

Dear Friends,

Greetings in the name of our Merciful God!

For the last two years, we had been preparing monthly reflections based on the six pillars of our movement; we had a scripture passage, a reflection material for everyone in the movement and a teaching material for the Households. We prepared the teaching material assuming that those who gathered in a Household would have gone through the reflection material prior to the gathering. But in practice, we found that most of them were reading the reflections only at the time of Household gatherings. We wanted to repeat the reflections on the pillars from January 2016 onwards. However, considering the importance of the 'Jubilee Year of Mercy', we are going to have the monthly scripture passage and reflections based on the theme of Mercy. We will not be preparing a teaching material – the reflection material itself should help you in preparing teachings for the household gatherings. The next year's reflections will comprise of 5 parts .

1. Monthly Scripture: Our movement will be united in reflecting on the scripture – we suggest one verse for reflection for the whole month. We are developing an App for mobile phones and computers so that you can use it as a wall paper or lock screen, which will be automatically updated every month.

2. Reflection: The monthly scripture passages will be based on the 8 parables of mercy recommended by the Pontifical Council for New Evangelisation and 4 scripture passages for Lectio Divina. "Everything in Him speaks of Mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion" (MV 8) – It is hoped that these parables will help us to have a deeper understanding and experience of His merciful love and live out the Holy Year of Mercy in a way that witnesses to the faith we profess.

3. Saint's quote: Pope Francis wrote "Our prayer also extends to the saints and blessed ones who made divine mercy their mission in life" (MV 24). In this section, we take quotes of Saints who entered into the "depths of mercy" in a "normative" and "exemplary" way. We hope the meditation on these words will become a prayer of intercession to fully live out this Jubilee in unwavering certainty and confidence in the merciful love of the Father.

4. Pope's quote: In *Misericordiae Vultrus*, Pope Francis cites three Popes highlighting the special interest each had concerning the theme of mercy – Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II. Pope John XXIII opened the second Vatican council saying "Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity.... The Catholic Church, as she holds high the torch of Catholic truth at this Ecumenical Council wants to show herself a loving mother to all: patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness toward her separated children". Pope Francis continues the teaching of his predecessors this year. We hope the words of the Popes will help us in carrying out our responsibility to be credible witnesses to the Gospel.

5. Acts of mercy: 'Preferential love and option for the poor' is a beautiful expression which offers a precious synthesis on the acts of mercy. Pope Francis has affirmed that this expression should not be an optional one, but a fundamental attitude of the Church; because *God shows the poor his Mercy first* (EG n.23). But how can the more fortunate people who do not live in marginalised conditions realize this option and love for the poor as that of the works of Mercy? Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Letter, *Octogesima Adveniens* says, "the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others" (n.23). The fourteen corporal and spiritual acts of Mercy correspond to four classes of human poverty - physical or economical poverty, cultural poverty, social poverty and spiritual poverty. Further reflection shows that we are called to become effective signs of the Father's Mercy, for the Mercy of God is not an abstract idea but a concrete reality! (cf n. 6). As we step into this Jubilee year, let us make sure that our works of Mercy are never limited to these specified fourteen acts; rather let us see and respond to the lack of resources and momentary needs (both external and internal) of people around us. Let us ask for grace to transform those moments of Mercy into heavenly opportunities of finding Christ. "In each of these 'little ones,' Christ himself is present".

We sincerely pray that this year will be "An extraordinary moment of Grace and Spiritual Renewal" (MV n 3) in our lives and we will be more effective missionaries in sharing the merciful love and care of the Heavenly Father who, with the Son and through the work of the Holy spirit, "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4).

We wish you all the blessings of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy!

The Jesus Youth International Formation Team

"Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful"

(Lk 6: 36)



Reflection:

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. ¹

Beginning from and with creation, and throughout history, God has revealed His mercy to human beings unceasingly. The mercy of God is endless and limitless. 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. ²

The mercy of God is not an abstract theory or an unattainable dream. It is so very real and is the character of God, who manifests mercy through the person of Jesus. Throughout his public life, Jesus personifies mercy in all his words and deeds. From healing of sickness (Mk.1:41) to comforting and forgiving sinners (Lk 7:41), the character and acts of mercy are revealed many times.

Jesus speaks about the mercy through parables and mercy is described in terms of a three-way relationship. We can refer to this three persons as "he, I, and the other." This threefold relationship in the parables of mercy is intentional. This structure implies a message we cannot overlook. The mercy of God is often linked to the mercy displayed by human beings and does not occur in a vacuum or merely in terms of "my" relationship to God. "Be merciful, even as [and because] your Father is merciful" (Lk 6: 36) is the central architectural beam of mercy in parable form.

Mercy is not a natural virtue that depends on a person's character; the most virtuous person is not necessarily more merciful than someone else. Instead mercy is a question of an inner disposition that matures as one spend time with Jesus.

As we enter the year of mercy, let us be mindful of Jesus's words that gently urges to be merciful just as the Father is merciful. In other words, Jesus is calling all of us once again to immerse ourselves in the Trinitarian life and embrace the merciful character of God. Let us open ourselves to the unending and limitless mercy of God, be transformed by this grace and become merciful children of a merciful Father.

¹ Pope Francis. (n.d.). *Misericordiae Vultus*.

² Pope Francis. (n.d.). *Misericordiae Vultus*.



Saint's quote:

"The Good Lord knows everything; even before you make your confession he already knows that you will sin again and yet he forgives you. How great is the Love of our God, who goes so far as to voluntarily forget the future, in order to forgive us" (St. John Vianney)



Pope's quote

Jesus' attitude is striking: we do not hear the words of scorn, we do not hear words of condemnation, but only words of love, of mercy, which are an invitation to conversation. "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again." Ah! Brothers and Sisters, God's face is the face of a merciful father who is always patient. Have you thought about God's patience, the patience He has with each one of us? That is His mercy. He always has patience, patience with us, He understands us, He waits for us, He does not tire of forgiving us if we are able to return to Him with a contrite heart. "Great is God's mercy," says the Psalm.

Pope Francis, , Angelus on March 17, 2013



Acts of Mercy : Pardon the offences, Feed the hungry, Give drink to the thirst

As we step on the Jubilee year of Mercy, the Catholic Church offers a beautiful path through which merciful love of Christians must travel - The love for our enemies. "If you cannot love the one who hate you, you cannot be called a Christian", says St.Clement. Being merciful and kind towards the wicked and the ungrateful is not only an action of the Father, but it is a criterion for ascertaining that we are His children. Seeking Lord's Mercy, let us closely examine our intentions, attitudes, and behaviours that we show in our daily life. Let's pray for a spirit of forgiveness and for a loving concern for the people around us. Let this desire for the well being of others make us conscious and responsible to respond to the scarcity and lack of resources of the poor and needy.

Mother Mary, Mother of Mercy, pray for us. Hail Mary...

