

A Time of Mercy ~ Lent 2016

“God’s mercy transforms human hearts; it enables us, through the experience of a faithful love, to become merciful in turn. In an ever new miracle, divine mercy shines forth in our lives, inspiring each of us to love our neighbor and to devote ourselves to what the Church’s tradition calls the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. These works remind us that faith finds expression in concrete everyday actions meant to help our neighbors in body and spirit: by feeding, visiting, comforting and instructing them. On such things will we be judged. For this reason, I expressed that *‘the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; this will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty, and to enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God’s mercy’*. For in the poor, the flesh of Christ *‘becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us’*. It is the unprecedented and scandalous mystery of the extension in time of the suffering of the Innocent Lamb, the burning bush of gratuitous love. Before this love, we can, like Moses, take off our sandals (cf. *Ex 3:5*), especially when the poor are our brothers or sisters in Christ who are suffering for their faith. ... For all of us, then, the season of Lent in this Jubilee Year is a favorable time to overcome our existential alienation by listening to God’s word and by practicing the works of mercy. In the corporal works of mercy we touch the flesh of Christ in our brothers and sisters who need to be fed, clothed, sheltered, visited; in the spiritual works of mercy – counsel, instruction, forgiveness, admonishment and prayer – we touch more directly our own sinfulness. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy must never be separated. By touching the flesh of the crucified Jesus in the suffering, sinners can receive the gift of realizing that they too are poor and in need. ... Let us not waste this season of Lent, so favorable a time for conversion!”

-Pope Francis, *Lenten Message 2016*



Lenten Guidelines

PRAYER

Catholics are encouraged to pray more during Lent, especially with Scripture. Lent is also an ideal time to receive properly the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation in preparation for the celebration of Christ’s Passion, Death and Resurrection.

FASTING AND ABSTINENCE

Catholics of age 14 and older abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all the Fridays of Lent. In addition, on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, Catholics from age 18-59 fast, limiting themselves to one full meal and two smaller meals each day.

ALMSGIVING

Moved by the sacrifice of Christ, many Christians combine almsgiving with fasting, giving to the poor the money they saved by eating, drinking or buying less as they rely more upon God’s abundant grace.

A Time of Pilgrimage

- ◆ Consider making a special pilgrimage to Saint Patrick Cathedral throughout this Jubilee Year to pass through the Holy Door. The Holy Door is a symbol of entering more deeply into our relationship with Jesus Christ who is the Door to Eternal Life and the Face of the Father’s Merciful Love.
- ◆ *Along with the Cathedral, Bishop Gainer has also designated these four churches as sites for the Jubilee Pilgrimage: **Historic Saint Mary’s, Lancaster; Sacred Heart Basilica, Conewago; Saint Mary’s, Fairfield; and the Basilica of Saints Cyril & Methodius, Danville.***

Plenary Indulgence

A **plenary indulgence** may be obtained in this Jubilee Year by making a pilgrimage to one of the designated shrines in the diocese or elsewhere.

- A plenary indulgence can be gained only once a day. In order to obtain it, the faithful must, in addition to being in the state of grace:
 - have the interior disposition of complete detachment from sin, even venial sin;
 - have sacramentally confessed their sins;
 - received the Holy Eucharist; and
 - prayed for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff.
 - Pope Francis also asks that we complete a work of mercy.
- ◆ Indulgences can always be applied either to oneself or to the souls of the deceased, but they cannot be applied to other persons living on earth.

Lectio Divina

Lent is a time to renew our love and appreciation of Sacred Scripture.

Prayerfully reading a short passage from the Bible each day allows us to be fed by God speaking to us in His Word, for “one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God (*Matt 4:4b*).”

