



Nov. 13, 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As we approach the end of the Jubilee of Mercy, it is time for us to recall with gratitude the depth of God's mercy revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Throughout this past year, we have all been striving to bring the light of the Gospel of mercy, the warm embrace of the Church, and the joy of God's forgiving love to everyone, everywhere.

With the closing of the Holy Doors at Holy Rosary Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, we must guard against the temptation to regard the Year of Mercy as "over and done with." We can never close the door of mercy, because Jesus, who lives forever, is himself the Door (cf. Jn 10:9).

The good Lord wants us to continue living the fruits of this Year, to keep the doors of mercy open wide, so that we can "re-gift" to others the forgiveness we ourselves have experienced, that joy of being found by Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who comes in search of us whenever we are lost.

Advent is soon beginning, that special season of expectation, conversion and hope. It inspires us to open ever wider the doors of our hearts and of our churches. As we prepare for Christmas, I invite you to take the spark of the Jubilee of Mercy and ignite into flame the evangelizing mission entrusted to each one of us.

All our initiatives of evangelization should embody mercy, and we are endeavouring to do this by means of our new [Archdiocesan Priorities and Goals](#). By working together to accomplish these priorities, which are rooted in mercy, we live out Jesus' call to "be merciful, just as the heavenly Father is merciful" (Lk 6:30). Like him, we must be ever ready to welcome, to understand and to forgive.

As an archdiocesan family, we are committed to these pastoral priorities:

Make Every Sunday Matter. We will keep the Lord's Day holy by preaching more relevant and understandable homilies, celebrating Mass with beautiful music, and practising a more intentional hospitality.

Get Closer to Jesus. We will provide more opportunities for people to begin a dynamic personal relationship with the Lord or to foster a deeper discipleship with him.

Strengthen Marriages and Families. We will support those who are struggling with today's parenting challenges by helping them connect with programs and services which assist them in practical ways.

Develop Parish Leadership and Support. We will strengthen ties between the John Paul II Pastoral Centre and parishes, as well as among parishes themselves. We will help develop parish leadership teams and promote increased lay participation in the Church's mission of evangelization.



Both as individual disciples and as living members of the Body of Christ, we are called to a mission of mercy. After experiencing God's mercy ourselves, we have no choice but to become missionaries of mercy to others. The more we receive mercy, the more we are called to share it. Small acts of love, tenderness and care that make people feel that the Lord is close to them are gestures which open the door of mercy to our brothers and sisters.

Jesus calls the Church to be the sign of his mercy in the world. As faith communities, we cannot bottle up the mercy lavished upon us. The door of God's mercy is always open, because the forgiveness granted humankind on Calvary knows no limits. He never tires of showing us his mercy.

The Lord is waiting to let in those who still lack the courage to knock or who are afraid of harsh judgment or rejection. This is why the doors of our churches, parishes, associations, movements and homes must remain open: so that we can welcome everyone into God's merciful embrace, regardless of where they are on their journey. May all our communities be oases and instruments of mercy!

The Jubilee Year has also reminded us to open our eyes to the misery of the world and the wounds of our brothers and sisters. Before all else, we need to take notice of the state of suffering in which so many people find themselves and to hear their cry for help. We can answer their pleas by practising more readily the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. They oblige us to roll up our sleeves to alleviate the burden of their suffering. Living mercy is a journey which begins in our heart and then reaches our hands.

In his preaching, Jesus tells us carrying out the works of mercy indicates whether or not we are truly his disciples. He wants us to see him "in the least of his brothers and sisters" (cf. Mt 25:40). To see Jesus in them is also the way he sees all of us. In a world damaged by the virus of indifference, the works of mercy are the best antidote to spiritual blindness.

Practising the corporal works of mercy is the proof that a dynamic faith expresses itself in charity: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked and welcoming strangers, and visiting the sick and imprisoned.

The spiritual works of mercy direct us to help others to escape the doubt that leads them to discouragement and despair; to overcome the ignorance which plagues millions of people, especially children unable to escape misery; to be close to the lonely and afflicted; to forgive readily those who have offended us; to reject the anger and hatred which lead to violence; to be patient; and to pray for the faithful departed.

The Church celebrates God's mercy most intensely in the great sacrament of mercy, Reconciliation. Making a good confession brings us face to face with Mercy. Here the Father receives, welcomes and forgives us everything. He understands our limitations and all our struggles. Whenever we are forgiven, Heaven erupts in joy.

As the Jubilee draws to a close, I invite you to reflect on how it has opened the door of your heart. Continue the good work you began, applying the lens of mercy to everything you do. If



you have not yet opened yourself to the grace of the Holy Year, remember that it is never too late to take hold of God's mercy.

Let us start this Advent by welcoming family, friends and guests from all backgrounds to a Church with her arms wide open. Let us encourage them to knock at the doors of our churches, where the Lord is always ready to receive them.

In our journey Home, we implore the heavenly assistance of Mary, the Mother of Mercy. May she never tire of turning her merciful eyes toward us, and so make us worthy to contemplate the face of Mercy Incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us open wide the doors of our heart to the joy of forgiveness, grateful that we have been given new confidence and hope, and thus that we can make our daily lives humble instruments of God's boundless mercy.

With my blessing and prayer that you will always keep wide open the doors of mercy, I remain

+Archbishop J. Michael Miller