



Resource of the Office for the New Evangelisation
Year of Mercy





Forgiveness

Year of Mercy Booklet

Issue 03





How to use the booklet

In this extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, we are called to gaze at the merciful heart of God our Father, and to imitate more closely Jesus Christ Our Saviour who shows heart of His Father. It is a time of ordering our hearts to “act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8).

The “Mercy” reflection booklet directed our minds to being more merciful through the works of mercy, in particular, feeding the hungry and bearing wrongs patiently. In being mercy-minded, we order our hearts’ desires to the will of God our Father. Jesus shows the will of our Father; he is our the way home to our Father, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34).

“Forgiveness” is the third set of our Year of Mercy reflections. It may be used for personal reflection and study, with a friend, or a small faith-sharing group. The reflections challenge us to practice forgiveness. Forgiveness is a gift to face our own truth, our own guilt, our own confusion. To forgive is to come home to ourselves and to God, our father.





Prayer for the Jubilee Year of Mercy

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.

Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money;
the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things;
made Peter weep after his betrayal,
and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the
Samaritan woman:

“If you knew the gift of God!”

You are the visible face of the invisible Father,
of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy:
let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.

You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness
in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error:
let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with His anointing,
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor,
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed,
and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of
Mercy; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever
and ever.

Amen.





The logo and the motto together provide a fitting summary of what the Jubilee Year is all about

The motto Merciful Like the Father (taken from the Gospel of Luke, 6:36) serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of the Father who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to give love and forgiveness without measure (cfr. Lk 6:37-38). The logo – the work of Jesuit Father Marko I. Rupnik – presents a small summa theologiae of the theme of mercy.

In fact, it represents an image quite important to the early Church: that of the Son having taken upon his shoulders the lost soul demonstrating that it is the love of Christ that brings to completion the mystery of his incarnation culminating in redemption. The logo has been designed in such a way so as to express the profound way in which the Good Shepherd touches the flesh of humanity and does so with a love with the power to change one's life. One particular feature worthy of note is that while the Good Shepherd, in his great mercy, takes humanity upon himself, his eyes are merged with those of man. Christ sees with the eyes of Adam, and Adam with the eyes of Christ. Every person discovers in Christ, the new Adam, one's own humanity and the future that lies ahead, contemplating, in his gaze, the love of the Father.



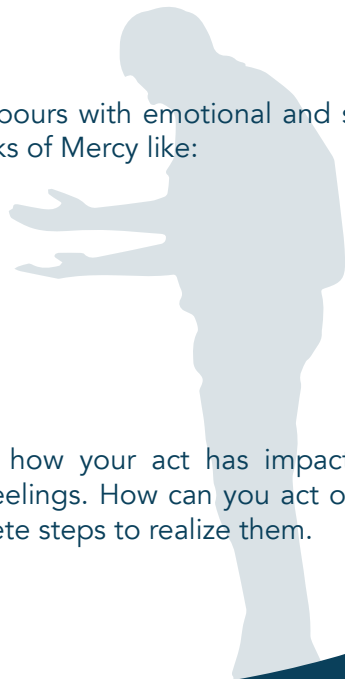


The scene is captured within the so called mandorla (the shape of an almond), a figure quite important in early and medieval iconography, for it calls to mind the two natures of Christ, divine and human. The three concentric ovals, with colors progressively lighter as we move outward, suggest the movement of Christ who carries humanity out of the night of sin and death. Conversely, the depth of the darker color suggests the impenetrability of the love of the Father who forgives all.

Corporal Works and Spiritual Works of Mercy

- Kind acts to help our neighbours with material and physical needs – we call these the Corporal works of Mercy like:
 - feed the hungry
 - give drink to the thirsty
 - clothe the naked
 - shelter the homeless
 - visit the sick
 - visit the imprisoned
 - bury the dead
- Acts of compassion to help our neighbours with emotional and spiritual needs – we call these the Spiritual works of Mercy like:
 - counsel the doubtful
 - instruct the ignorant
 - admonish sinners
 - comfort the afflicted
 - forgive offences
 - bear wrongs patiently
 - pray for the living and the dead

After each act of Mercy, take note of how your act has impacted the recipient, jot down your thoughts and feelings. How can you act on these rising thoughts and feelings? Take concrete steps to realize them.





Forgiveness

Session 1: Forgiveness Heals

Opening Prayer

Be sure to begin each session with prayer. Ask God our Father to open his word to you and speak to you personally.

“Lord Jesus Christ, You are the visible face of our invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: Let your church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified. You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness, in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: Let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God. ”

Gaze upon Jesus

Luke 15:11-27

But when he came to himself he said, “How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’” So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father said to his slaves, “Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” And they began to celebrate.





