



IGNATIAN FOOTPRINTS



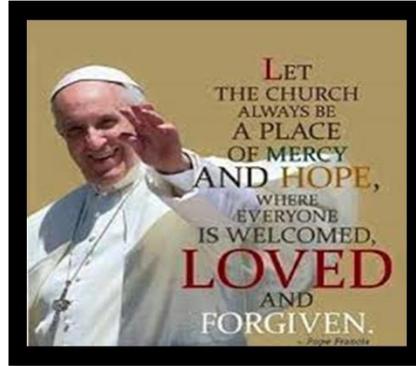
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*From the
Editor's Desk*

"The Catholic Church has declared the year 2016 as 'Jubilee Year of Mercy'. As recorded in the Old Testament, it was Jewish custom to write off/ forgive debts every fiftieth years and start afresh. This practice is still in vogue today in the civil law, as law of limitation. Keeping this in mind, there is a need for all of us to off load the burdens of the past, individually and collectively as church and society, by reflecting on the past deeds and misdeeds; thus bring about reconciliation, close old accounts, heal wounds of hurt, disappointments, failures, hatred and start afresh with forgiveness, compassion and empathy in our heart.

We are called to live according to the Word of God - The Holy Bible. We say that the Bible is a Love Story, the story of God's steadfast and abounding love for the humankind. This unconditional love has been revealed to us from the encounter of Adam and Eve with God in the Garden of Eden after the consumption of forbidden fruit. The various parables narrated by Jesus and the Last Words from the Cross reveal to us the Merciful Heart of God our father, who is the ocean of love. Therefore, we who are created in His own image and likeness are also called to

follow our father in heaven, by imitating our brother Jesus Christ. We can be merciful to one another only when we realize that God has been abundantly merciful to us.



The Jubilee Year of Mercy

Fr. Ralph D'Costa, S.J.

To whom do we go for comfort or a cheering word when we are hurt, or when we have done something wrong? Is it not to our mother? Do we not expect from her acceptance, forgiveness and understanding? And so, Pope Francis has called for a Jubilee Year of Mercy when he invites all humanity because of its sinfulness and rejection of God's love to go to God for mercy, forgiveness and acceptance. Because we are all sinners and have fallen short of our call and the goal set for us to be God's children God our Father calls us to return home to his loving acceptance and embrace. This is the maternal aspect of God, our Father, and God of tenderness, mercy and compassion. This dimension of

God seems quite distant from our traditional image of God, as we are accustomed to see Him as a Father strong and strict in having us obey Him, and severe as a judge who punishes our wrong doing. Yet in the Word of God, both in the Old and New Testaments God reveals Himself under both aspects, with perhaps the emphasis on his mercy, compassion, forgiveness and will to draw us into his eternal life; the maternal qualities of the mother who is life giving and protective and formative.

A few examples from the Old Testament: God is the one who knew us even before we were and brought us into being out of his love and assures us that he will never forget us "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you."(Is 49:15), "and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees, As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you" (Is 66:12).



Thank you Fr John and welcome Fr Arun

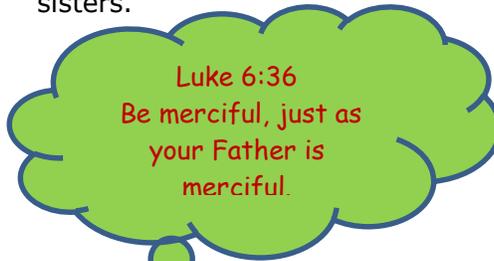
Even when we are faithless and wander from him he pleads with us "Return, O faithless children" (Jer 3:14), "that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom." (Is 66:11). This helps us to see God in his maternal dimension, because God who is pure Spirit and Lord of all carries in the perfection of His being both what we see as paternal and maternal



Celebrating Easter in giving and sharing in the true spirit of jubilee of mercy

qualities. Accustomed to images drawn from a patriarchal society perhaps and strengthened by a male chauvinism, our picture of God has neglected, if not rejected, the maternal dimensions of God and hence developed in us a relationship with God that generates awe, respect and fear, rather than love and tenderness. This Jubilee Year of Mercy is an invitation to us to reflect more deeply on the maternal qualities of our God so that our approach to Him and to one another be truly that of the child to the one who loves his children and his family with tenderness, understanding and compassion and we become "merciful as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36), in the love towards our Father and to one

another, our brothers and sisters.



