From December 8th, 2015 to November 20th, 2016, the Catholic Church will celebrate an Extraordinary Holy Year. This "Jubilee of Mercy" will begin with the opening of the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception and will end with the Solemnity of Christ, King of the Universe.

The opening of this Jubilee Year coincides with the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, which called the Church to proclaim the Gospel to the world in new ways, bringing God's mercy to everyone.

The Pope has requested that each diocese across the globe also open a "Door of Mercy" to recognize the Jubilee locally.

Press Release by the French Bishops' Conference

MERCY... IT IS GIVING AND RECEIVING AT THE HEART OF GOD'S LOVE

"Christ's message in all its richness must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct one another with all wisdom." (Col 3:16)

"Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes! He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God." (2 Co 1:3-4)

"Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more (...)." (Heb 10:24-25)

"My friends, if someone is caught in any kind of wrongdoing, those of you who are spiritual should set him right; but you must do it in a gentle way. (...) Help carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will obey the law of Christ." (Gal 6:1-2)

"You were called to be free. But do not let this freedom become an excuse for letting your physical desires control you. Instead, let love make you serve one another." (Gal 5:13)

"Each one, as a good manager of God's different gifts, must use for the good of others the special gift he has received from God." (1 Peter 4:10).

New Testament texts chosen by Henri Caffarel

SAINT JOHN PAUL II'S "PRAYER OF MERCY"

During his apostolic voyage to Poland in August 2002, Pope John Paul II celebrated the dedication of the new shrine of Divine Mercy in Cracow. During the homely, he solemnly entrusted the whole world to Divine Mercy:

*God, merciful Father,
in your Son, Jesus Christ, you have revealed your love
and poured it out upon us in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter,
We entrust to you today the destiny of the world and of every man and woman.*

*Bend down to us sinners,
heal our weakness,
conquer all evil,
and grant that all the peoples of the earth
may experience your mercy.
In You, the Triune God,
may they ever find the source of hope.*

*Eternal Father,
by the Passion and Resurrection of your Son,
have mercy on us and upon the whole world!*

Amen.

PRAYER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

*“Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.
Show us your face and we will be saved.
Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress
and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his
betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.
Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan
woman: “If you knew the gift of God!”
You are the visible face of the invisible Father,
of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your
visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.
You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness
in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who
approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.
Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty
to captives and the oppressed,
and restore sight to the blind.
We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy; you who
live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.
Amen.”*

GENERAL INTENTION

**Lord, we offer you our prayers for the intentions of our world in crisis that lacks love.
May the spirit of Mercy help humanity and ourselves to rediscover the meaning of
tenderness, sharing and peace.
May mercy experienced in the love of God and our neighbour help us to make evil,
indifference, selfishness and individuality recede.
Lord, let men and women who are committed to the path of marriage experience fully the
spirit of love so that our world may be, in their image, filled with mercy.**

**"We wish you a holy and happy Year
in the service of intercession through prayer."**