Pope Francis, in *Misericordiae Vultus* #13 writes, “*In order to be capable of mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God’s mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle.*”

Suggested Format

1. *Praeparatio*: Sit quietly and gather your thoughts. Carefully make the Sign of the Cross and call upon the Holy Spirit to inspire your prayer and to guide you.
2. *Lectio*: Slowly read a passage from the Sacred Scriptures. Pay attention to each word. Reread the passage and pause on any words or phrases that touch your mind and heart.
3. *Meditatio*: Quietly meditate on the passage. Use your imagination to listen prayerfully to the Lord’s message for you. If possible, insert yourself into the scene and envision with your mind the setting and circumstance.
4. *Contemplatio*: Allow your mind to rest and listen carefully to the Lord speaking. Let your heart reflect on the words spoken to you.
5. *Oratio*: Respond to the Lord in your own words with prayer. Inspired by your meditation and contemplation, turn to the Lord. This may be a prayer of petition or praise, of thanksgiving or contrition.

Daily Readings

ASH WEDNESDAY WEEK

February 10	Mt 6:1-6,16-18
February 11	1 Peter 5:1-4
February 12	Is 58:1-9a
February 13	Ps 86:1-6

FIRST WEEK OF LENT

February 14	Lk 4:1-13
February 15	Mt 25:31-46
February 16	Is 55:10-11
February 17	Ps 51
February 18	Mt 7:7-12
February 19	Mt 5:20-26
February 20	Mt 5:43-48

SECOND WEEK OF LENT

February 21	Lk 9:28-36
February 22	Lk 6:36-38
February 23	Is 1:10, 16-20
February 24	Mt 20:17-28
February 25	Jer 17:5-10
February 26	Gen 37:3-28
February 27	Ps 103:1-4, 9-12

THIRD WEEK OF LENT

February 28	John 4:5-42
February 29	Lk 4:24-30
March 1	Lk 1:26-38
March 2	Mt 5:17-19
March 3	Jer 7:23-28
March 4	Mk 12:28-34
March 5	Lk 5:1-11

FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

March 6	John 9:1-41
March 7	Jn 4:43-54
March 8	Ez 47:1-9, 12
March 9	Is 49:8-15
March 10	Jn 5:31-47
March 11	Ps 34:17-21,23
March 12	Jer 11:18-20

FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

March 13	Jn 11:1-45
March 14	Jn 8:1-11
March 15	Jn 8:21-30
March 16	Jn 8:31-42
March 17	Gn 17:3-9
March 18	Ps 18:2-7
March 19	Ez 37:21-28

HOLY WEEK

March 20	Mk 14:1-15:47
March 21	Is 42:1-7
March 22	Jn 13:21-33,36-38
March 23	Mt 26:14-25
March 24	Jn 13:1-15
March 25	Jn 18:1-19:42

An Examination of Conscience

Considering the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy is a beautiful way to examine our lives. Pope Francis, in the papal bull calling forth this Jubilee Year of Mercy, has written, “*It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.*” We remember also the words of Saint John of the Cross, “*In the evening of life, we will be judged by love alone.*” The works of mercy form a foundation for the Christian life and our sincere reflection will lead us to see not only the sins we may have committed but also those sins of omission in our lives, when we have failed to love generously and to seize those opportunities to do good in our daily lives.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

1. Counsel the doubtful.
2. Instruct the ignorant.
3. Admonish sinners.
4. Comfort the sorrowful.
5. Bear wrongs patiently.
6. Forgive all injuries.
7. Pray for the living and the dead.

The Corporal Works of Mercy

1. Feed the hungry.
2. Give drink to the thirsty.
3. Clothe the naked.
4. Shelter the homeless.
5. Visit the sick.
6. Visit the imprisoned.
7. Bury the dead.

An Act of Contrition

Father of mercy, like the prodigal son I return to you and say:
“I have sinned against you and am no longer worthy to be called your child.”

Christ Jesus, Savior of the world,
I pray with the repentant thief
to whom you promised paradise:
“Lord, remember me in your kingdom.”

Holy Spirit, fountain of love,
I call on you with trust:
“Purify my heart, and help me to walk
as a child of the light.”