



Pastoral Letter on the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

1. On 13 March 2015, Pope Francis announced his intention to proclaim an Extraordinary Jubilee which would have as its centre the Mercy of God, in the letter and spirit of Lk 6:36 : “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” This also serves as the motto for the Jubilee Year (see annex A). This Holy Year of Mercy commences on December 8 2015, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and will conclude on Sunday, 20 November 2016, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. This papal announcement was immediately followed by the Bull of Indiction entitled *Misericordiae Vultus (MV)* dated 11 April, the eve of the Feast of the Divine Mercy (see annex B). In this Bull, the Pope outlines his pastoral plan of action for the Jubilee Year, a plan which is directed to every Particular Church, exhorting them to live the entire Year as an extraordinary moment of grace and spiritual renewal (*MV* n.3). By this document, diocesan bishops are called to primarily focus on the theme of mercy during this Jubilee Year, in a way that mercy is not seen as an abstract word, but rather a face to recognize, contemplate and serve.

Salient Elements of the Holy Year of Mercy

2. The salient elements of the Holy Year of Mercy as presented in *MV* consist in:
- obtaining a plenary indulgence for all including the dead, based on the fulfillment of specified conditions;
 - a pilgrimage through a Holy Door at a cathedral, shrine or church closest to you;
 - the visitation by missionaries of Mercy to parishes and chapels;

- a recommendation to all faithful to fulfill a minimum a seven corporal works of mercy during the Jubilee Year.

With this Bull of Indiction and a subsequent letter to the Pontifical Council of New Evangelization - the dicastery that has been tasked to oversee all coordination of the Jubilee Year (see annex C) - the Pope seeks to emphasize “the indulgence on the part of the Father, who through the Bride of Christ, his Church, reaches the pardoned sinner” (MV n.22). In this way, the Pope wishes that the Jubilee indulgence be experienced and obtained by all the faithful: those who are physically able and healthy, as well as the weak and the aged.

3. To obtain the indulgence the Holy Father invites us to fulfill the following five conditions:

- i. make a brief pilgrimage to any Holy Door open in a cathedral or church designated by the diocesan bishop or to one of the four papal basilicas in Rome;
- ii. receive the sacrament of reconciliation;
- iii. attend the celebration of the Holy Eucharist;
- iv. recite the profession of faith, and
- v. pray for the intentions of the Holy Father.

For the sick and the elderly and shut-ins, the Pope suggests that it would suffice that they receive Holy Communion or attend Holy Mass, and community prayer through the various means of communication. *The Jubilee Year excludes no one*. It also includes the deceased who would be able to receive the indulgence when we remember them in the Eucharistic celebration.

The Military Ordinariate’s Pastoral Plan of Action (see *addendum*)

4. Dear brothers and sisters, in response to the Holy Father’s call, I have directed that a committee be formed and a Diocesan Pastoral Plan of Action be prepared in order to provide general guidelines and proposals to all RC Chaplains on how the Holy Year of Mercy is to be celebrated within the Military Ordinariate of Canada. Deacon Major (Retd) Gerard Vardy has graciously accepted to lead this committee and I have appointed him to act as the Diocesan Coordinator of all pastoral activities related to our diocesan celebration of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. In collaboration with my Vicar General, the Chancery, the Chapel Life Coordinators

(RC) and all RC Chaplains, Deacon Vardy will oversee the implementation of this Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Please feel free to communicate with him at any time if you have any questions.

5. The aim of this Diocesan Pastoral Plan is to put into action many of the indications which the Holy Father has presented to us for this Jubilee Year of Mercy. First of all, it seeks to concretely articulate Pope Francis' "burning desire" of placing mercy at the heart of all pastoral action within the Church. This is because 'mercy' is the very foundation of the Church's life and whose very credibility is seen in the manner she shows merciful and compassionate love, by putting into practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Indeed, Pope Francis, in his recent letter for the 31st World Youth Day, again emphasized his intent by suggesting that all faithful "for the first seven months of 2016, choose a corporal and a spiritual work of mercy to practice each month" (**see annex D**).

6. Dear brothers and sisters, this pastoral plan is directed first and foremost to all Chapel Life Coordinators (RC) who, by their very mission, are directly involved in the pastoral leadership of our chapel faith communities. By the promotion of the Jubilee Year of Mercy in the form of altar banners, posters, and, more importantly, by organizing at least some of the suggested pastoral initiatives proposed in the Pastoral Plan, it is my sincere hope that the faithful within the Ordinariate will generously reap the numerous spiritual riches of this Jubilee Year. In this way, the faithful will be able to rediscover the grace, beauty and power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is also my hope that the Pastoral Plan will act as a catalyst and a reference to inspire Chapel Pastoral Councils, chaplain teams and the faithful throughout this upcoming Holy Year and in this way become a source of renewal of chapel life. In return, all chapel communities are warmly encouraged to share with one another the fruit of their experiences. This could be done by posting on the diocesan and/or chapel websites, photos and articles regarding the pastoral events associated with the Holy Year of Mercy, held in the local chapels.

7. Secondly, it is my hope that this plan may also serve as a resource for all RC chaplains, regardless of rank or function, which will inspire them in finding innovative ways of incorporating concrete works of mercy in their professional and personal activities as well as create a greater awareness of the power of this most important virtue within their respective work environments.

8. Thirdly, I also invite all the faithful within the Military Ordinariate to fully engage in the various local pastoral activities that will be held in your area so as to fully benefit from the fruits of this Jubilee Year of Mercy. May their experience of this Holy Year reaffirm within them their love and commitment to Christ as well as compel them to become even more ardent witnesses of God's healing mercy in the world.

9. In closing, I would also like to recommend to all the website of the Pontifical Council for New Evangelization (<http://www.iubiliaummisericordiae.va/>). This link provides a multitude of pastoral resources, the calendar for the Jubilee Year, as well as the *modus operandi* for those who seek to go on a pilgrimage to the Eternal city during this period.

10. May Mary the Mother of Mercy who, in her *Magnificat* thanks the Almighty for "remembering his mercy, the mercy promised to our descendants" (Lk 1:55), watch over us, so that we and our subjects may once again be renewed in our experience of the justice and mercy of God.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



+ Donald J. Thériault
Military Ordinary of Canada

Given in Ottawa, Ontario

Feast of Saint John Damascene
04 December 2015

