



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC LETTER

*Misericordia et
misera*

OF THE HOLY FATHER
FRANCIS

AT THE CONCLUSION
OF THE EXTRAORDINARY
JUBILEE OF MERCY

Francis
to all who read this Apostolic Letter
mercy and peace

Misericordia et misera is a phrase used by Saint Augustine in recounting the story of Jesus' meeting with the woman taken in adultery (cf. *Jn* 8:1-11). It would be difficult to imagine a more beautiful or apt way of expressing the mystery of God's love when it touches the sinner: "the two of them alone remained: *mercy with misery*".^[1] What great mercy and divine justice shine forth in this narrative! Its teaching serves not only to throw light on the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, but also to point out the path that we are called to follow in the future.

1. This page of the Gospel could easily serve as an icon of what we have celebrated during the Holy Year, a time rich in mercy, which must continue to be *celebrated* and *lived out* in our communities. Mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the Church; it constitutes her very existence, through which the profound truths of the Gospel are made manifest and tangible. Everything is revealed in mercy; everything is resolved in the merciful love of the Father.

A woman and Jesus meet. She is an adulteress and, in the eyes of the Law, liable to be stoned. Jesus, through his preaching and the total gift of himself that would lead him to the Cross, returned the Mosaic Law to its true and original intent. Here what is central is not the law or legal justice, but the love of God, which is capable of looking into the heart of each person and seeing the deepest desire hidden there; God's love must take primacy over all else. This Gospel account, however, is not an encounter of sin and judgement in the abstract, but of a sinner and her Saviour. Jesus looked that woman in the eye and read in her heart a desire to be understood, forgiven and set free. The misery of sin was clothed with the mercy of love. Jesus' only judgement is one filled with mercy and compassion for the condition of this sinner. To those who wished to judge and condemn her to death, Jesus replies with a lengthy silence. His purpose was to let God's voice be heard in the consciences not only of the woman, but also in those of her accusers, who drop their stones and one by one leave the scene (cf. *Jn* 8:9). Jesus then says: "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?... Neither do I condemn you. Go your way and from now on do not sin again" (vv. 10-11). Jesus helps the woman to look to the future with hope and to make a new start in life. Henceforth, if she so desires, she can "walk in charity" (*Eph* 5:2). Once clothed in mercy, even if the inclination to sin remains, it is overcome by the love that makes it possible for her to look ahead and to live her life differently.

2. Jesus had taught this clearly on another occasion, when he had been invited to dine at the home of a Pharisee and a woman, known by everyone to be a sinner, approached him (cf. *Lk* 7:36-50). She poured perfume over his feet, bathed them with her tears and dried them with her hair (cf. vv. 37-38). To the scandalized reaction of the Pharisee, Jesus replied: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little" (v. 47).

Forgiveness is the most visible sign of the Father's love, which Jesus sought to reveal by his entire life. Every page of the Gospel is marked by this imperative of a love that loves to the point of forgiveness. Even at the last moment of his earthly life, as he was being nailed to the cross, Jesus spoke words of forgiveness: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (*Lk* 23:34).

Nothing of what a repentant sinner places before God's mercy can be excluded from the embrace of his forgiveness. For this reason, none of us has the right to make forgiveness conditional.

Mercy is always a gratuitous act of our heavenly Father, an unconditional and unmerited act of love. Consequently, we cannot risk opposing the full freedom of the love with which God enters into the life of every person. Mercy is this concrete action of love that, by forgiving, transforms and changes our lives. In this way, the divine mystery of mercy is made manifest. God is merciful (cf. *Ex* 34:6); his mercy lasts for ever (cf. *Ps* 136). From generation to generation, it embraces all those who trust in him and it changes them, by bestowing a share in his very life.

3. What great joy welled up in the heart of these two women: the adulteress and the sinner! Forgiveness made them feel free at last and happy as never before. Their tears of shame and pain

turned into the smile of a person who knows that he or she is loved. Mercy gives rise to *joy*, because our hearts are opened to the hope of a new life. The joy of forgiveness is inexpressible, yet it radiates all around us whenever we experience forgiveness. Its source is in the love with which God comes to meet us, breaking through walls of selfishness that surround us, in order to make us in turn instruments of mercy.

How meaningful in this regard for us too are the ancient words which guided the first Christians: "Clothe yourselves in joy, which always is agreeable and acceptable to God, and rejoice in it. For all who are joyful do what is good, think what is good, and despise sadness... All who put aside sadness and put on joy will live in God".^[2] The experience of mercy brings joy. May we never allow this joy to be robbed from us by our troubles and concerns. May it remain rooted in our hearts and enable us to approach with serenity the events of our daily lives.

In a culture often dominated by technology, sadness and loneliness appear to be on the rise, not least among young people. The future seems prey to an uncertainty that does not make for stability. This often gives rise to depression, sadness and boredom, which can gradually lead to despair. We need witnesses to hope and true joy if we are to dispel the illusions that promise quick and easy happiness through artificial paradises. The profound sense of emptiness felt by so many people can be overcome by the hope we bear in our hearts and by the joy that it gives. We need to acknowledge the joy that rises up in a heart touched by mercy. Let us keep in mind, then, the words of the Apostle: "Rejoice in the Lord always" (*Phil* 4:4; cf. *1 Thess* 5:16)

4. We have celebrated an intense Jubilee Year in which we have received the grace of mercy in abundance. Like a gusting but wholesome wind, the Lord's goodness and mercy have been poured out upon the entire world. Because each of us has experienced at length this loving gaze of God, we cannot remain unaffected, for it changes our lives.

We feel the need above all to thank the Lord and to tell him: "Lord, you have been favourable to your land... You have forgiven the iniquity of your people" (*Psalms* 85:1-2). So it is. God has subdued our iniquities and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea (cf. *Micah* 7:19). He no longer remembers them, since he has cast them behind his back (cf. *Isaiah* 38:17). As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us (cf. *Psalms* 103:12).

