



Church, Family, LET US BE MERCIFUL

World Mission Sunday, which will take place this year on October 23, assumes a particular nature. Indeed, a few weeks before the conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy, this day allows us to celebrate missionary activity and also deepen our understanding of the spiritual meaning of mercy. It opens our hearts and minds to a future in which mercy is at the heart of our Christian life. What is mercy? Why mercy? How is this pastoral attitude a sign of God in our world? How can our Christian communities become the “islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference”? Having drawn from the sources of life – the Word of God – now, we must “roll up our sleeves and not stand by and watch passively the suffering of the world.” (Pope Francis, February 15, 2015)

The Church is essentially a missionary extension of God’s mercy. For us who believe in Jesus Christ, our mission is to be the signs of God’s presence and closeness with all people in today’s world. What we receive during the Year of Mercy, we must share with our brothers and sisters so they too may experience God’s love and tenderness, through comfort, forgiveness and hope.

A few days after his election to St. Peter’s pulpit, Pope Francis assured that mercy changes everything: “feeling mercy changes everything. This is the best thing that we can feel: it changes the world. A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just. We need to properly understand this mercy of God, this merciful Father who is so patient...” (Angelus, March 17, 2013). Moreover, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Holy Father developed his thoughts on “mercy”. It appears like a chorus that must be repeated together and offered to the world. Along with Pope Francis, we acknowledge that Canadian society and in particular the Church, has a “great need of mercy today, and it is important that the lay faithful experience it and bring it into different social environments. Move forward! We are living in the age of mercy; this is the age of mercy.” (Angelus, January 11, 2015)

A path of mercy

Everything comes from God’s heart. To be merciful like God the Father, is to become a font of love and tenderness for every person. Mercy shows the paternity of the Father, who becomes sad when his children suffer and sin. God suffers with us, because of our estrangement and our growing indifference. In a great movement of compassion and love, he shows us his “mercy” and he asks us to do the same. Through the priest’s sacerdotal ministry, God forgives us and gives us back our rightful place as sons and daughters. This is what Jesus suggested to us during his life and asks us to do with our brothers and sisters: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful”. (Lk 6:36)



Despite the many violent and hateful events that we experience and endure, we want to promote and experience peace and justice. Mercy is the first step towards that peace and justice. It is the first essential step for a true fraternity. But we must go further than vain wishes and really take that path to be agents of mercy in each “outskirt and frontier” of the world.

Let us be merciful here AND elsewhere: let us feed those who are starving; let us give something to drink to those who are thirsty; let us give clothes to those who are naked; let us welcome the stranger; let us provide our assistance and let us take care of the sick; let us visit the prisoners; let us respect and honor the dead (cf. Mt 25:31-46) Let us not forget to give advice to those who are doubtful; to teach the children; to warn the sinners; to give comfort to the afflicted; to forgive the trespasses; to be patient with the people who harm us and to pray for the living and the dead. God the Father asks us to be merciful and to experience it through joy: “the giver, in generosity... the compassionate, in cheerfulness.” (Rm 12:8)

From mercy to reconciliation

Let us take another step. At the heart of this celebration of the Jubilee of Mercy, there is the sacrament of reconciliation that allows us to experience in the flesh, the greatness of mercy. “The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.” (Pope Francis, Bull of Indiction, n°10) Mercy does not only consist of forgiveness; it also leads to the sacrament of reconciliation in a privileged manner. It is the place where we can experience God’s love which heals our heart wounded by evil.

From reconciliation to fraternal life

A third step leads us from reconciliation to fraternal life. Life is a long pilgrimage that leads us to a life with God. As a sign of that transition, in many dioceses of Canada, “doors of mercy” have been opened. To experience a pilgrimage and to go through a physical door of mercy, it is to proclaim that we want to open the door of our heart to God’s mercy. “Pilgrimage is a particular sign of the Holy Year, because it represents the journey that each of us makes in this life [...] Also, in order to reach the Holy Door in Rome or in any other place in the world, everyone according to his or her ability, must make a pilgrimage. This will be a sign that mercy is also a goal that must be reached and it requires dedication and sacrifice. May pilgrimage encourages us to conversion: 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.” (Bull of Indiction, n°14)

In order to experience the missionary month or the missionary week, in preparation for *World Mission Sunday*, we suggest to you this spiritual Animation Kit on mercy. Whether it is with your parochial, religious or family community, each and everyone can go back to their roots: young people, children and people who are preparing themselves to receive the sacraments. To complete this Animation Kit, we also suggest the following material (available only in French): *The missionary Way of the Cross, the missionary Rosary the dialogues with Jesus the Merciful, the small biblical characters*, and for children, we recommend: *there is no age for prayer*.