



The Jubilee Year of Mercy

Drawn from

“Misericordiae Vultus”
(The face of Mercy)

The Bull of Indiction of
Pope Francis
11 April 2015

KNIGHTS OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS AUSTRALIA

FORMATION PROGRAMME FOR 2016

Bible quotes are generally taken from the Jerusalem Bible

Prepared by
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Emeritus Archbishop of Perth

INTRODUCTION

THE LOGO

By Mark I Rupnik SJ



The Son takes on his shoulders the lost soul. He has the power to change lives.

His eyes are merged with the man's eyes – Christ sees with the eyes of Adam, and Adam sees with the eyes of Christ.

The image is within a mandorla (the shape of an almond) of three concentric ovals, a movement that goes deep to the centre.

A mandorla is formed by the overlap of two circles, divine and human as in Christ.

Divinity and humanity come together through the mercy of God.

INDULGENCES

An Indulgence may be received personally by a pilgrimage through a Holy Door. An indulgence is a spiritual action freeing us from the consequences of sin. Sin usually leaves its mark, even though forgiven, a mark that is the effect on us of sin. Conditions for receiving the Indulgence include prayers for the Pope and for his intentions, a Creed and Confession and Holy Communion in the context of the pilgrimage to the Holy Door, not necessarily on the same day. This indulgence can be received only once a day.

Archbishop Barry J. Hickey
Emeritus Archbishop of Perth
Feb 2016

JUBILEE PRAYER

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 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.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

From the Order of Prayers





FIRST SESSION

Theme: THE JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY

Step 1: OPENING PRAYER (as for the Order Prayers)

Step 2: NOTES (to be read aloud)

On Easter Sunday 2015, Pope Francis declared that 2016 would be a Jubilee Year of Mercy. It began on 8 December 2015, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and will conclude on 20 November 2016, the Feast of Christ the King.

For centuries in the history of the Church, Popes have announced many Jubilees. This practice follows the Jewish custom of declaring a Jubilee every 50 years in order to restore justice, to forgive debts and to redistribute land. The number seven is the number of completion in the Jewish Tradition. God completed creation on the seventh day. The Jubilee was called after the completion of seven years by seven years, that is, after forty nine years, to celebrate God's Providence and to redress wrongs.

The theme of this Jubilee is Mercy. The Holy Father wants the whole church to reflect on the importance of Mercy in the Good News of Jesus Christ. As Mercy is central to the Redemption, it is necessary for us to experience mercy and learn to be merciful ourselves. In the words of Pope Francis, "Let us allow God to surprise us." (MV. No. 25).

Step 3: SACRED SCRIPTURE (John 8: 2-11) (*to be read aloud*)

At daybreak, Jesus appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them.

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, 'Master this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?' They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, 'If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her'. Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again. When they heard this, they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. He looked up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus 'go away, and don't sin anymore.'

Step 4: SILENT REFLECTION (for a few minutes)

Step 5: READINGS

Misericordiae Vultus No 1 & 2. Pope Francis

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*), after having revealed his name to Moses as "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (*Ex 34:6*), 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. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. *Jn 14:9*). Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of 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.

From the New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, Collegeville 1993

Mercy is the compassionate care for others, which takes on the burden of another as one's own. It is an active quality of the virtue of charity, motivated by love.....

According to Matthew 25: 31-46 mercy will be the quality on which Christians will ultimately be judged.

Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION

Step 7: SHARING (for about 10 minutes)

Step 8: CONCLUSION (by Chairman)

Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS



SECOND SESSION

Theme: THE PENITENTIAL JOURNEY OF LENT

Note to Chairman

This session is designed to be undertaken during Lent 2016 (10 February – 27 March). If Session 1 has not been covered, the notes should be read at the beginning of this session to provide the context for the whole Formation Programme.

