



Resource of the Office for the New Evangelisation
Year of Mercy





Mercy

Year of Mercy Booklet

Issue 02





Introductory

We encourage you to use the booklet's suggestions prayerfully. The Scripture verses may be very familiar to you. You have heard all this before and so it may be easy to skim through the readings. Over the next three weeks, we encourage you to progressively deepen in mercy-mindfulness in your prayers and actions through two works of mercy: feeding the hungry and bearing wrongs patiently.

How To Use The Reflections:

The reflections can be used individually for personal reflection and study, with a friend, or a small faith-sharing group.

1. Be sure to begin each session with prayer. Ask God to open his word to you and speak to you personally. You may want to use Pope Francis' prayer.

2. We pray you will find inspiration and courage in the prayer of Saint Faustina, a humble apostle of Divine Mercy in our times, that is at the end of each reflection.

3. Each reflection is focused on a particular insight into God's mercy. The parables devoted to mercy are presented here – the lost coin and the lost sheep. "Jesus reveals the

nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy." The Father "is always presented as full of joy, especially when he pardons. In them (parables of mercy) we find the core of the Gospel and of our faith, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon." Pope Francis (MV#9)

4. The reflections would bear more fruits when you put them into action.





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.





Photo credit: tillchrist.wordpress.com

Reflecting On The Image

Can you tell which is the dandelion? The dandelion, a poisonous weed, in its first stage of growth resembles wheat. The weed is also harmful to the wheat, its roots trying to starve the wheat from its source. Yet if the weed is pulled out, it could take with it the stalk of wheat. Harvest will not come.

What looks like wheat and yet starves me from joy, peace and experiencing the fullness of life?





Matthew 13:24-30

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."

Lectio Divina

Prayerfully reading Scripture creates a spiritual space for us to meet and converse with God.

Read the passage slowly, letting the words sink in. What stands out for you? A word/image? Note it down and ponder on its deeper meaning for your life.

Talk to God. Are you moved to examine your life, give thanks, to ask questions?

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

With this last step "Lord what do you want of me?" you respond to God not just in prayer but in action as well.





Reflecting With Scriptures

At times we are in a great hurry to judge, to categorize, to put the good here, the bad there... God, however, knows how to wait. With patience and mercy he gazes into the "field" of life of every person; he sees much better than we do the filth and the evil, but he also sees the seeds of good and waits with trust for them to grow. God is patient, he knows how to wait. This is so beautiful: our God is a patient father, who always waits for us and waits with his heart in hand to welcome us, to forgive us.
(Pope Francis, July 20 2014)

Reflect on times where we have discovered God through our mistakes/weaknesses.

Share

What do I find striking in these readings or these reflections and prayer?
What are my reactions? What do I wish to share with others?

Mercy is love in action. How would you practice patience in an area where God seems to be so slow at changing?

I will _____ and I will be able to see how patience has changed me because _____.

"God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
And wisdom to know the difference."

I will apply these words in my life by _____.





Further Thoughts

Daily life can at times seem to be much more a battleground; a struggle to live in the midst of the weeds that try to choke us and take our life away. Much of our growth comes from the mistakes we make and when we learn something from them. It is true of those we encounter as well. We are impatient with the slow emergence and growth of good.

God is the sower who sows endlessly and generously. He gives the growth. Jesus is the hope for all of us at the harvest time. How important it is to remember this point when we grow so impatient with God in our story.

- *Have you experienced a person like the field owner? What was it like?*
- *Which relationships can I practice being like the field owner?*

WE PRAY

"Help me, O Lord,

... that my eyes may be merciful, so that I will never be suspicious or judge by appearances, but always look for what is beautiful in my neighbours' souls and be of help to them;

... that my ears may be merciful, so that I will be attentive to my neighbours' needs, and not indifferent to their pains and complaints;

... that my tongue may be merciful, so that I will never speak badly of others, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all;

... that my hands may be merciful and full of good deeds;

... that my feet may be merciful, so that I will hasten to help my neighbour, despite my own fatigue and weariness;

... that my heart may be merciful, so that I myself will share in all the sufferings of my neighbor."

(St Faustina, Diary 163)





IN COMMUNITY

Corporal work of Mercy: Feed the Hungry

For your meals, eat less and pay less for one week. The money that you save, use it to buy food for someone in need. Go out of your way to find such a person if you cannot readily find him or her around your home or workplace. The poor can be – the garbage collector, the cleaner at your office, the auntie who cleans the pantry.

Spiritual work: Bear wrongs patiently

It is our nature to complain when things don't go our way; when someone seems incapable of change; when we have suffered an injustice. Remind yourself to stop and think for a short while before doing anything. Then seek ways to resolve the situation. We do not condone injustices. However, as we correct we do well to remember that God our Father has also forgiven us much for our own wrongdoings.

Share what you have done with the community when you next meet before starting on a new reflection.





Image credit: 'The Lost Coin' by Eugene Burnard

Reflecting On The Image

The woman lost a drachma. As small as it may seem, it is very precious and of great value to her. Her face reveals something of an intensity of the search for this drachma. The woman has barely recovered from long search but she cannot wait to announce the good news.

