

Jubilee of Mercy

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The Good Samaritan
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“Be merciful just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). Pope Francis will open the Jubilee Year of Mercy this December 8. We join together in this important time in the Church, in the spirit which Francis himself has presented in the Bull *Misericordiae Vultus*. Let us read and meditate on this Bull once again; it will do us good.

You can clearly see the intimate connection between this Jubilee and the charism and mission of our Congregation. We are people consecrated to the love of God revealed in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In the Sacred Hearts, we contemplate the mystery of mercy. Our reparative mission shows the healing and saving strength of merciful love. That is why this Jubilee is our year, our feast, our responsibility.

In line with the last three years

In this Jubilee of Mercy we can summarize the path of spiritual and missionary animation that we have been proposing to all of you for three years: 2013 (the Martyrs), 2014 (Damien) and 2015 (Eustaquio). Each one of these icons of our Congregation shows us a dimension of mercy that we can delve into more deeply during this Jubilee Year.

Believing in God the Father of Mercy

The **Martyrs** invite us to faith. During this Jubilee Year, let us ask that our faith in God might increase. The image of God, which spontaneously springs forth from our hearts, is not always that of the merciful Father that Jesus reveals to us. All of us carry interior mental blocks, more or less conscious, that make it difficult for us to truly believe that God is like the father in the parable of the prodigal son. It is difficult to admit that we, and all human beings, are worthy to be loved and that God desires our response of love and is pleased with it.

Moreover, we ought to model our way of looking at others on the basis of the mystery of God's mercy. Our conduct and the quality of our treatment of others often betray a certain indifference in our relationship with God, as if we knew little of Him, "by hearsay" (Job 42:5). Let us pray, then, more often. Let us ask for the gift of faith. Let us believe in God.

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. (MV 2)

Being reconciled among brothers

Eustaquio was a man of healing and reconciliation. The Jubilee of Mercy is again a propitious time for reconciliation among ourselves. A time for us to forgive one another and accept ourselves as brothers, companions whom God has given us for the journey.

Pardoning offences becomes the clearest expression of merciful love, and for us Christians it is an imperative from which we cannot excuse ourselves. (MV 9)

The mercy experienced in our communities is an apostolic mercy: our lifestyle as brothers proclaims the Gospel of Jesus; while harshness among us discredits the message of love that He has entrusted to us.

The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope. (MV 10)

Serving those in greatest need

Damien is the icon of service to those in greatest need. Mercy is action. Our wish is that this jubilee year might renew our commitment to move to the margins, to serve on the peripheries, to increase our contact with the poor.

On this ground, the danger that continuously sets a trap for us is inconsistency. We repeat a jargon of exciting expressions, but we do not bring them to life with any real action. It would be better, then, to be humble and say nothing.

This jubilee year, let us break the inertia and let us take a step forward. Let us do some new, concrete and even exaggerated act of mercy. I will return to this in the proposals I present to you below.



Two actions for this Jubilee year of 2016

As in the previous three years, the General Government is asking that, in 2016, you carry out two actions. These actions, being done by all, will help us to grow in the sense of body as a Congregation and will serve to emphasize, in a symbolic way, the mystery of mercy that we will be celebrating during the Jubilee. The two actions are:

1. Pilgrimage to a Holy Door

The practice of pilgrimage has a special place in the Holy Year, because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life. Life itself is a pilgrimage, and the human being is a viator, a pilgrim travelling along the road, making his way to the desired destination. Similarly, to reach the Holy Door in Rome or in any other place in the world, everyone, each according to his or her ability, will have to make a pilgrimage. (MV 14)

All of you will have a Holy Door near where you live. We ask that, together with other brothers, you devote a day to making a pilgrimage to the Holy Door. You may do it as a local community, or joining several communities, or as a generational group or in other ways. It will be a time of prayer together, of interiorizing the mystery of mercy and of opening yourselves to new horizons of commitment.

In a short while, the General Government will send you a supporting guide for this day of pilgrimage.

2. A work of mercy

During this jubilee year, we invite each local community to put some traditional works of mercy into practice. You will say that everyone is already doing not one but many of these works, regularly, in our various services. True. But we are asking that, during this Jubilee, each local community do one of these works **in an exaggerated way**, with concrete

actions that appear to be excessive. Actions that even manage to disconcert by breaking out of the predictable, so that they might alter our lives beyond the routines that protect our tranquility, our privacy and our independence. Let us do something crazy for the poor. It's the Jubilee!

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. 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. (MV 15)

Pardon me if I offer the example of the General House community. For a year now, we have had a commitment in our community plan to shelter homeless persons, mainly immigrants or refugees. It is certainly an action that shakes up the normal order of a house like ours that is designated for other things. But it is a real service to people who need it, and a blessing for us because it puts us in direct contact with concrete people whom we often mention in our speech and in our prayers. In the community plan for this year, we make two room available for shelter, one more than up to now. It will be our communitarian way of giving flesh to the work of mercy of "welcoming the stranger".

I ask, then, that each community reflect on this, decide which work of mercy to carry out as a community (not individual commitments, but something that involves all the brothers), put the action you want to accomplish in your community plan, and put it in practice. Without doubt, it will be a cause for joy and a font of blessing.

A holy and happy Jubilee to all!

