

Meditations on Mercy: April 2016

For each month of the Jubilee of Mercy, we offer reflections based on scripture passages that Pope Francis uses in his Bull *Misericordiae Vultus* (MV). By beginning with a scripture passage and a reference to paragraphs in *Misericordiae Vultus*, each reflection offers a way to more deeply embrace the call to embody mercy that is asked of every Christian. These reflections can be done on your own, with your family, or with small groups in your parish.

GATHERING

(10 minutes)

- Pray: Prayer of Pope Francis for the Jubilee of Mercy (www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va/content/gdm/en/giubileo/bolla.html)
- Discuss: Outside of our group activity, how did you see the mercy of God working in your life over the past few weeks?

APRIL 2016

Heb 2:17-18; 4:16; MV, no. 18

“[T]herefore, he [Jesus] had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God to expiate the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.” (Heb 2:17-18)

“So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.” (Heb 4:16)

At the beginning of Lent, Pope Francis sent out *Missionaries of Mercy* to various countries throughout the world. These priests were sent out to proclaim God’s love and be witnesses to God’s mercy through the celebration of the *Sacrament of Reconciliation*. This sacrament is a very visible and tangible sign of God’s mercy. As we see in the previous passages, because of God’s great love for us, Christ became like us every way except for sin. In doing so, Christ became the High Priest who is merciful and “expiate[s] the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17). Just as we are tested and suffer in this lifetime, so also Christ was tested and endured suffering. Christ knows our struggles, our pain, and our sorrows and wants to draw us into the healing embrace of the merciful Father, which we experience every time we participate in the sacraments through Christ’s Paschal Mystery. It is not only these priests who are being called in this Jubilee of Mercy to go out and witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ’s mercy and compassion but all Christians.

Throughout this Easter season, the Mass readings emphasize that all Christians must share the Good News of the love of God: Christ has risen from the dead, alleluia! In these readings, we hear of Christ appearing to the apostles and disciples. They are then sent out again and again to all the world to spread this news to others. As baptized Christians, we also are sent out to share this Good News with others. God, in his merciful love, longs for our salvation and our return to him when we turn away from sin. As we continue to celebrate this Easter feast, let us return to God again through our sacramental celebrations and living out the gospel message.

Mercy in Motion

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. During Lent, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is often emphasized, and many people participate in its wonderful mercies. However, it is not just a Lenten practice! This month, take some time to reflect on the connection between mercy, forgiveness, and spreading the Good News of Christ's Resurrection. How does your participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation prepare you to receive God's mercy and then share it with others?
2. In what ways can you be a "missionary of

mercy" to others in your home, work, and community? What are particular qualities of Christ, in his life, Death, and Resurrection, that you can model for others so that they can draw closer to the love of God?

CLOSING PRAYER

(5 minutes)

- Assemble intentions and reflections from this week's gathering.