



# Priestly People

WE ALL ARE THE PRIESTLY PEOPLE OF GOD. TOGETHER, WE ARE LEADERS IN RESPONDING TO THE EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF PRIESTS AND BROTHERS.

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*“The Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness”*

The Lord is *“merciful”*: this word evokes an attitude of tenderness as that of a mother in dealing with her child. In fact, the Hebrew term used by the Bible makes one think of the insides or even the maternal womb. Therefore, the image it suggests is that of a God that *is moved and becomes tender for us* as a mother when she takes her child in her arms, desirous only of loving, protecting, and helping, ready to give everything, even herself. This is the image that this term suggests. A love, therefore, that can be described as “visceral” in the good sense.

The Lord is *“gracious,”* in the sense that He gives grace, has compassion and, in His greatness, bends over one who is weak and poor, *always ready to receive, to understand, to forgive.* He is like the father of the parable reported in Luke’s Gospel (*Luke 15:11-32*): a father, who does not

shut himself in resentment because of the younger son’s abandonment but, on the contrary, continues to wait for him -- he has generated him. And then he runs to meet and embrace him, he does not even let him finish his confession -- as if he covered his mouth -- so great is his love and joy for having found him again. And then he also goes to call his older son, who is angry and does not want to celebrate, and yet the father bends over him and invites him to come in, he tries to open his heart to love, so that no one remains excluded from the celebration of mercy. *Mercy* is a celebration!

God is *“slow to anger,”* literally, *“in the long term,”* that is wide-ranging in long suffering and the capacity to endure. God is able to wait, and His times are not the impatient ones of men. He is like the wise farmer that is able to wait, gives time to the good seed to grow, despite the darnel (*Matthew 13:24-30*).

And, finally, the Lord proclaims Himself *“abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”* How lovely is this description of God! Everything is here, because God is great and powerful, but His greatness and power are displayed in loving us, we who are so little, so incapable. The word *“love”* used here indicates *affection, grace and goodness.* It is not the love of soap operas... It is love that takes the first step, which does not depend on human merits but is of immense gratuitousness. It is the divine solicitude that nothing can stop, not even sin, because it is able to go beyond sin, to overcome evil and forgive it.

A *“faithfulness”* without limits: here is the last word of God’s revelation to Moses. God’s faithfulness never fails. Because the Lord is the Guardian that, as the Psalm says, does not fall asleep but watches constantly over us to lead us to life.

Pope Francis – General Audience

# “Oh! Mercy”, “Lord have Mercy”, “Oh for Mercy’s Sake”

*Mercy* is used frequently in phrases that are spontaneous!

Maybe you have heard these phrases from people who are responding to an activity, tragedy, or sudden occurrence that raises one’s awareness of the need for kindness, sympathy, understanding, and generosity. Mercy has many synonyms, but none as strong as the actual word itself – *Mercy!*

Pope Francis announced the Year of Mercy by writing a Bull of Indiction. Pope Francis in his Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy invites us to go deeper into the meaning of *Mercy* in our lives. A papal bull is a particular type of letter, patent or charter issued by a Pope of the Catholic Church. It is named after the lead seal (bullae) that was appended to the end in order to authenticate it.

## *Reflections about MERCY from the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*

*Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s Mercy.* These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him.

*Mercy* as a key word that indicates God’s action toward us.

As we can see in Sacred Scripture, mercy is a key word that indicates God’s action towards us. He does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviors that are shown in daily living. The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible; that is, he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. This is the path which the

merciful love of Christians must also travel. As the Father loves, so do his children. *Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other.*

*Mercy* is a wellspring of joy, serenity and peace.

It is the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to a hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

*Mercy* is the very foundation of the Church’s life.

Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love.

*“Be merciful just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36).*

We want to live this Jubilee Year in light of the Lord’s words: Merciful like the Father. The Evangelist reminds us of the teaching of Jesus who says, “Be merciful just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). It is a program of life as demanding as it is rich with joy and peace... Merciful like the Father, therefore, is the “motto” of this Holy Year. In mercy, we find proof of how God loves us. He gives his entire self, always, freely, asking nothing in return. He comes to our aid whenever we call upon him.