Step 1: OPENING PRAYER (as for the Order Prayers)

Step 2: NOTES (*to be read aloud*)

The forty days of Lent recall the forty years the Chosen People travelled through the Sinai Desert before entering the Promised Land. Our forty days of Lent is a penitential journey to Easter. It is a time of prayer, fasting and charity in the hope that our sins will be forgiven and forgotten through the mercy of God. On the journey, we seek to be faithful followers of Jesus. Let us enter fully into this Jubilee Year of Mercy. Let us enter our Holy Door to express our desire to do so.

Step 3: SACRED SCRIPTURE (Matthew 6; 1-6, 16-18) (*to be read aloud*)

'Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win men's admiration. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you prayer, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

When you fast do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

Step 4: SILENT REFLECTION (for a few minutes)

Step 5: READINGS (to be read aloud)

Misericordiae Vultus No. 4. Pope Francis

We shall cross the threshold of the Holy Door fully confident that the strength of the Risen Lord, who constantly supports us on our pilgrim way, will sustain us. May the Holy Spirit, who guides the steps of believers in cooperating with the work of salvation wrought by Christ, lead the way and support the People of God so that they may contemplate the face of mercy.

Pastoral Letter, Rev T Costelloe SDB, Perth.

“If it is true that our sins distance us from God in that this is our doing and never God’s – it is also true that God is like the Good Shepherd in the Gospels, who never tires of going in search of us, ready to place us on his shoulders and bring us back – to our true selves, to each other and to God.

Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION

Step 7: SHARING (for about 10 minutes)

Step 8: CONCLUSION (by Chairman)

Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS

JUBILEE PRAYER

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 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.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

From the Order of Prayers



THIRD SESSION

Theme: THE WORD OF GOD

Step 1: OPENING PRAYER (as for the Order Prayers)

Step 2: NOTES (to be read aloud)

To understand the gift and blessing of mercy we must go to the pages of Holy Scripture where God's presence among the people is best summed up as mercy. The word mercy (in Hebrew: *hesed*) appears in different ways when translated into Greek. It is compassion, forgiveness, grace, healing and the touch of God. It is the outpouring of God's love for his people, which touches their lives in many ways. We experience God's love in all of these ways. It draws us to a deeper conversion and an abandonment of selfishness.

To be formed by God's written Word we must listen with the heart. An intellectual understanding of Scripture, its authors, its historical location, its sources or its literary qualities is useful but to allow our hearts to be touched we must listen, quietly and receptively, like Mary who "kept all these things in her heart." Listen, reflect, pray and respond. Faith comes from hearing – as St Paul said in Romans 10:17.

Step 3: SACRED SCRIPTURE (*to be read aloud*)

There are beautiful psalms of mercy. A psalm is one of the Hebrew songs of praise, 150 in number, used for private and Temple worship. They express to God the full range of human emotions and calls for mercy. One such psalm is included below as part of our prayer.

Psalms 25, 26, 40, 50 / 51, 69, 79, 106 and 119 all contain pleas for mercy.

Psalms 50 / 51 is a favourite with many people. It begins...

"Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness, in your compassion blot out my offence. O wash me more and more from my guilt and cleanse me from my sin."

Jesus is the face of the Father's mercy, as we read in "Misericordiae Vultus". We see Jesus' mercy throughout the Gospels again and again, in his parables like the Lost Sheep (Mt 18:12-14) and Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-20), but also in his actions, towards the woman taken in adultery (John 8:3), to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7), the Good Thief on the cross (Luke 23:43) and to Peter at the resurrection (John 21: 15-17).

Listen to his words –

(Mt 18:22) Peter went up to him and said "Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times? Jesus answered, "Not seven, I tell you, but seventy times seven".

Step 4: SILENT REFLECTION (for a few minutes)

Step 5: READINGS (to be read aloud)

Misericordiae Vultus No. 6. Pope Francis

“Patient and merciful.” These words often go together in the Old Testament to describe God’s nature. His being merciful is concretely demonstrated in his many actions throughout the history of salvation where his goodness prevails over punishment and destruction. In a special way the Psalms bring to the fore the grandeur of his merciful action: “He forgives all your iniquity, he heals all your diseases, he redeems your life from the pit, he crowns you with steadfast love and mercy” (Ps 103:3-4). Another psalm, in an even more explicit way, attests to the concrete signs of his mercy: “He executes justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin” (Ps 146:7-9). Here are some other expressions of the Psalmist: “He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds... The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, he casts the wicked to the ground” (Ps 147:3, 6). In short, the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a “visceral” love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy.

