

# A Jubilee Year of Mercy

Kristopher W. Seaman

The Jubilee Year of Mercy will begin as Pope Francis opens the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica on December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Church will then take her first steps on a year-long pilgrimage of contemplating God's mercy and living out that mercy to others. The year will close on November 20, 2016, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

The year begins, the pope notes in his bull of indiction, *Misericordiae Vultus* (Face of Mercy), on the fiftieth anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council. Noting the significance of the Council, Pope Francis recalls the use of the words mercy and charity at the beginning and end of the sessions. In his opening address to the Council, Pope John XXIII said, "The Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine on mercy." And in the closing remarks, Pope Paul VI said, "We prefer to point out how charity has been the principal religious feature of this Council."

Pope Francis writes that God has shown mercy throughout salvation history. To Moses, he revealed himself as "a God merciful and gracious." In sending his Son, the Father shows mercy. "Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy," *Misericordiae Vultus* (MV) begins. Explaining God's mercy, the pope states, "being merciful is concretely demonstrated in his many actions throughout the history of salvation where his goodness prevails over punishment and destruction" (MV, 6).

The heart of the Gospel, Francis emphasizes, is mercy. To be a Christian disciple is to be motivated by and to live out of God's deep mercy and compassion. Pope Francis' hope for us during this holy year is to profoundly attune ourselves, and to grow, in God's love and mercy. Both of these are qualities of what it means to be a disciple, to live out faith daily.

Providing characteristics of God's mercy as lived out by Jesus, Pope Francis states, "The signs he works, especially in favour of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion."

Not only is God a God of mercy, but Jesus' life was one marked by daily living out of mercy. God calls all disciples to live out God's mercy as well. Pope Francis emphasizes that, though God is invisible, Jesus makes visible God's mercy. God enters the world not to condemn it but to show deep mercy to all he encounters, Pope Francis notes, but we also need to share and show mercy to all who are marginalized.

Practically, Pope Francis offers some ways to contemplate and live out mercy in the forthcoming holy year. One



Pope Francis: Jesus is the face of God's mercy.

way is to mediate on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Another way is to participate in the Sacrament of Penance. Because living mercy is about opening hearts to one another, Pope Francis suggests growing in our knowledge of other world religions. He also invites us to get to know people of other religious traditions and to understand the ways they pray, worship, and show mercy. Pope Francis, finally, encourages us to pray Mary's prayer of mercy, the *Salve Regina*. All of these practices and prayers allow us to mark this holy year as one focused on being disciples of mercy.

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# Un Año Jubilar de Misericordia

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El Año Jubilar de la Misericordia iniciará en cuanto el papa Francisco abra la Puerta Santa en la Basílica de San Pedro, el 8 de diciembre, solemnidad de la Inmaculada Concepción de la Virgen María. La Iglesia dará los primeros pasos del año, en su largo peregrinar contemplando la misericordia de Dios y practicando la misericordia hacia los demás. El año cerrará el 20 de noviembre de 2016, solemnidad de Cristo, Rey del Universo.

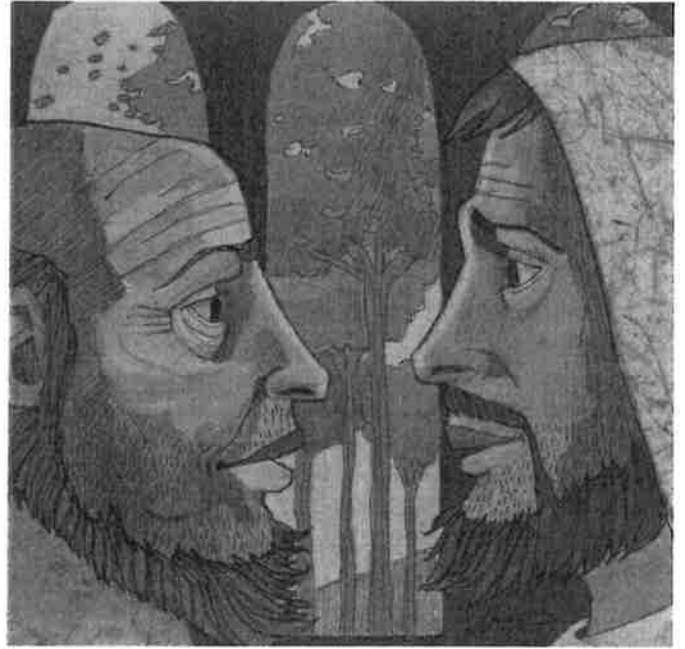
En la bula de inducción, *Misericordiae Vultus* (El rostro de la misericordia), el papa Francisco anota que el año inicia en el quincuagésimo aniversario de la clausura del Concilio Vaticano II. El Papa llama la atención en el uso de las palabras “misericordia” y “caridad” tanto al comienzo como al final de las sesiones conciliares. En el discurso de apertura, el papa Juan XXIII señalaba que “la esposa de Cristo prefiere usar de la medicina de la misericordia” (no. 15), y en el de clausura, el papa Pablo VI decía: “Preferimos resaltar cómo la caridad ha sido el rasgo principal de este Concilio”.

