

# “Contemplating God’s Love and Mercy with St. Paul”

“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.”  
(Pope Francis, Bull of Indiction, n.3)



## “Merciful like the Father”

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and after a wise discernment and contemplation of the needs of our contemporary world, our Holy Father Pope Francis, announced on April 11, 2015 an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. It is to be a year of grace; a year in which the whole Church is to “rediscover and make fruitful God’s mercy, with which all of us are called to give consolation to every man and woman of our time.”

### What is a Jubilee Year?

Jubilee Years have their roots in the ancient Hebrew tradition. The Jewish people celebrated a jubilee every 50 years. For them the year of Jubilee was in any case preeminently a time of joy, the year of remission or universal pardon.

From 1475 to present day, the Church has celebrated jubilees every 25 years –to allow each generation to experience at least one Holy Year. However, an extraordinary jubilee may be announced on the occasion of an event of particular importance, even outside the range of 25 years.

This upcoming Holy Year, that is to “have God’s mercy at its center”, will begin on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, and will conclude on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Solemnity of Christ, King of the Universe.

In the upcoming bulletins we will reflecting on the great gift of mercy so as to prepare our hearts to receive all the graces that the Lord wishes to communicate during this jubilee. We will do so by gazing on the revelation of God’s merciful love in the life and letters of St. Paul. He who experienced the Lord’s mercy in such a powerful way, which radically changed his life from persecutor to Christian, can teach us to recognize, accept and communicate God’s mercy to others.

*“When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy”  
(Titus 3: 4-7).*

\*Sources: Bull of Mercy, Hearts Afire, New Advent Encyclopedia Images taken from various internet sites.



### MEANING OF THE LOGO

The logo of the Year of Mercy– 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.

\*Source: www.im.va



*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help" (Heb 4:14-16).*

## What is Mercy?

Pope Francis in his Bull of Indiction "*Misericordiae Vultus*", defined mercy as the revelation of the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy, he said, is the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us." Through the mystery of the Incarnation God reveals his great love for the human race by **mercifully restoring the communion** that was broken by sin. Taking on our human condition, Jesus, who knew no sin, bared upon himself the weight of all our sins. He stretched out his arms on the Cross so as to be the **"bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness."** (Bull, MV)

God has no need of us, yet he loves us so much that he chooses and takes the initiative to come to heal and restore the wound caused by our pride and disobedience. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only son"* (Jn 3:16).

As St. Paul tells us *"He had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest"* (Heb 2:14-18). That is mercy! To place ourselves, out of great love, in the other person's shoes. Just like Jesus did, to **embrace** in the heart the sufferings of others, so that we don't judge them but first seek to **understand, forgive and elevate**. Mercy means to be one with the other, so that we would love and forgive just as we would want to be loved and forgiven.

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God" (2 Cor 1:1-4).*



Source: Google Images

## Questions for Further Reflection:

- ❖ Have I experienced God's mercy and love in my life?
- ❖ How have I communicated God's mercy and love to others?
- ❖ What concrete actions can I do to become a more perfect "bridge" that connects others to God?
- ❖ In what ways can I contribute to building greater communion, forgiveness and understanding within my family?

## Prayer for the Year 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.

Registration for the Major Events of the Jubilee in Rome is Available at [www.im.va](http://www.im.va)

## "In Virtue of His Own Mercy" (Titus 3:7)

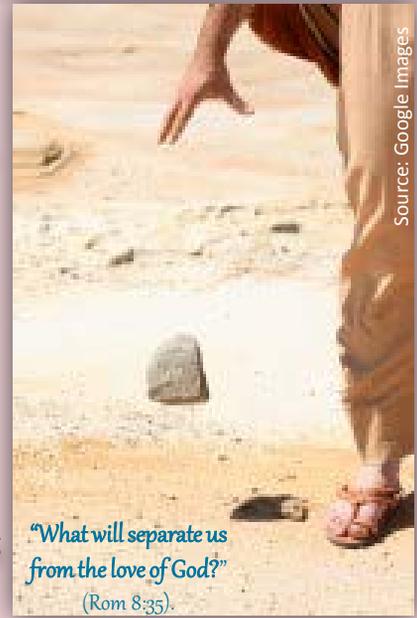
*"But when the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7).*

In the very life of St. Paul we see the redeeming power of God's merciful love. He who was once a ferocious persecutor of the Christians became, by a great act of divine mercy, an ardent apostle and preacher of God's loving and saving message. In Paul's conversion story we can contemplate the dynamics of God's mercy.