Mercy, in the Bible, is the heartfelt compassion for the misery of another person which makes us to help as much as possible. (St Augustine) We see this best in God's self-revelation to Moses in the burning bush Ex 3:7-10; 19:4-6; 34:6-7. Here is God who in the New Testament is just to himself and so can be simply merciful with the sinner who repents and cries for redemption. So mercy is God's justice and the name of our God. God by his holiness, we should fear; but He for his mercy is attractive and fascinating. It is the meeting of compassion and fidelity. Compassion is the instinctive drawing of one's being for another that springs in one's heart and is readily translated into action, e.g. in a tragic event, or the pardoning of an offence. Fidelity is to be the foundation of communion with the other; a freely willed, conscious goodness toward another in need. So mercy is composed of tenderness, pity, compassion, clemency, goodness, fidelity and even favour. As such it is the manifestation of God's tenderness occasioned by human misery of any sort.



We see the mercy of God when He affirms himself as the protector of the poor, the widow and the orphan (Dt 10:18). The most perfect and detailed description of this is seen in the Exodus event – God liberating a slave people (Ex 2:23-25) from the tyrannical oppression of the Egyptian overlords and guiding them into freedom, security and prosperity, giving them in all this a dignity and an identity of being his own people. Their repeated abandonment of Him and backslidings into idolatry is responded to in a tenderness and favour towards them as one who is slow to anger and abounding in mercy, faithful in showing his kindness, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin. (Ex 34:6-7). Justice and mercy are not contradictory, but both are manifestations of a love that is directed to a life-giving conversion of the sinner in return to the Father who seeks "not the death of the sinner but that he be converted and live" (cf. Ez 18:32).



Catechism children praising God

The year of mercy (Lev ch 25) is God's gift to everyone to feel more intimately the love of this God, a Father who welcomes everyone and excludes no one. It helps us remind ourselves that mercy is the essence of the Church's

proclamation to the world (Lk 4:18-21), and to offer every believer a tangible instrument of the tenderness of God, It is a year to replenish the hope that corruption will cease in us and in everyone so that we begin to change our lives allowing our hearts to be touched by the mercy of God and make us more sensitive towards the poor, the dispossessed, the deprived of their identity, their true human dignity, their property, their prosperity, their feelings and their very lives. God wants everyone of his own human family to experience their belongingness to Him, to one another and the world.



JV team celebrating Easter with the destitutes of Alverna Bhavan

Before Pope Francis several other Popes have spoken on the theme of mercy as central to our faith. In fact Pope John Paul II wrote a whole encyclical on it called "Dives in Misericordia", meaning Rich in Mercy and instituted the feast of Divine Mercy and popularised the devotion to Divine Mercy. Pope St. John XXIII, spoke of the "medicine of Mercy", and of Paul VI identified the spirituality of Vatican II with that of the Good Samaritan. But it is Pope Francis who has brought this theme to the centre of the consciousness of Christians and indeed the whole of humanity.