In this Holy Year, the Church listened attentively and experienced intensely the presence and closeness of the Father, who with the Holy Spirit has enabled her to see with greater clarity the gift and mandate of Jesus Christ regarding forgiveness. It has truly been like a new visitation of the Lord among us. We have felt his life-giving breath poured out upon the Church and, once again, his words have pointed out our mission: "Receive the Holy Spirit: if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (*John* 20:22-23).

5. Now, at the conclusion of this Jubilee, it is time to look to the future and to understand how best

to continue, with joy, fidelity and enthusiasm, experiencing the richness of divine mercy. Our communities can remain alive and active in the work of the new evangelization in the measure that the “pastoral conversion” to which we are called^[3] will be shaped daily by the renewing force of mercy. Let us not limit its action; let us not sadden the Spirit, who constantly points out new paths to take in bringing to everyone the Gospel of salvation.

First, we are called to *celebrate* mercy. What great richness is present in the Church’s prayer when she invokes God as the Father of mercies! In the liturgy, mercy is not only repeatedly evoked, but is truly received and experienced. From the beginning to the end of the *Eucharistic celebration*, mercy constantly appears in the dialogue between the assembly at prayer and the heart of the Father, who rejoices to bestow his merciful love. After first pleading for forgiveness with the invocation “Lord have mercy”, we are immediately reassured: “May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life”. With this confidence, the community gathers in the presence of the Lord, particularly on the holy day of the resurrection. Many of the “Collect” prayers are meant to remind us of the great gift of mercy. In Lent, for example, we pray: “O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy”.^[4] We are then immersed in the great Eucharistic Prayer with the Preface that proclaims: “For you so loved the world that in your mercy you sent us the Redeemer, to live like us in all things but sin”.^[5] The Fourth Eucharistic Prayer is a hymn to God’s mercy: “For you came in mercy to the aid of all, so that those who seek might find you”. “Have mercy on us all”^[6] is the insistent plea made by the priest in the Eucharistic Prayer to implore a share in eternal life. After the *Our Father*, the priest continues the prayer by invoking peace and liberation from sin by the “help of your mercy”. And before the sign of peace, exchanged as an expression of fraternity and mutual love in the light of forgiveness received, the priest prays: “Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church”.^[7] By these words, with humble trust we beseech the gift of unity and peace for Holy Mother Church. The celebration of divine mercy culminates in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the memorial of Christ’s paschal mystery, the source of salvation for every human being, for history and for the whole world. In a word, each moment of the Eucharistic celebration refers to God’s mercy.

In the sacramental life, mercy is granted us in abundance. It is not without significance that the Church mentions mercy explicitly in the formulae of the two “sacraments of healing”, namely, the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. In the first, the formula of absolution reads: “God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace”.^[8] In the second, the formula of anointing reads:

“Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit”.^[9] In the Church’s prayer, then, references to mercy, far from being merely

exhortative, are highly *performative*, which is to say that as we invoke mercy with faith, it is granted to us, and as we confess it to be vital and real, it truly transforms us. This is a fundamental element of our faith, and we must keep it constantly in mind. Even before the revelation of sin, there is the revelation of the love by which God created the world and mankind. Love is the first act whereby God makes himself known to us and comes to meet us. So let us open our hearts and trust in God's love for us. His love always precedes us, accompanies us and remains with us, despite our sin.

6. In this context, *hearing the word of God* takes on particular significance. Each Sunday, God's word is proclaimed in the Christian community so that the Lord's Day may be illuminated by the paschal mystery.^[10] In the Eucharistic celebration, we seem to witness a true dialogue between God and his people. In the biblical readings, we retrace the history of our salvation through the proclamation of God's tireless work of mercy. The Lord continues to speak to us today as to friends; he dwells in our midst,^[11] in order to accompany us and show us the path of life. His word gives a voice to our inmost needs and worries, and offers a fruitful response, so that we can concretely experience his closeness to us. Hence the importance of the *homily*, in which "truth goes hand in hand with beauty and goodness"^[12] so that the hearts of believers may thrill before the grandeur of mercy! I strongly encourage that great care be given to preparing the homily and to preaching in general. A priest's preaching will be fruitful to the extent that he himself has experienced the merciful goodness of the Lord. Communicating the certainty that God loves us is not an exercise in rhetoric, but a condition for the credibility of one's priesthood. The personal experience of mercy is the best way to make it a true message of consolation and conversion in the pastoral ministry. Both homiletics and catechesis need to be sustained by this pulsing heart of the Christian life.

7. The *Bible* is the great story of the marvels of God's mercy. Every one of its pages is steeped in the love of the Father who from the moment of creation wished to impress the signs of his love on the universe. Through the words of the prophets and the wisdom writings, the Holy Spirit shaped the history of Israel as a recognition of God's tenderness and closeness, despite the people's infidelity. Jesus' life and preaching decisively marked the history of the Christian community, which has viewed its mission in terms of Christ's command to be a permanent instrument of his mercy and forgiveness (cf. *Jn* 20:23). Through Sacred Scripture, kept alive by the faith of the Church, the Lord continues to speak to his Bride, showing her the path she must take to enable the Gospel of salvation to reach everyone. I greatly desire that God's word be increasingly celebrated, known and disseminated, so that the mystery of love streaming from this font of mercy may be ever better understood. As the Apostle tells us clearly: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 *Tim* 3:16).