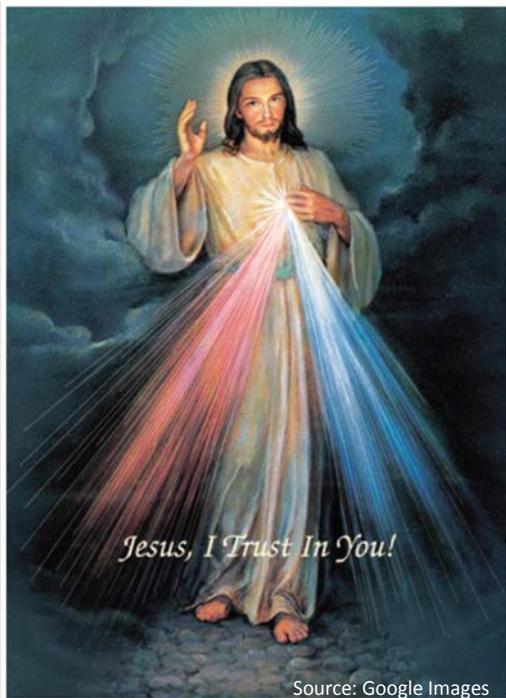
The Lord revealed himself to Saul while he was still in the midst of his sinfulness and hatred. In fact, when Christ spoke to him on the road to Damascus, Saul was on his way to persecute and make captives "any men or women who belonged to the Way" (Acts 9:2). While he was "still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1). Christ manifested his great mercy and love making him a chosen instrument to carry his name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites (Acts 9:15).

In the same way, the Lord makes himself present in our lives everyday, at every single moment. He wishes to manifest his great love for us, his tenderness and forgiveness. We have done nothing, and need to do nothing, to deserve such great love. It is indeed, God loving initiative, "in virtue of his own mercy", that he comes to meet and elevate man to a communion of love. Our Holy Father Pope Francis constantly reminds us that "God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking God's mercy." He who commanded us to forgive others, has already forgiven us "seventy times seven." He desires to meet us, be this encounter in the wells of our daily realities, or on our Damascus roads, he will receive us with open arms. Jesus has a great gift he wishes to share with us, "If you knew the gift of God" (Jn 4:10). His plans are of "welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope" (Jer 29:11).

He wishes to communicate that gift during this Year of Mercy, are you ready to receive it? Call on him, for he says: "When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your hearts, I will let you find me...and I will change you lot" (Jer 29: 12-14).



Source: Google Images



### PRAYER TO BE MERCIFUL

Written by St. Maria Faustina

"O Lord. I want to be completely transformed into Your mercy and to be Your living reflection. May the greatest of all divine attributes, that of Your unfathomable mercy, pass through my heart and soul to my neighbor. Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful, so that I may never suspect or judge from appearances, but look for what is beautiful in my neighbors' souls and come to their rescue. Help me, O Lord, that my ears may be merciful, so that I may give heed to my neighbors' needs and not be indifferent to their pains and moanings. Help me, O Lord, that my tongue may be merciful, so that I should never speak negatively of my neighbor, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all. Help me, O Lord, that my hands may be merciful and filled with good deeds, so that I may do only good to my neighbors and take upon myself the more difficult and toilsome tasks. Help me, O Lord, that my feet may be merciful, so that I may hurry to assist my neighbor, overcoming my own fatigue and weariness (...) Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful so that I myself may feel all the sufferings of my neighbor. (...)  
May Your mercy, O Lord, rest upon me" (Diary # 163).



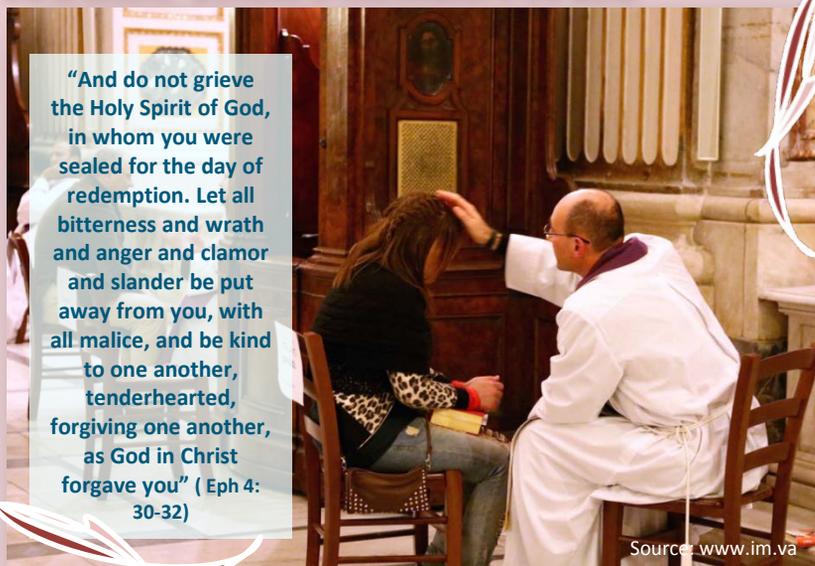
Learn about the other Sacraments  
Visit "Resources & Tools"  
[www.usccb.org/jphd](http://www.usccb.org/jphd)