Consider Jesus

What stands out for me? Note it down and ponder: What is Jesus saying to me? What has it to do with my relationship with him and others?

Contemplate Jesus

When all words are exhausted, sit with God our Father. You may picture yourself with Him in the Scripture story.

Imitate Jesus

Face of Forgiveness

Jo Berry's father was a member of the British Parliament. He was killed by an IRA bomb in 1984 when Jo was 27 years old. She did not want to blame and become bitter. She knew that she wanted to find a way to bring something positive out of the death of her beloved father.

Berry tells that she started on a forgiveness journey with a trust that she would find her way a step at a time. In November 2000, she met Patrick Magee, the man responsible for her father's death. He had been released from prison as part of the Good Friday Peace Agreement.

When Jo looks back on that day, she remembers being scared. Would she regret meeting him? The meeting lasted 3 hours. Finally Patrick said, "I have never met anyone like you before. I don't know what to say. I want to hear your pain." Although there were many difficulties, Jo and Patrick continued their meetings and became friends. A profound change took place: Jo came to realize that if she had lived Patrick's life, she might have done what he did and Patrick came to see how his violence affected so many lives.

This friendship has healed both Jo and Patrick. They now travel the world telling their stories through the Forgiveness Project, working for peace together. (Adapted from <http://www.catherineblountfdn.org>)

Who forgave us today? Who did we forgive today? What a difference it could make!





Going deeper

But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! **I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him,** 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'

"But when he came to himself..."

This is a great spiritual moment for the young man because he came to his senses; he realized what he had done and is doing and he remembered who he was. We have those experiences, too. What needs to happen for us to come to our senses and seek reconciliation?

"... I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him..."

When we acknowledge our actions and emotions, do we always act? Does our contrition bring us back to God our Father who is waiting for us to make a return? If no, what holds us back?

Take this time to reflect on a significant moment of the persons/community who forgave you. How were you healed? How was the relationship healed?

Recall an experience before and after you received forgiveness:

Your experience:	Before	After
Feelings		
Perceptions and expectations of yourself		
Perceptions and expectations of the other		
What did you learn about yourself and the other?		
How did the incident change your relationship with God?		
What graces did you receive in this process of reconciliation? Share with your small group or friend the graces you received.		





Forgiveness in action

**Is there someone you wish to reconcile with?
Describe the present quality of the relationship.
What graces do you need to seek reconciliation?
What needs to change for healing to happen?**

Take responsibility.

If we blame others, then we will have to wait until they can change for us in order for the relationship to heal. This is unlikely to occur. So we are left with nothing when peace is really close at hand. Take responsibility and chose to be loving rather than to be right.

Stand in the shoes of others.

When we do not practice awareness, we may unconsciously spend a great deal of time and energy getting offended by many things – a news report, a rude stranger, an inconsiderate cyclist, someone cursing, a sneeze, a black cloud – just about anything. We get hurt easily when our fragile ego is built around the temporal and our selfishness. Once offended, empathy is lost and forgiveness is not easy to practise. What we may not realize is that when we judge another person, we do not define them. We define ourselves as someone who needs to judge others. We become more entrenched in our expectations and perceptions.





Session 2: **Real forgiveness is from God our Father**

Opening Prayer

Be sure to begin each session with prayer. Ask God our Father to open his word to you and speak to you personally.

“Lord Jesus Christ, You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: Let your church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified. You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness, in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: Let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God. ”

Gaze upon Jesus

John 4:1-26

Jesus said to her, “Give me something to drink. His disciples had gone into the town to buy good. The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew. How is it that you ask me, a Samaritan, for something to drink?’

“You have no bucket, sir,” she answered, “and the well is deep: how do you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?”

“Sir,” said the woman, “give me some of that water, so that I may never be thirsty or come here again to draw water.”

The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming; and when he comes he will explain everything.’”



Consider Jesus

What stands out for me? Note it down and ponder: How did the Samaritan woman move from 'how is it that you ask me a Samaritan, for something to drink' to have a life changing conversation that she brought the Good News to other Samaritans? What does this scripture text tell you about forgiveness?

Contemplate Jesus

When all words are exhausted, sit with God our Father. You may picture yourself with Him in the Scripture story.

Imitate Jesus

Face of Forgiveness

'Kelly recalled the day she found out that her husband was having an affair with another woman. She said it was as if her heart just stopped; she felt paralyzed. She could not understand what prompted Alan to throw away their relationship. They were a happy family with two lovely children. There were arguments but they always made up. When Kelly finally plucked up the courage to confront Alan, she phoned him to demand an explanation. Alan denied it flatly. That night, they had their biggest fight and Alan moved out of the house the next day.

