



Jubilee Holy Year of Mercy

Ideas for Families

Rejoice! The Year of Mercy began on December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Misericordiae Vultus, the letter of Pope Francis officially proclaiming the Year of Mercy sets forth his vision for the Jubilee Year. The motto of the Year of Mercy is “*Merciful like the Father.*” It is in mercy that we find proof of how much God loves us. Day in and day out, we are touched by the mercy of a loving God. And it is through that love and mercy, we are able to be compassionate to see others.

Pope Francis reminds Catholics about the call of Jesus to live mercy. “The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person.” Mercy is who we are or, mercy is what we offer as disciples of Jesus. All of us are called to be people of mercy. Truly, “mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life.”

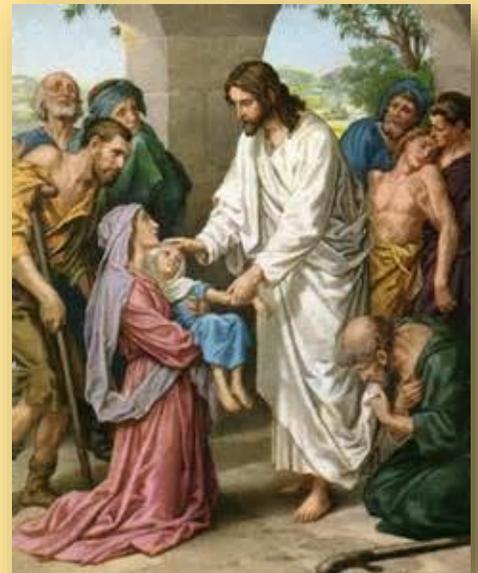
The vision of Pope Francis for this Jubilee Year of Mercy is both comforting and challenging. Integrate some of the following ideas at home, helping young people to grow so we can all be “merciful like the Father.”

Jesus Christ is the “face of God’s mercy.”

The life of Jesus made mercy visible to us. The Gospel is filled with accounts of the miracles and parables telling of the incredible mercy that Jesus showed to all people. The core of the Gospel and of our faith is found in the three beautiful parables of mercy in chapter 15 of the Gospel according to Luke — the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the father with two sons. These parables portray a loving God who never gives up. In the Gospel, mercy is a joyful call; mercy is the call that reawakens us to new life; mercy is a force that overcomes everything.

Pope Francis highlights some of these Gospel events where Jesus responds with mercy to the needs of others in paragraph 8 of *Misericordiae Vultus*.

- **Matthew 9.36**
Jesus felt compassion for the crowds who followed him.
- **Matthew 14.14**
The compassionate love of Jesus led him to heal the sick.



- **Matthew 15:32-39**

Jesus feeds the crowds

- **Mark 7:11-15**

Jesus feels compassion for a grieving mother and widow.

- **Mark 5:19**

Jesus frees the demoniac, and gives the mission to tell others of how Jesus had mercy on him.

- **Matthew 9:9-13**

The call of Matthew: Jesus looks on Matthew with merciful love and chooses him.

- **Matthew 18:21-35**

The parable of forgiveness, and being merciful as God is merciful to us.



Take time to slowly read the miracles and parables of Jesus that focus on mercy. Reflect on these events in the life of Jesus. We are called to act as Jesus did.

The Old Testament – The Psalms

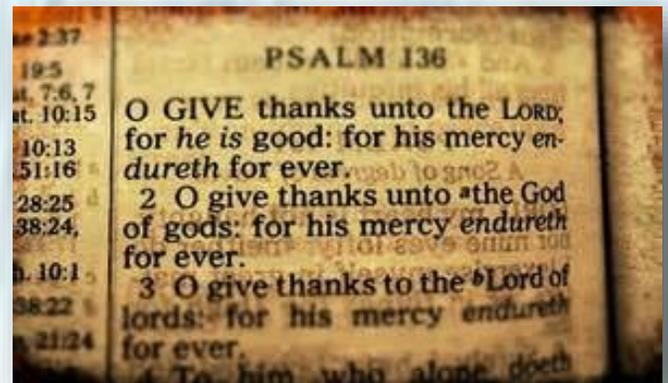
The Old Testament often describes God as patient and merciful. Throughout the history of salvation, God's loving kindness and goodness prevails over punishment. This is evident in the Psalms, which continually sing of the grandeur of God's mercy. Pope Francis lists some of these Psalms in paragraph 6 of *Misericordiae Vultus*.