It would be beneficial if every Christian community, on one Sunday of the liturgical year, could renew its efforts to make the Sacred Scriptures better known and more widely diffused. It would be a Sunday given over entirely to the word of God, so as to appreciate the inexhaustible riches

contained in that constant dialogue between the Lord and his people. Creative initiatives can help make this an opportunity for the faithful to become living vessels for the transmission of God's word. Initiatives of this sort would certainly include the practice of *lectio divina*, so that the prayerful reading of the sacred text will help support and strengthen the spiritual life. Such a reading, centred on themes relating to mercy, will enable a personal experience of the great fruitfulness of the biblical text – read in the light of the Church's spiritual tradition – and thus give rise to concrete gestures and works of charity.^[13]

8. The celebration of mercy takes place in a very particular way in the *Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation*. Here we feel the embrace of the Father, who comes forth to meet us and grant us the grace of being once more his sons and daughters. We are sinners and we bear the burden of contradiction between what we wish to do and what we do in fact (cf. *Rom 7:14-21*). Yet grace always precedes us and takes on the face of the mercy that effects our reconciliation and pardon. God makes us understand his great love for us precisely when we recognize that we are sinners. Grace is stronger than sin: it overcomes every possible form of resistance, because love conquers all (cf. *1 Cor 13:7*).

In the sacrament of Forgiveness God shows us the way to turn back to him and invites us to experience his closeness anew. This pardon can be obtained by beginning, first of all, to *live in charity*. The Apostle Peter tells us this when he writes that “love covers a multitude of sins” (*1 Pet 4:8*). Only God forgives sins, but he asks that we be ready to forgive others even as he forgives us: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us” (*Mt 6:12*). How sad it is when our hearts are closed and unable to forgive! Resentment, anger and revenge gain the upper hand, making our lives miserable and blocking a joyful commitment to mercy.

9. An experience of grace lived out by the Church with great effectiveness in the Jubilee Year has certainly been the service of the *Missionaries of Mercy*. Their pastoral activity sought to emphasize that God places no obstacles in the way of those who seek him with a contrite heart, because he goes out to meet everyone like a father. I have received many testimonies of joy from those who encountered the Lord once more in the sacrament of Confession. Let us not miss the opportunity to live our faith also as an experience of reconciliation. Today too, the Apostle urges us: “Be reconciled to God” (*2 Cor 5:20*), so that all who believe can discover the power of love which makes us “a new creation” (*2 Cor 5:17*).

I thank every Missionary of Mercy for this valuable service aimed at rendering effective the grace of forgiveness. This extraordinary ministry does not end with the closing of the Holy Door. I wish it to continue until further notice as a concrete sign that the grace of the Jubilee remains alive and effective the world over. As a direct expression of my concern and closeness to the Missionaries of Mercy in this period, the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization will supervise them and find the most suitable forms for the exercise of this valuable ministry.

10. I invite priests once more to prepare carefully for the ministry of Confession, which is a true priestly mission. I thank all of you from the heart for your ministry, and I ask you to be *welcoming* to all, *witnesses* of fatherly tenderness whatever the gravity of the sin involved, *attentive* in helping penitents to reflect on the wrong they have done, *clear* in presenting moral principles, *willing* to walk patiently beside the faithful on their penitential journey, *far-sighted* in discerning individual cases and *generous* in dispensing God's forgiveness. Just as Jesus chose to remain silent in order to save the woman caught in adultery from the sentence of death, so every priest in the confessional should be open-hearted, since every penitent is a reminder that he himself is a sinner, but also a minister of mercy.

11. I would like us all to meditate upon the words of the Apostle, written towards the end of his life, when he confesses to Timothy that he was the greatest of sinners, "but for this reason I received mercy" (1 *Tim* 1:16). Paul's words, powerful as they are, make us reflect on our lives and see God's mercy at work in changing, converting and transforming our hearts. "I thank him who has given me strength for this, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful by appointing me to his service, though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him; but I received mercy" (1 *Tim* 1:12-13).

Let us recall with renewed pastoral zeal another saying of the Apostle: "God has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation" (2 *Cor* 5:18). We were the first to be forgiven in view of this ministry, made witnesses at first hand of the universality of God's forgiveness. No law or precept can prevent God from once more embracing the son who returns to him, admitting that he has done wrong but intending to start his life anew. Remaining only at the level of the law is equivalent to thwarting faith and divine mercy. The law has an educational value (cf. *Gal* 3:24) with charity as its goal (cf. 1 *Tim* 1:5). Nonetheless, Christians are called to experience the newness of the Gospel, the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (*Rom* 8:2). Even in the most complex cases, where there is a temptation to apply a form of justice derived from rules alone, we must believe in the power flowing from divine grace.

We confessors have experienced many conversions that took place before our very eyes. We feel responsible, then, for actions and words that can touch the heart of penitents and enable them to discover the closeness and tenderness of the Father who forgives. Let us not lose such occasions by acting in a way that can contradict the experience of mercy that the penitent seeks. Rather, let us help light up the space of personal conscience with God's infinite love (cf. 1 *Jn* 3:20).

The Sacrament of Reconciliation must regain its central place in the Christian life. This requires priests capable of putting their lives at the service of the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 *Cor* 5:18), in such a way that, while no sincerely repentant sinner is prevented from drawing near to the love of the Father who awaits his return, everyone is afforded the opportunity of experiencing the liberating power of forgiveness.

A favourable occasion for this could be the *24 Hours for the Lord*, a celebration held in proximity to the Fourth Sunday of Lent. This initiative, already in place in many dioceses, has great pastoral value in encouraging a more fervent experience of the sacrament of Confession.

12. Given this need, lest any obstacle arise between the request for reconciliation and God's forgiveness, I henceforth grant to all priests, in virtue of their ministry, the faculty to absolve those who have committed the sin of procured abortion. The provision I had made in this regard, limited to the duration of the Extraordinary Holy Year,^[14] is hereby extended, notwithstanding anything to the contrary. I wish to restate as firmly as I can that abortion is a grave sin, since it puts an end to an innocent life. In the same way, however, I can and must state that there is no sin that God's mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father. May every priest, therefore, be a guide, support and comfort to penitents on this journey of special reconciliation.