The following weeks were hell for Kelly. Her happy family was turned upside down and the children were asking for Alan. Kelly suffered a mental breakdown and was warded in the hospital for attempted suicide. Alan came to the hospital and saw his wife lying motionless. He felt remorse and sought forgiveness as soon as Kelly regained consciousness.

Kelly still wanted to make the marriage work and agreed to forgive Alan. However, the forgiveness did not happen overnight. For months, she struggled with resentment and the fear that Alan would break his promise. On the part of Alan, he tried his best to mend the broken trust.

What does the story of Kelly and Alan tell you about forgiveness?





Going deeper

We are familiar with the phrase 'to err is human, to forgive divine'. Is it so hard for human beings to forgive? The natural reaction when we are wronged is to get even, to seek revenge. So when Jesus taught us to turn the other cheek, it was really against the human understanding. Why should we turn the other cheek? Is it not right to get even? Perhaps the saying is true because we think that we can actually forgive others by our own capacity when in fact our nature is to seek revenge.

Real forgiveness comes from God our Father which brings us peace and joy. We have often heard the phrase 'forgive and forget'; yet we know that it is hard to forgive and even harder to forget. Therefore, we should forgive and remember. Remember that we have been forgiven. Jesus' commandment to love God and love neighbour means we need to learn to forgive. The first thing is to learn to accept that the event took place and nothing will change that reality. Once we have totally accepted it, then we need to let it go.

Recall an occasion when you forgave. Where did you find the strength? Share with others in the group.

Forgiveness in action

Remember God our Father's forgiveness.

We are able to forgive because we have experienced being forgiven by God our Father. We can truly forgive others when we remember the mercy of God our Father – the crucifix is our reminder. The story of the unforgiven servant (Mt 18:28-35) shows us that when we forget the mercy and forgiveness of God our Father, we fail to extend mercy and forgiveness to others.

Look for a symbol or an object that will remind you of the mercy and forgiveness of God our Father for you. Keep this symbol or object close to you as a reminder to you the need to forgive others.





Notes:





Session 3: **Be ready to forgive**

Opening Prayer

Be sure to begin each session with prayer. Ask God our Father to open his word to you and speak to you personally.

“Lord Jesus Christ, You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: Let your church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified. You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness, in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: Let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God. ”

Gaze upon Jesus **Luke 23:32-34; 39-43**

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”



Consider Jesus

What stands out for me? Note it down and ponder: What is Jesus saying to me? What has it to do with my relationship with him and others?

Contemplate Jesus

When all words are exhausted, sit with God our Father. You may picture yourself with Him in the Scripture story.

Imitate Jesus

Face of Forgiveness

Lloyd LeBlanc has told me that he would have been content with imprisonment for Patrick Sonnier who murdered LeBlanc's son. He went to the execution, not for revenge but hoping for an apology.

Patrick Sonnier did not disappoint. Before sitting in the electric chair he had said, "Mr LeBlanc, I want to ask your forgiveness for what me and Eddie done." And Lloyd LeBlanc had nodded his head, signalling forgiveness he had already given.

LeBlanc had arrived with the sheriff's deputies there in Canefield to identify his son. He knelt beside his son and prayed the Our Father. And when he came to the words: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," he said, "Whoever did this, I forgive them."

But LeBlanc acknowledged that it is a struggle to overcome the feelings of bitterness and revenge that well up, especially when he remembers his son's birthday year after year. It is like losing him all over again: David at 20, David at 25, David getting married, grown-up David, a man like himself, whom he will never know. "Forgiveness is never going to be easy. Each day it must be prayed for and struggled for and won." (Dead Man Walking pp. 244-245)

Recall a time where your hopes were dashed and you forgave. Where did you find the strength? How were your hopes rebuilt?





Going deeper

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:32-34.

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

When my envy delights in putting down another, teach me to love by _____;

When my thoughts entertain anger, teach me to love by _____;

When my status and position in life tempt me to hate the other side, teach me to love by _____.

Where there is injury, pardon;

When words cut, teach me to pardon by _____;

When idle gossip tears apart friendships, teach me to pardon by _____;

When carelessness of action destroys trust, teach me to pardon by _____;

Where there is despair, hope;

When uncertainty clouds reality, teach me to share your truth by _____;

When confusion leads to anxiety and fear, teach me to share your truth and my hope in you by _____;

When there is struggle because no help seems to be coming, teach me to share my hope in you by _____.



Forgiveness in action

Be a giver of forgiveness.

Take the prayer of St Francis and choose to:

Console

Decide on “who” you are called to console;
“what” you will do or “what” the consolation is, and;
commit to “when” you carry out the resolution.

Understand

To whom shall you show understanding?
What will you do?
When will you carry out the resolution?

Die to self

To whom will you show mercy today?
What will you do to die to self?
Who might help you carry out the resolution?





Notes:





Notes:



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Designed by: Kenneth Toi & Rae Chia

