

Disciples on the Way

Issue 1: December 2015 | "Merciful like the Father" Pope Francis, *Misericordiae vultus*, 13-14

Highlighted Scripture Readings:

November 29, First Sunday of Advent

- Jer 33: 14-16
- Ps 25: 4-5, 8-9, 10, 14
- 1 Thes 3: 12 – 4: 2
- Lk 21: 25-28, 34-36

December 6, Second Sunday of Advent

- Bar 5:1-9,
- Ps 126: 1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6
- Phil 1:4-6, 8-11
- Lk 3:4, 6

December 13, Third Sunday of Advent

- Zep 3:14-18 A
- Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6
- Phil 4:4-7
- Lk 3:10-18

December 20, Fourth Sunday of Advent

- Mi 5:1-4 A
- Ps 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19
- Heb 10:5-10
- Luke 1:39-45

December 27, Feast of the Holy Family

- Sir 3: 2-6, 12-24
- Ps 128: 1-2, 3, 4-5
- Col 3: 12-21
- Lk 2: 41-52

The Jubilee Year of Mercy

Pope Francis has called for an extraordinary jubilee, a Holy Year of Mercy for the entire Church in the Papal Bull (document) called *Misericordiae vultus* (MV). This year of Mercy will begin on December 8, 2015 and end on November 20, 2016.

During this year, we are asked to pray with, reflect upon and live out the virtue of mercy as disciples of Christ. One of the ways that you can do this is by learning more about the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and living them out in your life.

Corporal Works of Mercy

The Corporal Works of Mercy are acts by which we help our neighbors with their material and physical needs:

- feed the hungry
- give drink to the thirsty
- clothe the naked
- **welcome the stranger**
- heal the sick
- visit the imprisoned
- bury the dead



Spiritual Works of Mercy

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are acts of compassion, by which we help our neighbors with their emotional and spiritual needs:

- counsel the doubtful
- instruct the ignorant
- admonish sinners
- comfort the afflicted
- forgive offenses
- bear wrongs patiently
- pray for the living and the dead



Welcome the Stranger

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me." - Mt. 25:40

Reflect on the Year of Mercy:

Think of a time when you went on a long journey. How did you prepare for it? What feelings did you experience on your journey? How were you greeted upon your arrival at your destination? Did your family or loved one leap for joy when they saw you?

When we experience a warm welcome from someone we often say that we feel "at home" with them. How might your own home be a place of welcoming? Who will you make a special effort to invite to your home this week or during the holiday season?

Live the Year of Mercy:

Pope Francis asks us to encounter Jesus on the margins of life. The "margins" include the poor, the heartbroken, the lost, the downtrodden, those suffering from abuse or addiction for example.

What places in your community welcome those on the margins?

Hint: Catholic Charities; Casa Alba Melanie, Green Bay; Fr. Carr's Place 2B, Oshkosh; Micah Center, Green Bay, etc.

We know that there is a migrant and refugee crisis all over the world due to war, violence and terrorism.

In what ways can you be a part of the solution? Would you consider calling your local representative and encourage them to enact laws that will welcome the migrant and refugee stranger?

The first work of mercy that we will learn about is the corporal work of mercy to **welcome the stranger.**

During the holiday season, we often travel to be with friends and family so that we can celebrate and share quality time together. During Advent, we also hear in the Sunday scriptures many stories of traveling and welcoming.

Mary traveled to visit her cousin Elizabeth, and when she was welcomed upon entering the house, John the Baptist, leapt for joy in Elizabeth's womb!

Traveling to Bethlehem to register for a census, the heavily pregnant Mary and her husband Joseph traveled to Bethlehem. Instead of being warmly welcomed in this town however, they were rejected and turned away because there was no room in the inn!

Like Mary and Joseph, we too are a pilgrim people longing to be welcomed and loved. We are traveling with one another toward salvation in Christ Jesus. We are disciples on the way. This journey is communal, one which can be long, difficult and challenging but which we travel together as fellow pilgrims. When we reach our eternal destination, we pray that we will be warmly welcomed by the Father.

Pray the Year of Mercy:

Jesus, you practiced hospitality. You welcomed "strange" people: fishermen, tax collectors, lepers, prostitutes, centurions, widows, and even little children.

So convinced were you of God's personal love for you that you embraced God's will even when it meant dying on a cross.

Jesus, help me to be more hospitable. Help me to welcome strangers into my life, to believe in blessings in disguise; to see all of life as opportunity and promise.

Surprise me! Let me entertain angels. Better yet, may I entertain you! Amen.

Adapted from Sr. Melannie Svoboda
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