For the Jubilee Year I had also granted that those faithful who, for various reasons, attend churches officiated by the priests of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X, can validly and licitly receive the sacramental absolution of their sins.^[15] For the pastoral benefit of these faithful, and trusting in the good will of their priests to strive with God's help for the recovery of full communion in the Catholic Church, I have personally decided to extend this faculty beyond the Jubilee Year, until further provisions are made, lest anyone ever be deprived of the sacramental sign of reconciliation through the Church's pardon.

13. Another face of mercy is *consolation*. "Comfort, comfort my people" (Is 40:1) is the heartfelt plea that the prophet continues to make today, so that a word of hope may come to all those who experience suffering and pain. Let us never allow ourselves to be robbed of the hope born of faith in the Risen Lord. True, we are often sorely tested, but we must never lose our certainty of the Lord's love for us. His mercy finds expression also in the closeness, affection and support that many of our brothers and sisters can offer us at times of sadness and affliction. The drying of tears is one way to break the vicious circle of solitude in which we often find ourselves trapped.

All of us need consolation because no one is spared suffering, pain and misunderstanding. How much pain can be caused by a spiteful remark born of envy, jealousy or anger! What great suffering is caused by the experience of betrayal, violence and abandonment! How much sorrow in the face of the death of a loved one! And yet God is never far from us at these moments of sadness and trouble. A reassuring word, an embrace that makes us feel understood, a caress that makes us experience love, a prayer that makes us stronger... all these things express God's closeness through the consolation offered by our brothers and sisters.

Sometimes too, *silence* can be helpful, especially when we cannot find words in response to the questions of those who suffer. A lack of words, however, can be made up for by the compassion of a person who stays at our side, who loves us and who holds out a hand. It is not true that silence

is an act of surrender; on the contrary, it is a moment of strength and love. Silence too belongs to our language of consolation, because it becomes a concrete way of sharing in the suffering of a brother or sister.

14. At a time like our own, marked by many crises, including that of the family, it is important to offer a word of comfort and strength to our families. The gift of matrimony is a great calling to which spouses, by the grace of Christ, respond with a love that is generous, faithful and patient. The beauty of the family endures unchanged, despite so many problems and alternative proposals: “The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church”.^[16] The journey of life that leads a man and a woman to meet one other, to love one another and to promise mutual fidelity before God, is often interrupted by suffering, betrayal and loneliness. Joy at the gift of children is accompanied by concern about their growth and education, and their prospects for happiness and fulfilment in life.

The grace of the sacrament of Matrimony not only strengthens the family to be a privileged place for practising mercy, but also commits the Christian community and all its pastoral activity to uphold the great positive value of the family. This Jubilee Year cannot overlook the complexity of the current realities of family life. The experience of mercy enables us to regard all human problems from the standpoint of God’s love, which never tires of welcoming and accompanying.^[17]

We have to remember each of us carries the richness and the burdens of our personal history; this is what makes us different from everyone else. Our life, with its joys and sorrows, is something unique and unrepeatable that takes place under the merciful gaze of God. This demands, especially of priests, a careful, profound and far-sighted spiritual discernment, so that everyone, none excluded, no matter the situation a person is living in, can feel accepted by God, participate actively in the life of the community and be part of that People of God which journeys tirelessly towards the fullness of his kingdom of justice, love, forgiveness and mercy.

15. Here too, we see the particular importance of *the moment of death*. The Church has always experienced this dramatic passage in the light of Christ’s resurrection, which opened the way to the certainty of the life to come. We have a great challenge to face, especially in contemporary culture, which often tends to trivialize death to the point of treating it as an illusion or hiding it from sight. Yet death must be faced and prepared for as a painful and inescapable passage, yet one charged with immense meaning, for it is the ultimate act of love towards those we leave behind and towards God whom we go forth to meet. In all religions, the moment of death, like that of birth, is accompanied by a religious presence. As Christians, we celebrate the funeral liturgy as a hope-filled prayer for the soul of the deceased and for the consolation of those who suffer the loss of their loved one.

I am convinced that our faith-filled pastoral activity should lead to a direct experience of how the

liturgical signs and our prayers are an expression of the Lord's mercy. It is the Lord himself who offers words of hope, since nothing and no one can ever separate us from his love (cf. *Rom 8:35*). The priest's sharing in this moment is an important form of pastoral care, for it enables the closeness of the Christian community at a moment of helplessness, solitude, uncertainty and grief.

16. The Jubilee now ends and the Holy Door is closed. But the door of mercy of our heart continues to remain wide open. We have learned that God bends down to us (cf. *Hos 11:4*) so that we may imitate him in bending down to our brothers and sisters. The yearning of so many people to turn back to the house of the Father, who awaits their return, has also been awakened by heartfelt and generous testimonies to God's tenderness. The Holy Door that we have crossed in this Jubilee Year has set us on *the path of charity*, which we are called to travel daily with fidelity and joy. It is the road of mercy, on which we meet so many of our brothers and sisters who reach out for someone to take their hand and become a companion on the way.

The desire for closeness to Christ requires us to draw near to our brothers and sisters, for nothing is more pleasing to the Father than a true sign of mercy. By its very nature, mercy becomes visible and tangible in specific and powerful acts. Once mercy has been truly experienced, it is impossible to turn back. It grows constantly and it changes our lives. It is an authentic new creation: it brings about a new heart, capable of loving to the full, and it purifies our eyes to perceive hidden needs. How true are the words of the Church's prayer at the Easter Vigil, after the reading of the creation account: "O God, who wonderfully created human nature and still more wonderfully redeemed it".^[18]

Mercy *renews and redeems* because it is the meeting of two hearts: the heart of God who comes to meet the human heart. The latter is warmed and healed by the former. Our hearts of stone become hearts of flesh (cf. *Ezek 36:26*) capable of love despite our sinfulness. I come to realize that I am truly a "new creation" (*Gal 6:15*): I am loved, therefore I exist; I am forgiven, therefore I am reborn; I have been shown mercy, therefore I have become a vessel of mercy.