*"So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cr 5: 17-19).*

The first fruit of mercy, and the one that proves the authenticity of repentance and forgiveness is spiritual renewal, namely, conversion of heart. True forgiveness, which is a fruit of true love, always calls forth and creates the space for the healing, restoration and elevation once again of he or she who has fallen. Love is always creative, therefore, mercy as an expression of love, always creates new life, new opportunities to begin afresh, it produces a "new creation."

*"So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cr 5: 20-21).*

Christ's gift of forgiveness is the most authentic and fruitful proof of his great love for us. He who took upon himself all our sins and washes us clean in his blood, continues to graciously communicate his mercy through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Year of Mercy is an special opportunity to rediscover and drink away from this fountain of mercy and so become "architects of reconciliation in the world."



**"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph 4: 30-32)**

Source: [www.im.va](http://www.im.va)

## Questions for Further Reflection:

- ❖ When was the last time you went to confession?
- ❖ When was the last time I forgave someone who hurt me?
- ❖ Do I feel resentment or a desire for revenge against someone who did wrong to me? Who are those people?
- ❖ Do I really forgive the trespasses of those who trespass against me as I pray in the Our Father? What do I need to change to do so truly?

## A Guide to Confession

### ➤ Preparation

Before going to confession, take some time to prepare. Begin with prayer, and reflect on your life since your last confession. How have you—in your thoughts, words, and actions—neglected to live Christ's commands to "love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind," and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:37, 39)? review the Ten Commandments or the Beatitudes (Ex 20:2-17; Dt 5:6-21; Mt 5:3-10; or Lk 6:20-26).

### ➤ Greeting

The priest will welcome you; he may say a short blessing or read a Scripture passage.

### ➤ Sign of the Cross

Together, you and the priest will make the Sign of the Cross. You may then begin your confession with these or similar words: "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [give days, months, or years] since my last confession."

### ➤ Confession

Confess all your sins to the priest. If you are unsure what to say, ask the priest for help. When you are finished, conclude with these or similar words: "I am sorry for these and all my sins."

### ➤ Penance

The priest will propose an act of penance. The penance might be prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. He might also counsel you on how to better live a Christian life.

### ➤ Act of Contrition

After the priest has conferred your penance, pray an Act of Contrition, expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving to sin no more. A suggested Act of Contrition is:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy. (Rite of Penance, no. 45)

### ➤ Absolution

The priest will extend his hands over your head and pronounce the words of absolution. You respond, "Amen."

### ➤ Praise

The priest will usually praise the mercy of God and will invite you to do the same. For example, the priest may say, "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good." And your response would be, "His mercy endures for ever" (Rite of Penance, no. 47).

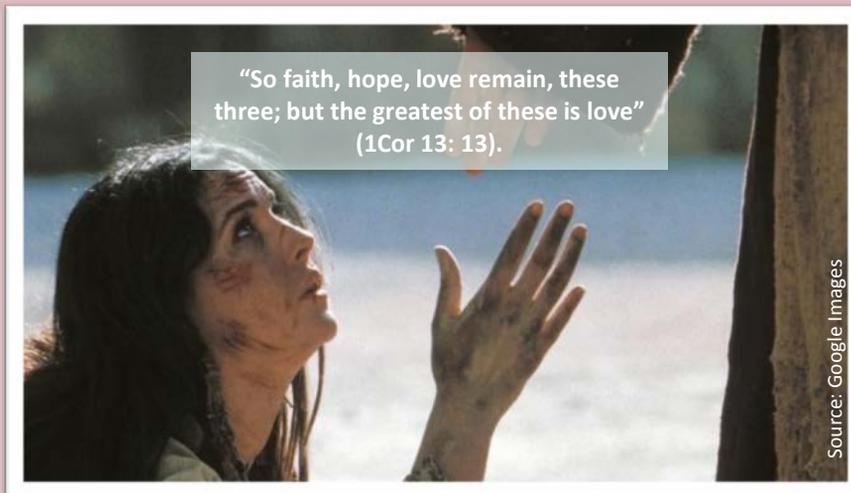
### ➤ Dismissal

The priest will conclude the sacrament, often saying, "Go in peace."