When have you experienced losing something very precious and spending much effort in search of it?

What was the search like?





Luke 15:8-10

Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Praying with the imagination

How do we start? Settle in a comfortable chair and in a quiet place where we won't be distracted. Our first gesture might be to open our hands on our lap, and to ask God to open our hearts and imaginations.

Read through the Scripture verses once or twice slowly. Now we begin to imagine the scene as if we are standing right there. Who is in it? What conversation takes place? What is around me? Who else is there? What do I hear/see/smell in the scene? What is the mood – tense, joyful, confused or angry?

Converse with Jesus about the scene. When all words have exhausted, rest in his presence.

Lastly, ask "Lord what do you want of me?"
to respond in prayer and action.





Reflecting With Scriptures

He is a God who does not like to lose what is his, and in order not to lose it, he goes out from himself, and seeks out the lost....His work is to search: to search and seek out the lost in order to invite them back. For God cannot abide losing what is his; thus on Holy Thursday Jesus would pray 'that none of those whom thou hast given me may be lost'. He is a God who walks around searching for us, and has a certain loving weakness for those who are furthest away, who are lost. And how does he search? ... like the woman, when she loses a coin, who lights a lamp and sweeps the house, and searches carefully. That's how God searches.
(Pope Francis, 7 Nov 2013)

Recall a time when you felt God seeking you out.

Think about a person you cannot get along with or you are angry at. Let yourself become merciful towards this person.

Share

What do I find striking in these readings or these reflections and prayer?
What are my reactions? What do I wish to share with others?

Mercy is giving to someone not because you think they merit it but because you know their circumstances. It is a time to seek out someone who needs your forgiveness. Is there someone who needs your forgiveness?

I have decided to forgive _____ and I will _____.





Further Thoughts

"Each of us, each one of us, is that little lost lamb, the coin that was mislaid; each one of us is that son who has squandered his freedom on false idols, illusions of happiness, and has lost everything. But God does not forget us; the Father never abandons us. He is a patient Father, always waiting for us! He respects our freedom, but he remains faithful forever. And when we come back to him, he welcomes us like children into his house, for he never ceases, not for one instant, to wait for us with love. And his heart rejoices over every child who returns. He is celebrating because he is joy." (Pope Francis, 15 Sep 2013)

- ***Celebration belongs to God's kingdom. We are called to enter into that joy. What is my experience of joy?***
- ***When was the last time I shared my joy of receiving God's welcoming forgiveness?***

WE PRAY

"Help me, O Lord,

... that my eyes may be merciful, so that I will never be suspicious or judge by appearances, but always look for what is beautiful in my neighbors' souls and be of help to them;

... that my ears may be merciful, so that I will be attentive to my neighbors' needs, and not indifferent to their pains and complaints;

... that my tongue may be merciful, so that I will never speak badly of others, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all;

... that my hands may be merciful and full of good deeds;

... that my feet may be merciful, so that I will hasten to help my neighbor, despite my own fatigue and weariness;

... that my heart may be merciful, so that I myself will share in all the sufferings of my neighbor"

(St Faustina, Diary 163).





IN COMMUNITY

Corporal work of Mercy: Feed the Hungry.

"We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty."
Mother Teresa.

Take time to be more attentive this week around your neighborhood and at work. Are there any whom you think are unwanted, unloved and uncared for? See what you can do for them. Can you offer to do their grocery shopping this week? Can you spend some time with the one who is struggling alone?

Spiritual work: Bear wrongs patiently.

Talk to someone whom you have not spoken to (at work, home, social circles). Listen to discover what has been the problem. Offer words of encouragement or appreciation to them.

Share what you have done with the community when you next meet before starting on the new reflection.