JV Team thanking Fr John D 'Souza and wishing him well for his new mission

On 13 March 2015, was the second anniversary of the election of Pope Francis. That day the pope took the world by surprise when he announced the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. God's mercy has been at the heart of his own life ever since an extraordinary, mystical experience of it at the age of 17 that has shaped his exercise of ministry as priest, bishop and now pope. On that day the young Jorge Bergoglio was passing in front of a Church on his way to a youth meeting when he decided to pay a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Once inside the Church he saw that there was a priest hearing confessions and on an impulse he decided to go for Confession. When he came out he was a totally different man. He had an experience which he could only put in the words he chose later on as his episcopal motto: "Misericordia et Misericordia", meaning "He had mercy on him and chose him". This has been the central theme of his priestly ministry as a parish priest, as a Bishop, a cardinal and now as pope. Pope Francis has now called the jubilee year to communicate this mercy to a wounded world that is in great need of healing and reconciliation. He linked this jubilee directly to the two assemblies of the Synod of Bishops on the family and is challenging the church to abandon a judgmental and condemnatory attitude towards those who find it difficult to make a success of their marriage and family life or in their dealing with their sexuality. He wants the Church to address the entire spectrum of family situations in the light of God's mercy and to find ways of integration for those who are excluded.

"Embrace in one act the two truths--thine own sin, and God's infinite mercy in Jesus – Christ."
Alexander MacLaren

JUBILEE OF MERCY

Fr. Freddie D'Silva, S.J.

We have begun a Year of the Jubilee of Mercy to reflect on the salient features of mercy, focusing primarily on the theme of the light of Christ's face. Mercy is not an abstract word, but rather a face to recognise, contemplate and serve. The Church has to be a credible sign of mercy: "Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life". The Jubilee Year began on 08 December 2015, the 50th anniversary of the closure of Vatican II and its conclusion will take place on the feast of Christ the King on 20 November day 2016



Pope Francis wants the jubilee celebration of mercy to involve local church communities in every country and to be accessible to the poorest of the poor, to prisoners and those trapped in conflict situations. He has published a document "The Face of Mercy" ("Misericordiae Vultus"), and given the motto "Merciful like the Father". He wants this jubilee to be inclusive, one from which no one feels excluded. He tells us that this holy year is a radical call to the church and individual believers to experience God's mercy and to show mercy in their individual, family, social, professional and community lives through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and thereby respond in concrete ways to all who are wounded and suffering in today's world.

Pope Francis has given us several personal examples showing how to be merciful in daily life. One of his very first acts after being elected Pope was to appoint a former humble Polish priest, as the director of papal charity and gave him the task of reaching out on his behalf to provide concrete assistance to the many poor, hungry, homeless, desperate people in Rome, and to immigrants there and elsewhere. He has had showers and a barber's service installed for the poor and homeless people under the colonnades in St. Peter's

Square and opened a hostel to provide beds for many of them at night. He has organized a visit for them to the Vatican museums free of charge. All this to affirm their dignity as human beings. He has asked every parish in Europe to take in a refugee family and instructed the Vatican's two parishes to do likewise. He has visited prisoners in jails in several countries during his journeys, called for abolition of the death penalty and urged reform of the penal system. He spends much time with the sick, the disabled and terminally ill children. By his personal witness to the Gospel of mercy, the pope is setting an example for the whole church in this holy year—in the first place for his brother bishops, his fellow priests and to all Christians—making clear to everyone that to follow Jesus means to be merciful always.

The motto of the Jubilee is "Merciful like the Father", stressing the need for forgiveness. The theme that is particularly close to the Pope's heart is the works of corporal and spiritual mercy which are to be resumed in order 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". Considering the relationship between justice and mercy, we do not stop at a legalistic view, but rather aim at a path that leads to merciful love.

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Pope Francis wishes that this Year may be "dedicated to living out in our daily lives the mercy which the Father constantly extends to all of us. In this Jubilee Year, let us allow God to surprise us. He never tires of throwing open the doors of his heart and repeats that he loves us and wants to share his love with us. ... In this Jubilee Year, may the Church echo the word of God that resounds strong and clear as a message and a sign of pardon, strength, aid, and love. May she never tire of extending mercy, and be ever patient in offering compassion and comfort. May the Church become the voice of every man and woman, and repeat confidently without end: 'Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they



JV team after a spiritual rejuvenation with Fr Hilario Fernandez



HAPPY FEAST OF
ST. IGNATIUS LOYALA