17. During the Holy Year, especially on the "Fridays of Mercy", I was able to experience in a tangible way the goodness present in our world. Often it remains hidden, since it is daily expressed in discreet and quiet gestures. Even if rarely publicized, many concrete acts of goodness and tenderness are shown to the weak and the vulnerable, to those most lonely and abandoned. There are true champions of charity who show constant solidarity with the poor and the unhappy. Let us thank the Lord for these precious gifts that invite us to discover the joy of drawing near to the woundedness of human weakness. I also think with gratitude of the many volunteers who daily devote their time and efforts to showing God's presence and closeness. Their service is a genuine work of mercy, one that helps many people draw closer to the Church.

18. Now is the time to unleash the creativity of mercy, to bring about new undertakings, the fruit of grace. The Church today needs to tell of those "many other signs" that Jesus worked, which "are

not written” (*Jn* 20:30), so that they too may be an eloquent expression of the fruitfulness of the love of Christ and of the community that draws its life from him. Two thousand years have passed, yet works of mercy continue to make God’s goodness visible.

In our own day, whole peoples suffer hunger and thirst, and we are haunted by pictures of children with nothing to eat. Throngs of people continue to migrate from one country to another in search of food, work, shelter and peace. Disease in its various forms is a constant cause of suffering that cries out for assistance, comfort and support. Prisons are often places where confinement is accompanied by serious hardships due to inhumane living conditions. Illiteracy remains widespread, preventing children from developing their potential and exposing them to new forms of slavery. The culture of extreme individualism, especially in the West, has led to a loss of a sense of solidarity with and responsibility for others. Today many people have no experience of God himself, and this represents the greatest poverty and the major obstacle to recognizing the inviolable dignity of human life.

To conclude, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy continue in our own day to be proof of mercy’s immense positive influence as a *social value*. Mercy impels us to roll up our sleeves and set about restoring dignity to millions of people; they are our brothers and sisters who, with us, are called to build a “city which is reliable”.^[19]

19. Many concrete signs of mercy have been performed during this Holy Year. Communities, families and individuals have rediscovered the joy of sharing and the beauty of solidarity. But this is not enough. Our world continues to promote new forms of spiritual and material poverty that assault human dignity. For this reason, the Church must always be vigilant and ready to identify new works of mercy and to practise them with generosity and enthusiasm.

Let us make every effort, then, to devise specific and insightful ways of practising charity and the works of mercy. Mercy is inclusive and tends to spread like wildfire in a way that knows no limits. Hence we are called to give new expression to the traditional works of mercy. For mercy overflows, keeps moving forward, bears rich fruit. It is like the leaven that makes the dough rise (cf. *Mt* 13:33), or the mustard seed that grows into a tree (cf. *Lk* 13:19).

We need but think of one corporal work of mercy: “to clothe the naked” (cf. *Mt* 25:36, 38,43,44). This takes us back to the beginning, to the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve realized that they were naked and, hearing the Lord approaching, felt shame and hid themselves (*Gen* 3:7-8). We know that God punished them, yet he also “made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them” (*Gen* 3:21). He covered their shame and restored their dignity.

Let us think too of Jesus on Golgotha. The Son of God hangs naked on the cross; the soldiers took his tunic and cast lots for it (cf. *Jn* 19:23-24). He has nothing left. The cross is the extreme revelation of Jesus’ sharing the lot of those who have lost their dignity for lack of the necessities of

life. Just as the Church is called to be the “tunic of Christ”^[20] and to clothe her Lord once more, so She is committed to solidarity with the naked of the world, to help them recover the dignity of which they have been stripped. Jesus’ words, “I was naked and you clothed me” (*Mt 25:36*), oblige us not to turn our backs on the new forms of poverty and marginalization that prevent people from living a life of dignity.

Being unemployed or not receiving a sufficient salary; not being able to have a home or a land in which to live; experiencing discrimination on account of one’s faith, race or social status: these are just a few examples of many situations that attack the dignity of the person. In the face of such attacks, Christian mercy responds above all with vigilance and solidarity. How many situations exist today where we can restore dignity to individuals and make possible a truly humane life! Let us think only about the many children who suffer from forms of violence that rob them of the joy of life. I keep thinking of their sorrowful and bewildered faces. They are pleading for our help to be set free from the slavery of the contemporary world. These children are the young adults of tomorrow. How are we preparing them to live with dignity and responsibility? With what hope can they face their present or their future?

The *social character* of mercy demands that we not simply stand by and do nothing. It requires us to banish indifference and hypocrisy, lest our plans and projects remain a dead letter. May the Holy Spirit help us to contribute actively and selflessly to making justice and a dignified life not simply clichés but a concrete commitment of those who seek to bear witness to the presence of God’s Kingdom.

20. We are called to promote a *culture of mercy* based on the rediscovery of encounter with others, a culture in which no one looks at another with indifference or turns away from the suffering of our brothers and sisters. *The works of mercy are “handcrafted”*, in the sense that none of them is alike. Our hands can craft them in a thousand different ways, and even though the one God inspires them, and they are all fashioned from the same “material”, mercy itself, each one takes on a different form.

