

Diocese of Rapid City

Keeping God's Children Safe

A Safe Environment Newsletter

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Our newsletter welcomes the Jubilee Year of Mercy, as does our children/youth Winter Lesson on *Mercy and Forgiveness*. This article provides insights for us to reflect and act on, and to transform one's self into a merciful follower of Christ. This is all part of our faith's call as we continue to work on creating safe environments for all our vulnerable children and adults.

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A year of mercy

Elizabeth Foss



Elizabeth
Foss



Stefano Spaziani | CNS

Pope Francis processes into St. Peter's Basilica to celebrate first vespers of Divine Mercy Sunday at the Vatican April 11. Before celebrating vespers, the pope released a 9,300-word document officially proclaiming the 2015-2016 extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy.

"The mercy of God is poured out upon us, making us just and giving us peace. This is a time for the Church to rediscover the meaning of the mission entrusted to her by the Lord on the day of Easter: to be a sign and an instrument of the Father's mercy."

-- Pope Francis

The pope has announced a **Jubilee Year of Mercy** to encourage the faithful to "welcome the numerous signs of the tenderness which God offers to the whole world." He said that these signs of God's tenderness are especially offered to the suffering, the alone, the abandoned and those "without hope of being pardoned or feeling the Father's love."

A Jubilee Year holds special significance in Catholic tradition as a time of joy, remission or universal pardon. The "year" will begin Dec. 8, 2015, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, and conclude on the feast of Christ the King, Nov. 20, 2016. About a year intended to be a deliberate and joyous celebration of mercy, the pope has said he is "convinced that the whole church will find in this jubilee the joy needed to rediscover and make fruitful the mercy of God, with which all of us are called to give consolation to every man and woman of our time."

That's a lofty goal — to extend mercy to every man and woman. We begin at home, because often it is most difficult to extend genuine mercy within our four walls. As families, we have the opportunity to live mercy intentionally in the domestic church. For us, this year of jubilee is an opportunity to bind wounds

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If you are a victim or have knowledge of a sexual abuse incident of a minor by a cleric, church employee or volunteer, please report the matter to:

Barbara Scherr
Victim Assistance
Coordinator
605-209-3418 (cell)

USCCB Office of Child and Youth Protection
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/index.cfm>

Diocese of Rapid City Safe Environment
<http://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/safe-environment/>

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy."

- Matthew 5:7

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and extend pardon in the intimate corners of our homes and then in the communities outside our front doors and beyond. Now is the time to better understand mercy in order to fully appreciate and truly live the Year of Mercy.

Often, as parents, we see sin in our children as the opportunity to impart justice. This is just part of the picture. God actually calls us “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). The occasion of a Jubilee Year focused intently on mercy will give all of us a chance to refine those movements of justice and mercy. If we can live mercy at home, we can extend mercy in the world. Further, we raise children who know mercy well and who are ambassadors of mercy from a place of intimate understanding.

We begin to prepare for the jubilee by listening closely as the Holy Father reminds us that now is “the favorable time to heal wounds, a time not to be weary of meeting all those who are waiting to see and to touch with their hands the signs of the closeness of God, a time to offer everyone the way of forgiveness and reconciliation.” When we consider sin a wound, everything changes. We allow ourselves to be moved to alleviate the suffering of the sinner; it’s a paradigm shift.

This is to be the year of kindhearted justice. Let us begin to know it well.

To be truly just and truly merciful at once is to be kind and to act with genuine goodness. It’s an emotional response, to be sure, a sense of empathy, but we are required to offer so much more than empathy. We are required to make a decision to care, to be compassionate, to love with self-sacrifice. Then we are required to do something. We must act on that compassion. We have to respond with genuine effort. It’s a simple thing to call a wrong a wrong. It’s a simple thing to point out someone’s faults or failings. We are a people who have been shown God’s goodness; we are required to do more. We are called to act justly and love mercy.

Remember: Every person’s shortcoming causes him or her suffering. It is a wound. Jesus came to tenderly dress the wounds and to heal the suffering of the sinner. Father Michael Gaitley writes, “Mercy is love when it encounters suffering. More specifically, it is two movements that take place within us when we see someone (or something) suffer. The first is an emotional movement, a movement of compassion that we feel in our hearts or even, when the suffering is particularly intense, deep in our guts. The second is a movement of action. In other words, as we see someone suffering and feel compassion for him, we soon find ourselves reaching out to alleviate his suffering. In sum: Mercy is love that feels compassion for those who suffer (heart) and reaches to help them (arm).”

Merciful justice requires us to feel and to alleviate someone’s suffering. That’s a very different concept from the one of judging, scolding, punishing and humiliating. Finally, we are called to walk humbly with our God. In our humility, we are not quick to condemn our neighbor. We recognize our own sinfulness. We recognize that we are nothing without Him and that we are limited in our own capacity to understand another person. We respond with genuine humility when we are gentle, allow ourselves to be infused with the kindness, goodness, and mercy of Our Lord and become ministers of that mercy to everyone we meet.

Can you imagine a moment in time when every person in the universal church is acting with the mercy of Jesus?

It’s going to be a very good year.

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<http://www.catholicherald.com/stories/A-year-of-mercy,28881>

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