



Pastoral Letter

HOLY YEAR of MERCY

Dear brothers and sisters of the Diocese of St Paul,

As many of you may have heard, Pope Francis has declared the coming year as a Jubilee of Mercy. He said,

“Dear brothers and sisters, I have often thought of how the Church may render more clear her mission to be a witness to mercy; and we have to make this journey. It is a journey which begins with spiritual conversion. Therefore, I have decided to announce an *Extraordinary Jubilee* which has at its centre the mercy of God. It will be a *Holy Year of Mercy*. We want to live in the light of the word of the Lord: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” (cf. Lk 6:36) And this especially applies to confessors! So much mercy!”

Also he has decreed that in each diocesan cathedral there is to be a Holy Door of Mercy just as there will be in St Peter’s and other basilicas of Rome. And so here in St Paul, on December 7, 2015 at 7:00 pm, with a Vatican-provided “Rite of the Opening of the Door of Mercy”, and a solemn Mass concelebrated by our priests and with as many parishioners who are able to attend, we shall open our Holy Door and inaugurate the Jubilee of Mercy in the St Paul diocese.

Of course, one of the main objectives of the Jubilee of Mercy is to remind us all, that mercy does not consist merely in what we receive from God but that it is, as well, spiritual and corporal acts, which we undertake for others. And so during the Jubilee Year of Mercy we are invited to renew our sharing of God’s mercy for us, by practicing spiritual and corporal acts of mercy for each other. Each parish will be encouraged to develop catechesis and activities to promote this “spiritual conversion” as Pope Francis calls it. However, at our diocesan celebration, on Dec. 7th we shall have some suggestions to share. For example, we will distribute cards with a listing of the spiritual and corporal acts of mercy. A bishop from another diocese has suggested that with such cards, parish and school children might be invited to journal or to list their acts of mercy during Lent and then as a group, come and enter through the cathedral door of mercy in a jubilee celebration.

As well, in this Year of Mercy, St Faustina's witness and message about Divine Mercy will be spiritually enriching throughout the whole Church. However, here locally, after consulting with Wilfred and Phyllis Collins of Elizabeth Settlement, I have decided to appoint them as "diocesan missionaries of divine mercy" for a special out-reach to the Aboriginal and Metis communities throughout the diocese for the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Concretely, this means that Wilfred and Phyllis will be available and happy to meet with and facilitate prayer groups to know and benefit from the Divine Mercy devotions. The coordinating and setting up of these events, will be done with Odette from my office.

As bishop, I shall be visiting during the year, all the faith communities which do not normally have Sunday Mass so as to celebrate with them the riches of God's and our mercy for each other.

Also, in September and October of 2016 we shall be returning to the five (5) area inter-parish Masses so that, as larger segments of the diocesan family, we may together celebrate the marvels of God's mercy in our lives.

Pope Francis envisions this year as a time when we will become more merciful in our own lives and also bring God's mercy to others. He is entrusting the jubilee year to the "Lordship of Christ" and he asks Christ to pour out his mercy on us and the entire cosmos. He says, "How much I desire that the year to come will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God."

Let us all, in the diocese of St Paul join him, on this journey.



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