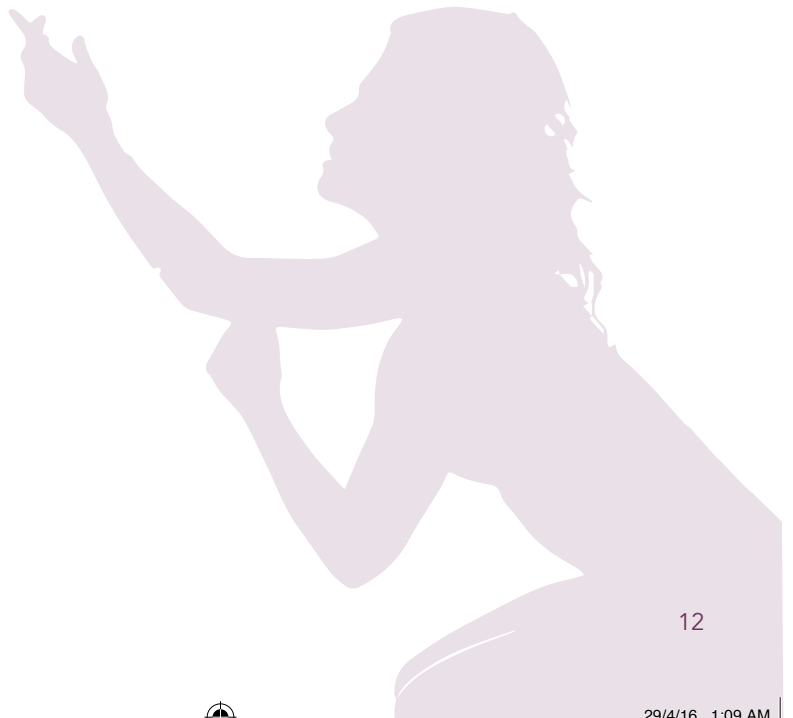




Image credit: 'The Forgiving Father' by Frank Wesley

Reflecting On The Image

In this image we see a parent embracing a 'lost child' who is in need of an embrace, one who seems to have been beaten down by life. Look at the 'lost child' body limp, barely able to help himself. Contrast that with the strong limbs of the parent. Can you relate this image to your own life?

When have you been beaten down and later found yourself embraced, restored to life?

When have you been invited to embrace and forgive someone who had lost his/her way? How did that feel?





Luke 15:4-7

Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

Lectio Divina

Lectio :

As scripture is read, listen for the word or phrase that captures your attention.

Which word is speaking to you? Repeat it silently.

Meditatio:

We reflect more deeply on God's Word. Notice where this passage is speaking to your life. What is God saying?

Oratio:

Have our eyes and hearts been opened and touched by God? We speak to God.

Contemplatio:

We have responded to God's Word with our own words. When all words have been exhausted, rest in His loving presence.

Operatio:

We take this Word home with us and recall it to mind during the week, during this Year of Mercy.





Reflecting With Scriptures

God perseveres in his search for those who have lost their way or made a mess of their lives.

God's work does not consist only in seeking out the lost ... When he finds us, when he has found the lost sheep he neither sets it aside nor does he ask us: "Why did you get lost? Why did you fall?". Rather, he restores what was lost to its proper place. And when this happens it is God who rejoices. God rejoices not in the death of the sinner but rather that he be restored to life. (Pope Francis, 7 Nov 2013)

Share

What do I find striking in these readings or these reflections and prayer?
What are my reactions? What do I wish to share with others?

Mercy is never wrong. When was the last time I experienced God's joy that I belong to him?

My life reveals my being loved by God when _____.
My life reveals God's joy of loving me when _____.



Further Thoughts

"We should not simply remain in our own secure world, that of the 99 sheep who never strayed from the fold, but we should go out, with Christ, in search of the one lost sheep, however far it may have wandered. He spoke to everyone, without distinction, to the great and the lowly; to the rich young man and the poor widow, the powerful and the weak; He brought the mercy and forgiveness of God to all; he healed, comforted, understood, gave hope, He led all to the presence of God who is interested in every man and woman, like a good father and a good mother is interested in each child. God did not wait for us to go to Him, but He moved towards us, without calculation, without measures. This is how God is : He is always the first, He moves towards us. Jesus lived the daily realities of most ordinary people: He was moved by the crowd that seemed a flock without a shepherd, and He cried in front of the suffering of Martha and Mary on the death of their brother Lazarus; he called a tax collector to be His disciple and also suffered the betrayal of a friend. (Pope Francis, 3 Mar 2013)

- ***In what ways have I strayed even if I am steeped into much service of family and community? I leave the Father's home every time I _____.***
- ***Do we see our blessings as reward for our good work? The Father has given his all, his Son. What could we ever do to repay in full? Nothing. However, we can "Do whatever He tells you." (John 2:5). Indeed, he has said to us "... all that is mine is yours." (Luke 15:31). Do we not receive all of what the Father has through Jesus who gives of himself in the Eucharist?***

To "be merciful as the Father is merciful" I will _____.





WE PRAY

"Help me, O Lord,
... that my eyes may be merciful, so that I will never be suspicious or judge by appearances, but always look for what is beautiful in my neighbours' souls and be of help to them;
... that my ears may be merciful, so that I will be attentive to my neighbours' needs, and not indifferent to their pains and complaints;
... that my tongue may be merciful, so that I will never speak badly of others, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all;
... that my hands may be merciful and full of good deeds;
... that my feet may be merciful, so that I will hasten to help my neighbour, despite my own fatigue and weariness;
... that my heart may be merciful, so that I myself will share in all the sufferings of my neighbor."

(St Faustina, Diary 163)

IN COMMUNITY

Corporal work of Mercy: Feed the Hungry.

Share a meal with someone who is searching for the consolation of being understood and looking to find a way back to God or just have a meal with someone who is searching for happiness. Speak of God's patience and mercy.

Spiritual work of Mercy: Bear wrongs patiently.

We are to keep sowing the seeds of faith in the hearts and minds of those who are in grievous error. Change has to come in God's own time. What might you need to do in order to be patient with someone who seems to be so slow at 'self-improvement'? Find out if the person needs help by first listening to their needs. All they need might just be an encouragement to continue in their efforts with confidence.

Share what you have done with the community the next time you meet.





Notes:



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Designed by: Kenneth Toi & Rae Chia

