Rekindling Hope
Rockhampton Diocesan Faith Education and Formation Christmas Newsletter 2015

Editorial  PAT MCDEVITT

Over the last few years we have been privileged to be part of two great spiritual years – the Year of Grace and the Year of Faith. As 2015 comes to a close, we are again being invited – invited to participate in an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in the coming year from 8 December 2015 (The Feast of the Immaculate Conception) to 21 November 2016 (The Feast of Christ the King).

Having these special years is particularly enriching spiritually. In 2012, the Australian Catholic Bishops invited us to “start afresh from Christ” in the Year of Grace, where we were encouraged to contemplate more deeply the face of Christ in order to deepen our relationship with him.

This Year of Grace was intertwined with the Year of Faith which Pope Benedict XVI announced for the universal Church and which commenced in October 2012. During the Year of Faith, we were asked to study and reflect on the documents of Vatican II and on the Catechism of the Catholic Church in order to deepen our knowledge of the faith. So it was with great interest that in 2015, Pope Francis should call an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in 2016. In this coming year, we are invited to come to a deeper understanding of God’s mercy and to be touched by this mercy, and, in turn, to share this mercy with others – be merciful like the Father.

In the bull, Misericordiae Vultus (The Face of Mercy) in which Pope Francis proclaimed the Jubilee of Mercy, he wrote:

Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy. . . . Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father. Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions and his entire person reveals the mercy of God. (MV1)

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 us, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness. (MV2)

The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person. . . . It is absolutely essential for the Church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy. Her language and her gestures must transmit mercy, so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father. (MV12)

As a way of entering into this Year of Mercy, Pope Francis advises that we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way it is possible to contemplate God’s mercy and adopt it as our life style. (MV13) Particular focus is to be given to the Psalms and Parables of Mercy.

The practice of pilgrimage has a special place in the Holy Year because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life. The Pope commends a pilgrimage to the Holy Door in Rome or in any other place in the world eg our own St Joseph’s Cathedral, so that by crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, we will find the strength to embrace God’s mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as the Father has been with us. (MV14) Those confined to home or in prison are not forgotten and alternative arrangements for participation in a pilgrimage have been offered.
Jubilee Indulgence

Pope Francis invites us to live this Jubilee intensely, begging the Father to forgive our sins and to bathe us in His merciful “indulgence”. (MV22) As with all Holy Years there is a Jubilee Indulgence. To experience and obtain this indulgence, we are called to make a brief pilgrimage to the Holy Door, open in every cathedral or in the churches designated by the Diocesan bishop, and in the four Papal Basilicas in Rome, as a sign of the deep desire for true conversion. This moment needs to be linked to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with a reflection on mercy. It will be necessary to accompany these celebrations with the profession of faith and with prayer for the Pope and for his intentions.

(See sections 1471-1473 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church for a fuller explanation of indulgences, available at www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_ces/archive/catechism/p252c2a4)

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**Year of Mercy: RESOURCES**

There are many resources available to help live the Year of Mercy – and more to come! Listed below is a sample of what is currently available in the form of booklets, pamphlets, websites.

**FROM THE CATHEDRAL BOOKSTORE:**
- Mother of Mercy
- A Home Full of Mercy
- A Year of Mercy with Pope Francis
- Year of Mercy Prayer Cards
- God is Always Near: Conversation with the Pope
- Miserericordiae Vultus – Special Edition

**FROM THE MUSTARD SEED BOOKSHOP, SYDNEY:**
- INFORM: Embracing the Year of Mercy, Pamphlet No. 156

**FROM GATHER PROCLAIM BREAK SEND:**

**FROM OUR SUNDAY VISITOR:**

**WEBSITES:**
- The Jubilee Year of Mercy, www.im.va/content/gdmy/en.html
- Archdiocese of Melbourne, www.cam.org.au/evangelisation/Resources/Year-of-Mercy (includes a resources booklet)
- St John Paul II, Dives in Misericordia, w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf-jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia

**APP:**
- The ‘Mercy-ing’ app provides users with a morning inspiration and an evening reflection, to frame their day, attentive to the events, interactions, relationships and circumstances of each day within the context of ‘being Mercy’.
- Download on the App Store
- Get it on Google Play

**Editorial PAT McDEVITT**

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During this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis has expressed a burning desire that Christian people may reflect on the **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 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). (MV15)

Pope Francis has also urged us to live the upcoming season of **Lent** more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God’s mercy – through meditation on Sacred Scripture, participating in the 24 **Hours for the Lord** (4-5 March), receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation (with confessors being a sign of the primacy of mercy always, everywhere and in every situation, no matter what) and the sending out of Missionaries of Mercy. (MV18)

So, as Pope Francis says: in this Jubilee Year, let us allow God to surprise us! (MV25)
Year of Mercy

Prayer

Lord Jesus,
you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,
and have told us that whoever sees you, sees God.

In this the Jubilee Year of Mercy, a year of grace from the Lord,
renew our enthusiasm to live and testify to mercy daily through our words and actions,
remembering the abundant compassionate love shown by you to those in need.

Open our hearts in a new way to those living on the fringes of society,
that we may bring healing love to the most neglected, rejected and abandoned.

Give us the strength to forgive those who offend us,
and to seek forgiveness from those whom we offend.

Send your Spirit upon your Church,
so we can become the visible face of our merciful God in the world.

Through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of Mercy, we ask this of you, Lord Jesus,
who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.

Year of Mercy logo
EXPLANATION

The Year of Mercy motto Merciful Like the Father (Luke, 6:36) serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of the Father who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to give love and forgiveness without measure (Luke6:37-38). The logo presents a small summa theologiae of the theme of mercy and is designed to express the profound way in which the Good Shepherd touches the flesh of humanity. 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 humanity. Every person discovers in Christ one’s own humanity and the future that lies ahead, contemplating, in his gaze, the love of the Father.

The scene, captured within the mandorla (the shape of an almond) calls to mind the two natures of Christ, divine and human. The three concentric ovals, with colours progressively lighter as we move outward, suggest the movement of Christ who carries humanity out of the night of sin and death. Conversely, the depth of the darker colour suggests the impenetrability of the love of the Father who forgives all.

(Adapted from the longer explanation found on the official Year of Mercy website at www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va/content/gdm/en/giubileo/logo)
The Bishop’s Inservice Days will be held again next year and are open to all people involved in ministry in the Diocese, including Adult Faith and RI in State Schools. If you are able to attend one of these days, you are asked to register and to select three workshop sessions that you would like to attend.

**Dates**

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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barcaldine</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>8 February 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emerald</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>9 February 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>11 February 2016</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
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**Registration details**

Online registration will open on **Monday, 18 January 2016** and close on Monday, 1 February 2016. Directions on how to register online will be forwarded in January via email to all adult faith coordinators and catechists who have an email address. You will receive an acknowledgement of registration via email once you have submitted your registration. A copy of the program for each BID centre is attached to this newsletter for your early perusal.

For **catechists without email**, a paper copy of the registration form and program will be forwarded to you by post with this newsletter. Please return the completed registration form to Carolyn Turner by **Friday, 18 December 2015**. A reply paid envelope will be provided. Alternatively, you may fax it to Carolyn at 4931 3700.