



28October, 2015

Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy

The Catholic tradition of proclaiming Jubilee years traces back to the 15th century. At first it proclaimed jubilee year every 33 years and later on it began to be proclaimed every 25 years. Of late, the Popes of the recent times have proclaimed such Jubilee years more frequently with the sole purpose of inviting people to repentance and conversion.

Pope Francis on March 13, 2015, (the second anniversary of his election as successor to Peter) through the papal Bull "*Misericordiae Vultus*" (The Face of Mercy), has announced the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy for the Universal Church. The Jubilee year will begin on 8th December 2015, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin and will conclude on 20th November 2016, the Feast of Christ the King.

On this occasion as the universal church prepares for the celebration of the Jubilee of Mercy, a reflection on the Biblical and historical presentations on Mercy and its purpose is befitting. Both the Old Testament and New Testament books of the Bible present God as "the Father, "rich in mercy" (1Eph 2:4). After having revealed his name to Moses as "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex34:6), God has never ceased to show mercy in various ways throughout history. In the "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), when everything had been arranged according to his plan of salvation, he sent his only Son into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to reveal his love for us in a definitive way. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. Jn 14:9). Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.

The Door of Mercy: In the past, during the year of Mercy, people had been asked to visit a Cathedral or a Pilgrimage Center as a sign of their repentance and conversion to Christ. Usually, every such church **dedicates one of its doors as a 'Holy Door'**; it is opened solemnly at the inauguration of the Jubilee year and closed at the conclusion the Jubilee Year. Availing this convention, Pope Francis will open the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica, Rome which will become a 'Door of Mercy'. This Door of Mercy is a special door which Pope Francis has asked to be opened in every diocese during the 'Extraordinary Holy Year' in order to allow the faithful in every corner of the world to experience the mercy of the Father in its fullness.

At this juncture may I remind you that a mere walking through this 'Holy Door' will not grant one forgiveness or divine blessings! It has to be accompanied by an inner desire for conversion of one's heart and a thirst for God's intervention. Walking through this door is very symbolic. Just as the Israelites crossed through the red sea, leaving behind their memories of slavery and other pagan practices so too one who passes through this door should have a real desire for conversion of heart and to receive God's blessings in abundance.

Pope Francis, in the recent times has insistently spoken about the mercy of God. *EvangeliumGadudim* states: 'The church has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of her own experience of the Father's infinite mercy' (24). Mercy is not an abstract term but one which expresses the face of God. Today's world more than ever stands in need of God's Mercy. We live in world shattered by violence, corruption, crimes, theft, etc. People are up in arms waiting to create a world order through violent means. We are well aware of the fact that no arms can secure one's life and give man peace and tranquillity. I firmly believe that only by showing mercy and compassion to the broken world, can we restore the harmony that existed at the time of creation. To this end the Jubilee year declared by Pope Francis becomes more relevant and we, as an individual Christian and Archdiocese, have to contribute to make this event an occasion for our brothers and sisters to experience God's and man's mercy.

Celebration in the Archdiocese: To celebrate the year of mercy in the Archdiocese of Guwahati, the Holy Door of Christ the Bearer of Good News Cathedral will be opened ceremonially on 13th December 2015. I cordially invite all the Priests, Religious and Faithful of the Archdiocese to witness this ceremony and to walk through the 'Holy Door' to obtain God's Mercy. I request the Parish Priests to make arrangement for your parishioners, on that day or any other day of your choice, to make this pilgrimage. It should include penitential service, confessions, Holy Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, and prayer for the intention of the Holy Father (1 Our Father, 1 Hail Mary 1 Glory be and Profession of Faith) to obtain Plenary indulgence. If you inform earlier, the priests of Dispur Cathedral, will make necessary arrangements. With the Holy Father we hope that this Holy Year will be an authentic occasion for the renewal of pastoral life in the Archdiocese and all its parishes and institutions. Some practical ways to celebrate this 'Year of Mercy' more meaningfully are given below.

1. *Recital of Mercy Rosary before the Holy Mass in the parishes*
2. *Pilgrimage to Dispur Cathedral during the Jubilee Year of Mercy*
3. *Retreat at every parish*
4. *Regular penitential rite to prepare people for confession*
5. *Placing the picture of Divine Mercy in the Church*
6. *Caring for the Prisoners. Bro Devassy SG has been asked to meet the Head of the Schools of Guwahati city and the CRI Guwahati unit to draw up plans and programmes to help the inmates of the jail in the city. We request you to extend to him your whole hearted cooperation*
7. *Recital of the Jubilee prayer every day; it will soon be made available.*

May the Lord continue showing his mercy upon us all!

+Archbishop John Moolachira

Archbishop of Guwahati