Mercy. Walter Kasper, Paulist Press 2014

The psalms above all provide compelling proof against the commonly raised assertion that the God of the Old Testament is a jealous God of vengeance and wrath. Rather, the God of the Old Testament, from the Book of Exodus to the Book of Psalms, is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.” (Ps 145:8)

Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION

Step 7: SHARING (for about 10 minutes)

Step 8: CONCLUSION (by Chairman)

Step 9: PRAYER

Psalm 115

Leader: O give thanks to the Lord for he is good.

Response: For his love endures forever.

Leader: Give thanks to the God of God

Response: For his love endures forever

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord of Lord

Response: For his love endures forever

Leader: It was he who made the great light

Response: For his love endures forever

Leader: The sun to rule in the day

Response: For his love endures forever

Leader: **The moon and stars in the night**
Response: For his love endures forever
Leader: **He let Israel inherit their land**
Response: For his love endures forever
Leader: **On his servant, their land he bestowed**
Response: For his love endures forever
Leader: **He remembered us in our distress**
Response: For his love endures forever

CONCLUDING PRAYER

From the Order of Prayers



FOURTH SESSION

Theme: THE CALL OF VATICAN II

Step 1: OPENING PRAYER (as for the Order of Prayers)

Step 2: NOTES (to be read aloud)

It is 50 years since the end of the Second Vatican Council. It concluded in 1965. The Council made it clear that the Church is not just the hierarchy. All the baptized make up the Church. We are the Church. We act in the name of the Church when we take Jesus Christ as our Teacher and Saviour. We become his witnesses and at the same time witnesses on behalf of the Church to the world around us.

Consequently, if the church has the call to show mercy so do we. We become witnesses to the mercy of God in our daily lives, and we do so in the name of the Church. In the midst of the world's hardness, cruelty, violence, selfishness, drive for possessions, callous regard for the weak and the poor, we are to be witnesses to God's mercy in the way we act and speak.

Step 3: SACRED SCRIPTURE (*to be read aloud*)

Jesus prays for his disciples **John 17: 15 – 23**

I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake, I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth. I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realize that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.

John 15:16

'You did not choose me, no, I chose you, and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last.'

Step 4: SILENT REFLECTION (for a few minutes)

Step 5: READINGS (*to be read aloud*)

Misericordiae Vultus No. 8. Pope Francis

Jesus, seeing the crowds of people who followed him, realized that they were tired and exhausted, lost and without a guide, and he felt deep compassion for them (cf. Mt 9:36). On the basis of this compassionate love, he healed the sick who were presented to him (cf. Mt 14:14), and with just a few loaves of bread and fish he satisfied the enormous crowd (cf. Mt 15:37). What moved Jesus in all of these situations was nothing other than mercy, with which he read the hearts of those he encountered and responded to their deepest need.

The Gaze of Mercy. R Cantalmassa, San Paolo 2015

The link between the theme of mercy and the Second Vatican Council is anything but arbitrary or minor. St John XXIII, in his opening address for the council on October 11, 1962, pointed to mercy as the new approach in the council's style: "The Church has always opposed ... errors (throughout the ages). Frequently she has condemned them with the greatest severity. Nowadays, however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity."

Council Decree on the Lay Apostolate. 1965. No 6.

At a time when new questions are being put and when grave errors aiming at undermining religion, the moral order and human society itself are rampant, the Council appeals to the laity to take a more active part, according to their talents and knowledge, and in fidelity to the mind of the Church, in the explanation and defence of Christian principles and in the correct application of them to the problems of our times.

Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION

Step 7: SHARING (for about 10 minutes)

Step 8: CONCLUSION (by Chairman)

Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS

PRAYER (from the Y.C.W. International Prayer)

Lord Jesus, I thank you for this day.