The works of mercy affect a person’s entire life. For this reason, we can set in motion a real cultural revolution, beginning with simple gestures capable of reaching body and spirit, people’s very lives. This is a commitment that the Christian community should take up, in the knowledge that God’s word constantly calls us to leave behind the temptation to hide behind indifference and individualism in order to lead a comfortable life free of problems. Jesus tells his disciples: “The poor you always have with you” (*Jn 12:8*). There is no alibi to justify not engaging with the poor when Jesus has identified himself with each of them.

The culture of mercy is shaped in assiduous prayer, in docility to the working of the Holy Spirit, in knowing the lives of the saints and in being close to the poor. It urges us not to overlook situations that call for our involvement. The temptation to theorize “about” mercy can be overcome to the

extent that our daily life becomes one of participation and sharing. Nor should we ever forget what the Apostle Paul tells us about his meeting with Peter, James and John after his conversion. His words highlight an essential aspect of his own mission and of the Christian life as a whole: “Only they would have us remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do” (*Gal 2:10*). We cannot forget the poor: this is an injunction as relevant today as ever, and one that compels by its evangelical warrant.

21. The Jubilee impresses upon us the words of the Apostle Peter: “Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (*1 Pet 2:10*). Let us not hold on jealously to what we have received, but share it with our suffering brothers and sisters, so that they can be sustained by the power of the Father’s mercy. May our communities reach out to all who live in their midst, so that God’s caress may reach everyone through the witness of believers.

This is the time of mercy. Each day of our journey is marked by God’s presence. He guides our steps with the power of the grace that the Spirit pours into our hearts to make them capable of loving. *It is the time of mercy* for each and all, since no one can think that he or she is cut off from God’s closeness and the power of his tender love. *It is the time of mercy* because those who are weak and vulnerable, distant and alone, ought to feel the presence of brothers and sisters who can help them in their need. *It is the time of mercy* because the poor should feel that they are regarded with respect and concern by others who have overcome indifference and discovered what is essential in life. *It is the time of mercy* because no sinner can ever tire of asking forgiveness and all can feel the welcoming embrace of the Father.

During the “Jubilee for Socially Excluded People”, as the Holy Doors of Mercy were being closed in all the cathedrals and shrines of the world, I had the idea that, as yet another tangible sign of this Extraordinary Holy Year, the entire Church might celebrate, on the Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time, the *World Day of the Poor*. This would be the worthiest way to prepare for the celebration of the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, who identified with the little ones and the poor and who will judge us on our works of mercy (cf. *Mt 25:31-46*). It would be a day to help communities and each of the baptized to reflect on how poverty is at the very heart of the Gospel and that, as long as Lazarus lies at the door of our homes (cf. *Lk 16:19-21*), there can be no justice or social peace. This Day will also represent a genuine form of new evangelization (cf. *Mt 11:5*) which can renew the face of the Church as She perseveres in her perennial activity of pastoral conversion and witness to mercy.

22. The Holy Mother of God always looks upon us with her eyes of mercy. She is the first to show us the way and to accompany us in our witness of love. As she is often shown in works of art, the Mother of Mercy gathers us all under the protection of her mantle. Let us trust in her maternal assistance and follow her perennial counsel to look to Jesus, the radiant face of God’s mercy.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter’s Basilica, on 20 November, the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ,

King of the Universe, in the year 2016, the fourth of my Pontificate.

FRANCISCUS

[1] *On the Gospel of John*, XXXIII, 5.

[2] *Shepherd of Hermas*, XLII, 1-4.

[3] Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 27.

[4] *Roman Missal*, Collect for the Third Sunday of Lent.

[5] *Ibid.*, Preface for Sundays in Ordinary Time VII.

[6] *Ibid.*, Eucharistic Prayer II.

[7] *Ibid.*, Communion Rite.

[8] *Rite of Penance*, No. 46.

[9] *Sacrament of Anointing and Pastoral Care of the Sick*, No. 76.

[10] Cf. Second Vatican ecumenical council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 106.

[11] *Id.*, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, 2.

[12] Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 142.

[13] Cf. Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 86-87.

[14] Cf. *Letter According to Which an Indulgence is Granted to the Faithful on the Occasion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*, 1 September 2015.

[15] Cf. *ibid.*

[16] Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, 1.

[17] Cf. *ibid.*, 291-300.

[18] *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil, Prayer after the First Reading.

[19] Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*, 50.

[20] Cf. Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*, 7.

ACTA APOSTOLICAE SEDIS

COMMENTARIUM OFFICIALE

Directio: Palazzo Apostolico – Città del Vaticano – *Administratio:* Libreria Editrice Vaticana

ACTA FRANCISCI PP.

CONSISTORIA

Homilia habita occasione Consistorii Ordinarii Publici ad XVII novos Cardinales creandos.*

Il brano del Vangelo che abbiamo appena ascoltato,¹ molti lo hanno chiamato “il discorso della pianura”. Dopo l’istituzione dei Dodici, Gesù discese con i suoi discepoli dove una moltitudine lo aspettava per ascoltarlo e per farsi guarire. La chiamata degli Apostoli è accompagnata da questo “mettersi in cammino” verso la pianura, verso l’incontro con una moltitudine che, come dice il testo del Vangelo, era “*tormentata*”.² L’elezione, invece di mantenerli in alto sulla montagna, sulla cima, li conduce al cuore della folla, li pone in mezzo ai suoi tormenti, sul piano della loro vita. In questo modo il Signore rivela a loro e a noi che la vera vetta si raggiunge nella pianura, e la pianura ci ricorda che la vetta si trova in uno sguardo e specialmente in una chiamata: «Siate misericordiosi, come il Padre vostro è misericordioso». ³

Un invito accompagnato da quattro imperativi, potremmo dire da quattro esortazioni che il Signore rivolge loro per plasmare la loro vocazione nella concretezza, nella quotidianità dell’esistenza. Sono quattro azioni che daranno forma, daranno carne e renderanno tangibile il cammino del discepolo. Potremmo dire che sono quattro tappe della mistagogia della misericordia: *amate, fate il bene, benedite e pregate*. Penso che su questi aspetti tutti possiamo concordare e che ci risultino anche ragionevoli. Sono quattro azioni che facilmente realizziamo con i nostri amici, con le persone più o meno vicine, vicine nell’affetto, nei gusti, nelle abitudini.