\*Source: [www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship](http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship)



Listen to  
the Official Hymn  
of the Jubilee at:  
<https://youtu.be/-N0Dt059fg>



*"If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; If I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor 13: 1-3).*

The message of mercy is essentially a message of love. It manifests in a concrete manner the primacy of love of which St. Paul speaks in his first letter to the Christians in Corinth. Mercy is the fruit of love; because it is capable of overcoming all things, "love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8).

However, in our contemporary society love has lost its fundamental meaning and dignity. The word love is one, if not the most, used and misused words today. Everyone uses the term "love" to refer simply to their likes and dislikes. We can even read in bumper stickers sayings like "I love my dog", "I love my car", and similar things. Such contemporary definitions of love actually deprive love of its most beautiful and sacred meaning.

In his very first encyclical letter, St. John Paul II told us that "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it" (*Redemptor Hominis*, 10).

Then, what is the real meaning of love, that makes it

indispensable for man's very existence? St. John Paul II himself responds to this question by teaching us that "Love is never something ready made, something merely 'given' to the human person, it is always at the same time a task. Love should be seen as something which in a sense never 'is' but is always only 'becoming', and what it becomes depends upon the contribution of the persons and the depth of their commitment. Love divorced from a feeling of responsibility for the person is a negation of itself, is always and necessarily egoism. The greater the feeling of responsibility for the person the more true love there is" (*Love and Responsibility*, pgs. 131-139).

Love, then is not merely a feeling that can come and go but a choice. Love is always a free choice for the good of the other. St. Paul defines for us true face of love:

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (1Cor 13: 1-7).*

## Questions for Further Reflection:

- ❖ Have you ever experienced or seen a love like the one St. Paul describes?
- ❖ What effects has this love have in your life and relationships?
- ❖ Consider people you know that love in this way and think of how you could grow in a greater and more authentic love for God and for your neighbor.
- ❖ Make a list of concrete actions of love and service you could begin to do during this Holy Year of Mercy that will make those around you feel that they are also loved by God.





## “Rooted and Grounded in Love” (Eph 3:17)

For  
Information  
About becoming a  
Volunteer for the Jubilee:  
volunteers@im.va

Source: Google Images



“Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 10).

### “God chose the lowly and despised of the world...”

In his Bull of Induction for the Jubilee Year, Pope Francis said, “It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It will reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty” (n.15).

So many times, just like St. Paul, we too go around with scales on our eyes that do not allow us to see the needs of our brothers and sisters who are suffering in our midst. We live in a, as Pope Francis has called it, “throwaway culture.” This consumerist and utilitarian society with its ambitious drives and materialist values often discards human persons for the sake of economic progress and production.

Human dignity is greatly ignored and violated; and the most affected ones are usually the poorest and the weakest. Those who do not have enough economic means or access to technological progress. Since the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has

denounced and condemned such individualistic, egotistic and inhumane attitude. Calling the whole Church and the world to a greater awareness and cooperation with those who are in greater poverty, distress, and loneliness.

As he has expressed, it is his desire that during this Jubilee of Mercy the Church reflect with renewed luminosity the merciful face of Christ. This Holy Year is then, an invitation to examine our fraternal love and to increase our charitable response by courageously engaging in works of mercy that will cooperate in the construction of a civilization of love and life.

God’s mercy, besides being a great gift of his redeeming love for us, is also a call to go out of ourselves and love our neighbors with the same love and forgiveness with which God loves us. Doing so we will certainly, “Let mutual love continue” ( Heb 13: 1).

“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did it for me” (Mt 25: 40).

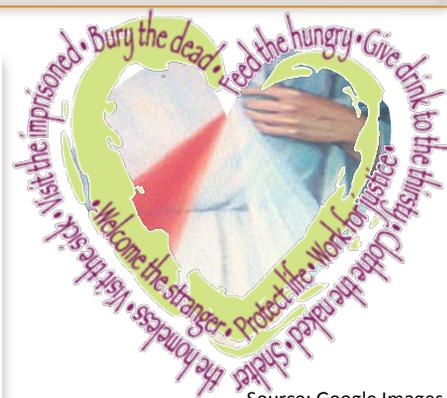
### Take this Jubilee Year to make God’s love concrete!

#### Corporal Works of Mercy:

- Feed the hungry.
- Give drink to the thirsty.
- Shelter the homeless.
- Clothe the naked.
- Care for the sick.
- Help the imprisoned.
- Bury the dead.

#### Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- Share knowledge.
- Give advise to those who need it.
- Comfort those who suffer.
- Be patient with others.
- Forgive those who hurt you.
- Give correction to those who need it.
- Pray for the living and the dead.



Source: Google Images