I offer you all my work, my hopes and struggles, my joys and sorrows.

Help me and all my fellow workers to think like you, to work with you, to live in you.

Help me to love you with all my heart and serve you with all my strength.

May your kingdom come in all our places of work, study and leisure, and in all our homes.

Give me the courage to challenge what is wrong and keep me faithful to you.

May those who have suffered for what is right and all who have died share the happiness of your kingdom for ever.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

From the Order of Prayers



FIFTH SESSION

Theme: BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Step 1: OPENING PRAYER (as for the Order Prayers)

Step 2: NOTES (*to be read aloud*)

St Thomas Aquinas notes that mercy is not weakness but evidence of God's power. It is easy to demand justice, but not so easy to go beyond justice and show mercy, especially if it requires forgiveness and putting aside resentment or desire for revenge. Mercy is a virtue, requiring strength of character.

Scripture calls merciful people "blessed" or "happy". There is an inner peace in showing mercy. Perhaps many of us need to go on a personal spiritual journey before we can truly be called a merciful person.

This journey may require considerable change within. It may also require a conversion. We may feel we are living a fairly good life but we need to look deeper to recognize our need for conversion. We need to look at things like lack of compassion, hardness of heart, the refusal to forgive, selfishness, lust, addictions, the desire to dominate others. We need to be free of these things, through prayer and the grace of the Risen Lord, before we can call ourselves truly merciful.

Step 3: SACRED SCRIPTURE (*Matthew 5: 1-12*)

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you. "

Step 4: SILENT REFLECTION (for a few minutes)

Step 5: READINGS (*to be read aloud*)

Misericordiae Vultus No. 9. Pope Francis

Pardoning offences becomes the clearest expression of merciful love, and for us Christians it is an imperative from which we cannot excuse ourselves. At times, how hard it seems to forgive! And yet pardon is the instrument placed into our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart. To let go of anger, wrath, violence, and revenge are necessary conditions to living joyfully. Let us therefore heed the Apostle's exhortation: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Eph 4:26).

Corporal Works of Mercy (drawn from Scripture)

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the sick
- Ransom captives
- Bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

- Instruct the ignorant
- Counsel the doubtful
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Admonish the sinner
- Gladly forgive injuries
- Bear wrongs patiently
- Pray for the living and the dead

Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION

Step 7: SHARING (for about 10 minutes)

Step 8: CONCLUSION (by Chairman)

Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS

Prayer from 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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. Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

From the Order of Prayers



SIXTH SESSION

Theme: THE WORKS OF MERCY

A) Justice and Mercy

B) The Family and Mercy

Step 1: OPENING PRAYER (as for the Order of Prayers)

Step 2: NOTES (to be read aloud)

Two of the works of mercy are considered here;

- a) Justice and mercy
- b) The family and mercy

A. JUSTICE AND MERCY

These are sometimes taken as opposites as if one can dispense either one or the other, but not both. In God's eyes, both are the fruits of love – justice in terms of fairness, and mercy, which goes beyond justice. Civil justice can sometimes be very punitive, even barbaric. Was justice done by Jesus in the case of the women taken in adultery? Jesus' action shows how God treats sinners, not with punishment but with a call to repentance.

Scripture speaks of justice in other ways too. St Paul says we are justified, made just, by the Cross of Christ.

It also speaks of a final justice when we must render an account of ourselves at the last judgment.

Step 3: SACRED SCRIPTURE (to be read aloud)

(Romans 3: 21-25)

God's justice that was made known through the Law and the Prophets has now been revealed outside the Law, since it is the same justice of God that comes through faith to everyone, Jew and pagan alike, who believes in Jesus Christ. Both Jew and pagan sinned and forfeited God's glory, and both are justified through the free gift of his grace by being redeemed in Christ Jesus who was appointed by God to sacrifice his life so as to win reconciliation through faith.

(Romans 2: 6-8)

He will repay each one as his works deserve. For those who sought renown and honour and immortality by always doing good there will be eternal life; for the unsubmitive who refused to take truth for their guide and took depravity instead, there will be anger and fury.

