

Meditations on Mercy: June 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?

JUNE 2016

Mt 25:31-45; MV, no. 15

“Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you . . . ?’ . . . And the king will say to them

in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’” (Mt 25:34-37, 40)

During this month, the Church celebrates a Jubilee for people who are ill or who have disabilities. In a special way this month then, we pray for and celebrate with people who struggle with a disability, whether visible to others or not. Because of the variety of disabilities and illnesses, we are not always aware of those who are suffering. However, we are called to show love to those who are suffering, even if we do not fully understand or know their suffering. This passage from Matthew’s Gospel is a good illustration of how we are called to serve Christ by serving others, no matter the situation. The righteous ones are praised and rewarded for showing mercy and compassion to those who are suffering. The king (Christ) identifies with those who are suffering. In a special way, Christ is with those who suffer or are on the margins of society. Just as those in the story of the final judgment did not recognize Christ but still acted out of compassion for their brothers and sisters in need, so too should we act compassionately toward everyone we encounter.

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples about what is to come in the Last Judgment. After a lengthy discourse of lessons and parables, we have, in Matthew 25:31-45, a description of the final judgment. The king will separate the “sheep” from the “goats,” based on the criteria of what we now refer to as the corporal works of mercy. These works are integral to our ability to live out the Christian faith. Additionally, the Church encourages us to go beyond these physical acts of

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mercy by also incorporating into our daily lives the spiritual works of mercy. These works include “to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offenses, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead” (*MV*, no. 15). These works of mercy are things that can and should be done on a daily basis. The spiritual nature of these works allows them to be integrated into our daily prayer life. We can also incorporate them into all of our actions toward others, so that, even if we do not know someone is suffering, by living out these spiritual works of mercy, we are able to respond as Christ would and see the love Christ has for all in them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. For a variety of reasons, we sometimes hide our own suffering from others. Yet the spiritual works of mercy show us that, as Christians, we ought to support and encourage all those who are suffering, for whatever reason. Take a moment today to reach out to

someone and ask whether there is anything you can pray about for them. You can also ask someone to pray for you.

2. Many of the spiritual works of mercy are ones that we already do in our daily lives, for example, forgiving others, comforting those who are suffering, giving advice, or praying for the living and dead. Reflect on your day today, and identify times when you have lived out these works of mercy. Did you feel God’s presence working in your actions and in the lives of those involved? What are some ways that you can be more intentional about or conscious of doing these works of mercy so that you can recognize the face of Christ more clearly in those you meet?

CLOSING PRAYER

(5 minutes)

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