Psalm 103 – he crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.

Psalm 146 – the concrete signs of mercy.

Psalm 147 – expressions of the mercy of God.

Psalm 136 – the continuing refrain “For his mercy endures forever.”



Take time to pray the Psalms that focus on the mercy of God. Since the Psalms are songs, listen or sing some hymns that are based on these psalms, like the song, “Amazing Grace.”

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

Pope Francis challenges all Christian people to reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. This will lead us more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience with God's mercy. Matthew 25:31-45 gives us the criteria upon which we will be judged for we cannot escape the words of Jesus spoken to us. This is reinforced in the Gospel according to Luke, when Jesus returned to Nazareth and went to the synagogue. There, he read from the Scriptures to proclaim a year of the Lord's favor or mercy (see Isaiah 61:1-2). Again, we are called to witness to our faith through our actions.

Learn the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Make a commitment to practice the Works of Mercy in your life. What are some ideas your family can practice the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy today?

Pilgrimage

Making a pilgrimage is a sign of the journey each of us makes in this life. Truly we are on a life-long journey of faith. A pilgrimage can be a sign that mercy is also a "goal to reach and requires dedication and sacrifice."

The official Holy Door is at Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. There is also a Holy Door in the Diocese of Dallas and other dioceses around the world. Plan to take a pilgrimage to pray and walk through the Holy Door in our diocese.



Holy Doors located at Cathedral Guadalupe, Dallas, Texas

Consider visiting the Holy Door in other dioceses that may be near to you, or when you travel on vacation this year.



The seven Works of Mercy consist of the following:

- Admonishing the sinner
- Instructing the ignorant
- Advising the doubtful
- Bearing wrongs patiently
- Forgiving all injuries
- Praying for the living and the dead

The seven Corporal Works of Mercy are comprised of the following:

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the dead

These fourteen works of Mercy are the fulfillment of the Christian expression of love. Indeed Jesus Christ teaches in the 25 chapter of Matthew that when we do these works, "in each of these 'little ones', Christ himself is present."



The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Many people are returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and discovering the power of this Sacrament. Pope Francis asks us to place the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the center so that people can touch the grandeur of God's mercy in their own hands.

Encourage the habit of celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis. Many parishes have Penance Services especially during Lent, which provide a great opportunity for receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Mother of Mercy

Pope Francis asks the Mother of the Son of God, Mary, to watch over us during this Holy Year of Mercy. We are to address her in the prayer Hail, Holy Queen, "so that she may never tire of turning her merciful eyes upon us, and make us worthy to contemplate the face of mercy, her Son Jesus."

Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy;
Hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To you do we cry, poor banished
children of Eve.
To you do we send up our sighs, mourning
and weeping in the valley of tears.
Turn then, most gracious advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us;
and after this our exile
Show unto us the blessed fruit
of your womb, Jesus.
O clement, O loving O sweet Virgin Mary.
Amen.

The Apostle of Mercy



Not only do we ask Mary to watch over us, but our prayers extend also to the saints who made divine mercy their mission in life. Saint Faustina Kowalska is especially remembered as the great apostle of mercy.

She was born in Poland in 1905 to a family of poor farmers and was baptized Helen Kowalska. When she was seven years old, she heard Jesus' voice within her, encouraging her to become a saint. Later, she wanted to become a nun, but her parents needed her help to support the family. When Helen was 19, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. She took the religious name of Sister Maria Faustina of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

During the next several years, Jesus appeared to Sister Faustina many times. In one vision, Sister Faustina saw two rays of light, one red and one white, pouring forth from Jesus' heart. Jesus told her that the red and white rays represented the blood and water that poured forth from his heart when he was pierced with a sword as he hung on the cross. He explained that his blood is the life of souls and the water from his side makes souls righteous.

Jesus told Sister Faustina to share with the world that he is the Divine Mercy. He loves each one of us, no matter how great our sins. Jesus told her that he wants all people to trust in him and in his mercy.

Sister Faustina spent the rest of her life praying that people would accept the love and mercy of Jesus. At the end of her very short life, she became very ill. As she lay dying, she said, "My one occupation is to live in the presence of my heavenly Father." Sister Faustina died in 1938. We celebrate the Sunday of Divine Mercy on the Second Sunday of Easter.