Step 4: SILENT REFLECTION (for a few minutes)

Step 5: READINGS *(to be read aloud)*

Misericordiae Vultus No. 5. Pope Francis

How much I desire that the year to come 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!

The Gaze of Mercy. R Cantalmessa. P 178

The opposite of mercy is not justice, it is vengeance.

When someone criticized Abraham Lincoln for his leniency toward his political enemies, he is said to have replied, "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends."

B. THE FAMILY AND MERCY

Step 2: NOTES *(to be read aloud)*

As we have received God's mercy ourselves and become free from the condemnation of sin by the Cross of Christ, we must show that kind of mercy to others.

Obviously, the first to receive that healing mercy is our own family.

We rightly speak of family love. It must be shown in action. Misbehavior by children, hurtful actions between husband and wife, must be resolved by the exercise of mercy and forgiveness. This is not simple. Some may not accept they are at fault nor want to forgive even when forgiven themselves. The exercise of mercy means that one does not continue to bear grudges, nor harbor resentment, jealousy, thoughts of revenge or place limits on forgiveness. We need to look within to see whether our heart has been hardened by bitterness or stubbornness, by fear of losing power and control. Many marriages break up over these things. Only by bringing to bear the power of the special graces of the Sacrament of Marriage will soften our heart and restore peace.

Step 3: SACRED SCRIPTURE (Colossians 3: 12-17) *(to be read aloud)*

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Step 4: SILENT REFLECTION

Step 5: READINGS (*to be read aloud*)

Misericordiae Vultus No. 9. Pope Francis

The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible; that is, he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. This is the path, which the merciful love of Christians must also travel. As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other.

Step 10: SHARING (for about 10 minutes)

Step 11: CONCLUSION (by Chairman)

Step 12: PRAYER

Repeat three times –

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

(Divine Mercy Novena)

Step 13: CLOSING PRAYERS (from the Order of Prayers)



SEVENTH SESSION

Theme: EVANGELIZATION AND MERCY

A) The Lost Sheep

B) Mercy and the Poor

Step 1: OPENING PRAYER (as for the Order of Prayers)

A. THE LOST SHEEP

Step 2: NOTES (to be read aloud)

Pope Francis has surprised the world by refusing to condemn sinners or those who have lapsed from the Faith. What is he trying to say to us? Surely sin must be condemned, like murder, child abuse, violence, prostitution, slavery, abortion and homosexual acts.

The condemnation of these terrible sins is certainly part of the Church's mission. Pope Francis has been firm on all these sins. He has also expressed the view that if you want to reach those who commit these sins you must approach them not with condemnation but with a genuine desire to introduce them to Christ who will change their lives. Jesus was criticized for mixing with sinners. He knew what he was doing. Look at Zaccheus.

Step 3: SACRED SCRIPTURE (*Luke 19: 1-10*)

Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the town when a man whose name was Zacchaeus made his appearance; he was one of the senior tax collectors and a wealthy man. He was anxious to see what kind of man Jesus was, but he was too short and could not see him for the crowd; so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus who was to pass that way. When Jesus reached the spot he looked up and spoke to him: 'Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry, because I must stay at your house today.' And he hurried down and welcomed him joyfully. They all complained when they saw what was happening. 'He has gone to say at a sinner's house' they said. But Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to the Lord, 'Look sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times the amount'. And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek out and save what was lost'.

Step 4: SILENT REFLECTION (for a few minutes)

Step 5: READINGS

Misericordiae Vultus No. 9. Pope Francis

In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy. We know these parables well, three in particular: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the father with two sons (cf. Lk 15:1-32). In these parables, God is always presented as full of joy, especially when he pardons. In them we find the core of the Gospel and of our faith, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon.

Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION

B. MERCY AND THE POOR

Step 2: NOTES *(to be read aloud)*

Jesus read aloud in the Synagogue of Nazareth the words Isaiah announcing that they were being fulfilled before their very eyes. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.." (Luke 4: 18) Isaiah was referring both to those who were poor spiritually and needed God, and those who were materially poor and needed the care of the community.