El papa Francisco subraya que Dios ha mostrado su misericordia a lo largo de la historia de la salvación. A Moisés se le reveló como “Dios de misericordia y de gracia”. Al enviar a su Hijo, el Padre muestra su misericordia. “Jesucristo es el rostro de la misericordia del Padre”, inicia diciendo en *Misericordiae Vultus* (MV). Al explicar la misericordia de Dios el Papa afirma que “su ser misericordioso se constata concretamente en tantas acciones a través de la historia de la salvación, donde su bondad prevalece por encima del castigo y la destrucción” (MV, 6).

El corazón del evangelio es la misericordia, enfatiza Francisco. Ser discípulo cristiano es vivir motivado en y por la profunda misericordia y compasión de Dios. El papa Francisco confía en que durante este año santo nos pongamos en profunda sintonía y crezcamos en el amor y la misericordia de Dios. Ambas son cualidades de lo que significa ser discípulo y vivir nuestra fe día con día.

Al ofrecernos las características de la misericordia de Dios realizadas por Jesús, el papa Francisco enseña que “los signos que realiza, sobre todo hacia los pecadores, hacia las personas pobres, excluidas, enfermas y sufrientes, llevan consigo el distintivo de la misericordia. Nada en él es falta de compasión” (MV, 8).

No sólo Dios es un Dios de misericordia, sino que la vida de Jesús se distingue por el ejercicio cotidiano de la misericordia. Dios también llama a cada discípulo a practicar la misericordia. El Papa enfatiza que aunque Dios es invisible, Jesús hace visible la misericordia de Dios. Dios entra al mundo no para condenarlo sino para mostrar profunda misericordia



Papa Francisco: Jesús es el rostro de la misericordia del Padre.

a todos los que él encuentra. El papa Francisco anota que también nosotros necesitamos compartir y mostrar misericordia a todos los marginados.

El papa Francisco también ofrece algunos modos para contemplar y practicar la misericordia en este año venidero. Uno de ellos es mediante las obras corporales y espirituales de misericordia. Otro es participando en el sacramento de la Penitencia. Dado que practicar la misericordia es abrir el corazón a los demás, el Papa sugiere que conozcamos mejor otras religiones. También nos invita a encontrarnos con personas de otras tradiciones religiosas y a comprender sus modos de orar, rendir culto y mostrar misericordia. El papa Francisco, finalmente, nos impulsa a rezar con la *Salve Regina*, plegaria de la misericordia de María. Todas estas prácticas y oraciones dejarán su huella en nosotros si nos concentramos en ser discípulos de la Misericordia.

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# Growing in FAITH™

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December 2015

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Rev. James L. Secora, Pastor

## One Minute Meditations

### St. Thomas Becket

Thomas enjoyed power and riches as a close friend of England's King Henry II, who appointed him chancellor of England. In 1162, King Henry had Thomas named Archbishop of Canterbury. The King tried to pressure Thomas and the other bishops into agreeing to laws allowing the state to regulate Church matters, but Thomas refused. The King exiled Thomas, who fled to France for safety. To protect the Church, Thomas returned to England and was martyred soon after.