* Die 19 Novembris 2016.

¹ Cfr *Lc* 6, 27-36.

² Cfr v. 18.

³ v. 36.

LITTERAE APOSTOLICAE**I****Misericordia et misera de Iubilaeo Extraordinario Misericordiae concludendo.****FRANCISCUS EPISCOPUS****Omnibus Praesentes Litteras inspecturis
Misericordiam et Pacem**

MISERICORDIA ET MISERA voces sunt duae, quibus utitur S. Augustinus ad enarrandum occursum Iesu cum adultera (cfr *Io* 8, 1-11). Nihil pulchrius et congruentius quam verbum hoc invenire poterat, quo caritatis Dei peccatorem adeuntis significaret mysterium: «Relicti sunt duo, misera et misericordia».¹ Quantum pietatis in hac narratione et divinae iustitiae! Venit praeceptum eius finem Iubilaei Extraordinarii Misericordiae collustrare simulque viam ostendere, ad quam in futurum vocamur percurrendam.

1. Evangelii haec plagula tamquam specimen merito sumi potest eorum, quae Anno Sancto celebravimus, tempore scilicet divite misericordia, quae intra communitates nostras usque *celebrari* atque *experiri* poscit. Misericordia enim esse non potest in vita Ecclesiae interiectio, sed eiusdem existentiam efficit, quae interiorem Evangelii manifestat atque aperit veritatem. Omnia in misericordia revelantur; omnia in miserenti Patris caritate solvuntur.

Mulier et Iesus conveniunt. Illa adultera est et iuxta Legem iudicata lapidatione punienda; hic autem praedicatione et oblato sui ipsius munere, quod ipsum ad crucem adducet, legem Moysis in genuinum spiritum primigenium restituit. Neque lex neque iustitia legalis in medio stat sermone, sed caritas Dei, qui uniuscuiusque personae cor legere valet, ut desiderium eiusdem abditissimum intellegat, cuique principatus super omnia tribuendus est. Hoc tamen in evangelico relatu non occurrunt sibi peccatum et iudicium in universum, sed peccatrix et Salvator. Illius mulieris Iesus intuitus est oculos eiusdemque cor legit ibique desiderium eius ut intellegeretur, ignosceretur ac liberaretur repperit. Miseria peccati misericordia caritatis induta est. Nullum Iesu exstat iudicium, quod signatum non esset pietate et compassione pro condicione peccatricis. Illis qui eam diiudicare et

¹ In *Evangelium Ioannis* 33, 5.

capite damnare volebant, producto silentio respondet Iesus, quod vocem Dei e conscientiis sive mulieris sive accusatorum studet emergendam. Qui lapides demittentes e manibus unus post unum exeunt (cfr *Io* 8, 9). Et post silentium illud, dicit Iesus: «Mulier, ubi sunt? Nemo te condemnavit? [...] Nec ego te condemno; vade et amplius iam noli peccare» (*Io* 8, 10-11). Hac via eam adiuvat, ut spei plena futurum conspiciat atque adsit vitae suae denuo conciendae; posthac, si vult, «ambulare in dilectione» (cfr *Eph* 5, 2) poterit. Cum semel quis misericordia induatur, etiam si peccati causa condicio supersit infirmitatis, huic tamen imminet caritas, quae superspicere sinit ac secus vivere.

2. Iesus alioquin haec clare praeceperat, cum rogavit illum quidam de pharisaeis ut manducaret cum illo, et mulier accedit quam omnes cognoscebant in civitate peccatricem (cfr *Lc* 7, 36-50). Quae pedes Iesu unguento unxerat, flens lacrimis rigaverat et capillis capitis sui terserat (cfr vv. 37-38). Et conturbato pharisaeo Iesus inquit: «Remissa sunt peccata eius multa, quoniam dilexit multum; cui autem minus dimittitur, minus diligit» (v. 47).

Venia signum est manifestissimum caritatis Patris, quam Iesus in omni vita sua voluit revelare. Nulla est in Evangelio plagula, quae ab hoc munere eripi possit caritatis adusque veniam pervenientis. Etiam in ultimo huius vitae spatio, dum cruci affigitur, Iesus verba dicit remissionis: «Pater, mitte illis, non enim sciunt quid faciunt» (*Lc* 23, 34).

Nihil eorum, quae paenitens peccator divinae proponit misericordiae, eiusdem veniae amplexu privari potest. Proinde, nemini nostrum licet conditionibus misericordiam moderari, quae semper est actus gratuitus Patris caelestis, absoluta et immerita caritas. Periclitari igitur non possumus plenae libertati resistere caritatis, qua Deus uniuscuiusque vitam ingreditur.

Misericordia est actio haec certa caritatis, quae ignoscendo vitam convertit et immutat. Hac via mysterium divinum revelatur. Deus misericors est (cfr *Ex* 34, 6), in aeternum misericordia eius (cfr *Ps* 136), a progenie in progeniem quemque Ei confidentem amplectitur ac transformat, eique vitam suam offerens.

3. Quanta laetitia accensum est cor harum duarum mulierum, adulterae scilicet et peccatricis! Venia effecit, ut tandem aliquando sese liberarum perciperent et perquam felices. Lacrimae ignominiae et doloris commutatae sunt in risum illius, quae comperit se amari. Misericordia *laetitiam* suscitavit, quia

cor in spem vitae novae erigitur. Inenarrabile est gaudium remissionis, quod vero in nobis fulget quotiescumque eam experimur. In capite eius caritas est, qua Deus nobis venit obviam, nimii amoris nostri infringens circulum, qui nos convolvit, ut nos vicissim misericordiae efficiat instrumenta.