Jesus showed care for the poor, the lepers, the widows, Lazarus at the gate of the rich man, the disabled, the blind and those walking in spiritual darkness. Compassion for the poor has always been a main preoccupation of the Church and still is.

In the early decades after Pentecost the new Christian communities made sure that no one in their group remained poor. They all shared what they had. Do we have poor people in our communities? What is our response?

Political decisions can affect the levels of poverty within a nation, but only mercy and compassion can embrace the poor because it is personal. Mercy must always be personal and genuine.

Step 3: SACRED SCRIPTURE *(to be read aloud)*

(Zecharia 7: 8-10)

The Lord says this: apply the law fairly, and practice kindness and compassion towards each other. Do not oppress the widow and the orphan, the settler and the poor man, and do not secretly plan evil against one another.

(Matthew 25: 34-40)

Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me". Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the King will answer, I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me".

Step 4: SILENT REFLECTION

Step 5: READINGS *(to be read aloud)*

Misericordiae Vultus No. 15. Pope Francis

In this Holy Year, we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes which modern society itself creates. How many uncertain and painful situations there are in the world today! How many are the wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich! During this Jubilee, the Church will be called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care. Let us not fall into humiliating indifference or a monotonous routine that prevents us from discovering what is new! Let us ward off destructive cynicism! Let us 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!

Gaudium et Spes. Vatican II Decree. The Church in the Modern World. 1965. No 1.

“The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.”

Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION

Step 7: SHARING (for about 10 minutes)

Step 8: CONCLUSION (by Chairman)

Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS

JUBILEE PRAYER

From the Order of Prayers



EIGHTH SESSION

Theme: MOTHER OF MERCY

Step 1: OPENING PRAYER (as for the Order of Prayers)

Step 2: NOTES (*to be read aloud*)

Pope Francis tells us that “no one has penetrated the profound mystery of the incarnation like Mary.” From the time she accepted the Divine Will that she bring the Word of God made flesh, Emmanuel, Jesus the Messiah, into the world, she pondered this mystery in her heart. She would have reflected on the words of Simeon that ‘a sword of sorrow would pierce her heart.’ Her son was to shed his blood for the salvation of the world and obtain, as an outpouring of God’s mercy, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life with the Father of all.

Mary is our Ark of the Covenant, bearing in her womb her son Jesus, the reflection of his Father’s mercy, and the Presence of God in the world.

As we invoke her as Mother of Mercy, we know she loves all those for whom her son has died. She has compassion for sinners and those carrying heavy burdens and she prays for them to her Son. She must be part of our lives too.

Step 3: SACRED SCRIPTURE (*to be read aloud*)

(Luke 2: 34-35)

Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.’

(John 2: 5)

His mother said to the servants ‘Do what he tells you.’

(Luke 1: 46 – 56)

And Mary said:

‘My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my savior; because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid. Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me.

Holy is his name, and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him. He has shown the power of his arm, he has routed the proud of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly.

The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy – according to the promise he made to our ancestors – of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.’

Step 4: SILENT REFLECTION (for a few minutes)

Step 5: READINGS (to be read aloud)

Misericordiae Vultus No. 24. Pope Francis

My thoughts now turn to the Mother of Mercy.

The Mother of the Crucified and Risen One has entered the sanctuary of divine mercy because she participated intimately in the mystery of His love.

At the foot of the Cross, Mary, together with John, the disciple of love, witnessed the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus. This supreme expression of mercy towards those who crucified him show us the point to which the mercy of God can reach.

Step 6: SILENT REFLECTION

Step 7: SHARING (for about 10 minutes)

Step 8: CONCLUSION (by Chairman)

Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS

**SALVE REGINA
Hail, Holy Queen**

Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears! Turn, then, O most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V- Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

R- That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God, by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit you prepared the body and soul of Mary, glorious Virgin and Mother, to become the worthy dwelling place of the Son; grant that by her gracious intercession, in whose commemoration we rejoice, we may be delivered from present evils and from everlasting death. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER (by Chairman)

From the Order of Prayers