### Gratitude and Generosity

Gratitude and generosity often go hand in hand. God is generous in his blessings to us, and often gives us more than we need. Our gratitude inspires us to "give back" to God. Gratitude is the attitude of a generous heart.

*"Do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you"*  
(Mathew 6:3-4).



## Unwrap the gifts from your Father

God loves to give his children gifts, especially at Christmas. *"Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift"* (2 Corinthians 9:15). This year, unwrap your heavenly gifts ...

**Joy** - *"Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel"* (Isaiah 12:6). We are joyful because God gave us the gift of himself. Celebrate by talking about God with others. For example, tell how he has blessed you in the last year.

**Peace** - *"Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which*

*will come to all the people"* (Luke 2:10). Is it possible to live in the world and not be afraid? Yet peace is what the angel advised Zechariah, Mary, and the shepherds at the

Incarnation. Take the angel's advice and "be not afraid." Accept the gift of peace; avoid worry and doubt.

**Love** - When God sent his Son to our rescue, he gave us an incomprehensible gift of love. This gift calls for a response,

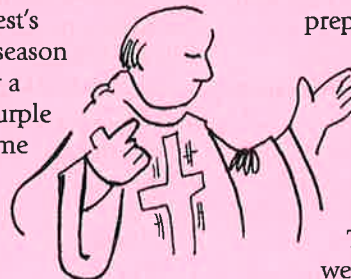
as he invites us to share in his love. *"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God"* (1 John 4:7). Share love at Christmas by spending time, not money, on those you love.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

### Why does the priest wear purple during Advent?

The colors of the priest's vestments highlight a season of the liturgical year or a mystery of the faith. Purple (violet) represents a time of penance and preparation. During three weeks of Advent, the priest wears violet vestments to remind us to



prepare penitentially for Christ's coming. On the third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday), he wears rose vestments to signal the halfway point of Advent. This is a happy time when we anticipate the joy in Christ's coming.



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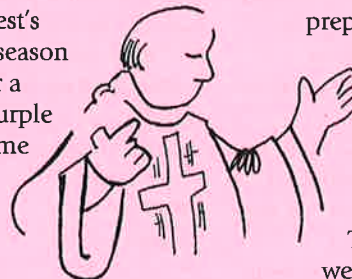
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“My life is tied to the liturgy and the Eucharist,” says Precious Blood Sister Ann Hipp, 95, who entered religious life in 1937. “It’s part of who we are as a community.” As a teacher for 50 years, she shared this love of the Eucharist with her students. At age 70, Sister Ann traded in her chalk for a sewing needle and today still helps craft altar cloths and vestments.

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Photos: (top) Sister Ann Hipp, CPPS, 95; (bottom from left) Brother Anselm Allen, OSB, 76; Sister Geraldine Vogel, CPPS, 84; Sister Luanna Brucks, CPPS, 90; Father Brendan Miller, OSB, 70; Sister Rosemary Zaffuto, ASCJ, 87.  
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“Mi vida está vinculada a la liturgia y a la Eucaristía”, dice la religiosa de la Preciosa Sangre hermana Ann Hipp, de 95 años, quien entró al convento en 1937. “Es parte de lo que somos como comunidad”. Durante los 50 años que estuvo de maestra, ella compartió este amor a la Eucaristía con sus alumnos. A los 70, la hermana Ann cambió la tiza y la pizarra por una aguja de coser y hoy todavía ayuda a confeccionar manteles para el altar y vestimentas litúrgicas.

# Fondo para la Jubilación de Religiosos

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[www.retiredreligious.org](http://www.retiredreligious.org)

Al igual que la hermana Ann, decenas de miles de hermanas, hermanos y sacerdotes de órdenes religiosas ya ancianos han dedicado su vida a compartir su fe. Generaciones de católicos recuerdan con gratitud la labor que ellos desempeñaron en escuelas, hospitales y agencias de servicio social católicos. Sin embargo, años de servir por poca o ninguna paga han resultado en que ahora sus comunidades religiosas carecen de suficientes ahorros para la jubilación y el cuidado de sus ancianos.

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