*“Year of the Lord’s Mercy”*

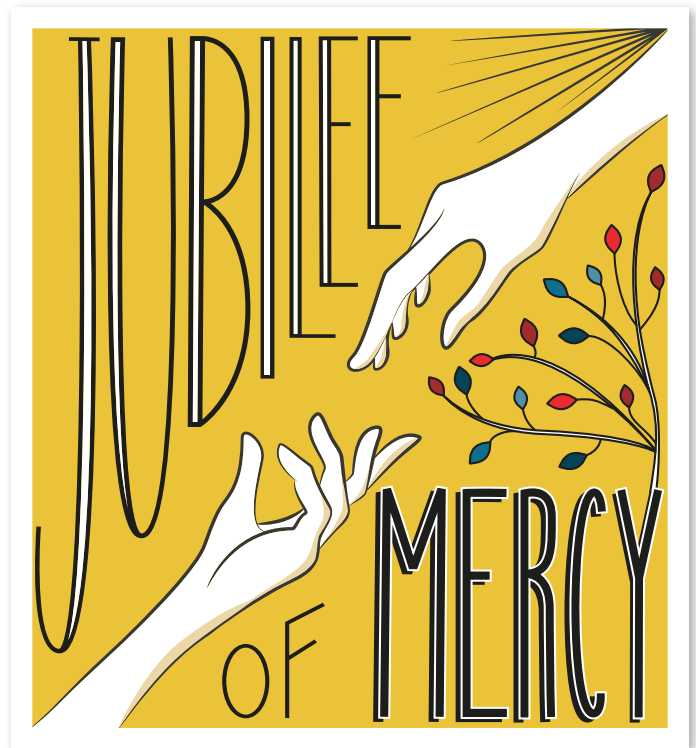
Luke writes that Jesus, on the Sabbath, went back to Nazareth and, as was his custom, entered the synagogue. They called upon him to read the Scripture and to comment on it. The passage was from the Book of Isaiah where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed

me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to those in captivity; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Is 61:1-2). A "year of the Lord's favor" or "mercy": this is what the Lord proclaimed and this is what we wish to live now. This Holy Year will bring to the fore the richness of Jesus' mission echoed in the words of the prophet: to bring a word and gesture of consolation to the poor, to proclaim liberty to those bound by new forms of slavery in modern society, to restore sight to those who can see no more because they are caught up in themselves, to restore dignity to all those from whom it has been robbed. The preaching of Jesus is made visible once more in the response of faith Christians are called to offer by their witness. May the words of the Apostle accompany us: He, who does acts of mercy, let him do them with cheerfulness (Rom 12:8).

*Mercy* expresses God's way of reaching out to the sinner offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert and believe.

*Mercy* - God's forgiveness knows no bounds!

The season of Lent during this Jubilee Year should also be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God's mercy. How many pages of Sacred Scripture are appropriate for meditation during the weeks of Lent to help us rediscover the merciful face of the Father!... The initiative of "24 Hours for the Lord," to be celebrated on the Friday and Saturday preceding the Fourth Week of Lent, should be implemented in every diocese. So many people, including the youth, are returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation; through this experience they are rediscovering a path back to the Lord, living a moment of intense prayer and finding meaning in their lives. Let us place the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the center once more in such a way that it will enable people to touch the grandeur of God's mercy with their own hands. For every penitent, it will be a source of true interior peace.



### *Missionaries of Mercy*

During Lent of this Holy Year, I intend to send out Missionaries of Mercy. They will be a sign of the Church's maternal solicitude for the People of God, enabling them to enter the profound richness of this mystery so fundamental to the faith. There will be priests to whom I will grant the authority to pardon even those sins reserved to the Holy See, so that the breadth of their mandate as confessors will be even clearer. They will be, above all, living signs of the Father's readiness to welcome those in search of his pardon. ... I ask my brother Bishops to invite and welcome these Missionaries so that they can be, above all, persuasive preachers of mercy. May individual dioceses organize "missions to the people" in such a way that these Missionaries may be heralds of joy and forgiveness.

The Church's primary task is to introduce everyone to the great mystery of God's *Mercy* by **contemplating the Face of Christ.**

**May the balm of *Mercy* reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already in our midst.**



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