Quam significantia et nobis sunt vetera verba, quae primos christianos dirigebant: «Indue igitur hilaritatem, quae Deo semper grata est et accepta et laetare in ea. Omnis enim vir hilaris bona operatur et bona sentit et contemnit tristitiam [...] et omnes vivent Deo, quotquot proiecerint a se tristitiam et induerint omnem hilaritatem»!² Misericordiam experiri comparat laetitiam. Ne sinamus multos maerores et curas eandem nobis subdcere. Cordi nostro haereat valde, ut aequo animo vitam cotidianam iugiter intueamur.

In humanitatis cultu saepius technicis rationibus subiecto genera maestitiae et solitudinis multiplicari videntur, in quae incidunt personae, et multi etiam iuvenes. Futurum enim obses videtur incertorum, quae non patiuntur stabilitatem. Sensus sic maestitiae maerorisque et taedii solent exoriri, qui paulatim usque in desperationem adducunt. Spei et veri gaudii testium opus est, ut vanae imagines deiciantur, quae falsae speciei amoenitatis ope facilem promittunt felicitatem. Alta inanitas multorum repleti potest spe, quam gestamus in corde, ac laetitia, quae eam sequitur. Summopere opus est discernere laetitiam revelatam in corde, quod misericordia attingit. Verba ergo Apostoli cumulemus: «Gaudete in Domino semper» (*Phil* 4, 4; cfr *1Thess* 5, 16).

4. Annum magni oneris celebravimus, quo misericordiae gratia nobis abunde suppeditata est. Benignitas et misericordia Domini, tamquam vehemens ventus ac salutaris, effusae sunt in universum mundum. Et hoc coram suavi Dei intuitu, qui tamdiu in unumquemque nostrum oculos convertit, nullo modo inertes possumus perseverare, quia vitam ille immutat.

Incitatur ante omnia gratias agere Domino eidemque dicere: «Complacuisti tibi, Domine, in terra tua [...]. Remisisti iniquitatem plebis tuae» (*Ps* 85, 2-3). Revera ita est: Deus calcavit iniquitates nostras et proiecit in profundum maris omnia peccata nostra (cfr *Mi* 7, 19); oblitus est eorum et proiecit post tergum suum ea (cfr *Is* 38, 17); quantum distat ortus ab occidente, longe fecit a se iniquitates nostras (cfr *Ps* 103, 12).

² HERMAS, *Pastor*, XLII, 1-4.

In hoc Anno Sancto valuit Ecclesia aliis aures praebere et praesentiam ac propinquitatem Patris impensius experta est, qui operante Spiritu Sancto donum et mandatum Iesu Christi quoad veniam planius ipsi illustravit. Nova revera erat intra nos Domini visitatio. Afflatum vitae percepimus eius super Ecclesiam effusum, cuius verba denuo extulerunt missionem: «Accipite Spiritum Sanctum. Quorum remiseritis peccata, remissa sunt eis; quorum retinueritis, retenta sunt» (Io 20, 22-23).

5. Hoc exacto Iubilaeo, tempus nunc est prospiciendi atque intellegendi quomodo divinae misericordiae divitias fideliter, laetanter ac flagranter deinceps experiri possimus. Communitates nostrae vivae ac sollertes in opere denuo Evangelii nuntiandi perseverabunt prouti “conversio pastoralis”, ad quam agendam vocamur,³ renovanti vi misericordiae cotidie informabitur. Ne sane actionem eius coerceamus, neque Spiritum maerore affligamus, qui novas semper semitas patefacit currendas, ut salutare Evangelium omnibus afferamus.

Ad misericordiam in primis vocamur *celebrandam*. Quantum divitiarum inest precationi Ecclesiae, cum Deus Pater miserens invocatur! In liturgia misericordia non modo iterum iterumque revocatur, sed revera recipitur atque peragitur. Ab initio ad finem *eucharisticae celebrationis* misericordia pluries occurrit in dialogo populi orantis cum corde Patris, qui laetatur cum amorem suum misericordem effundere potest. Post actum paenitentialem in principio peractum per acclamationem «Kyrie, eleison», statim confirmamur: «Misereatur nostri omnipotens Deus et, dimissis peccatis nostris, perducatur nos ad vitam aeternam». Hac corroborata fiducia communitas, praesertim sancta die resurrectionis, coram Domino congregatur. Plurimae orationes «collectae» solent magnum misericordiae donum revocare. Tempore Quadragesimae, exempli gratia, dicimus orantes: «Deus, omnium misericordiarum et totius bonitatis auctor, qui peccatorum remedia in ieiuniis, orationibus et eleemosynis demonstrasti, hanc humilitatis nostrae confessionem propitius intuere, ut, qui inclinamur conscientia nostra, tua semper misericordia sublevemur».⁴ In magna Prece eucharistica dein demergimur, renuntiante praefatione: «Quia sic mundum misericorditer dilexisti, ut ipsum [Filius] nobis mitteres Redemptorem, quem absque peccato in nostra

³ Cfr Adhort. ap. *Evangelii gaudium*, 27.

⁴ *Missale Romanum*, Dominica III in Quadragesima.

voluisti similitudine conversari». ⁵ Prex eucharistica IV insuper hymnus vere est divinae misericordiae dicatus: «Omnibus enim misericorditer subvenisti, ut te quaerentes invenirent». Illud «Omnium nostrum, quaesumus, miserere» ⁶ supplex est postulatio, qua sacerdos in prece eucharistica utitur ad aeternae vitae consortium exposcendum. Post Orationem Dominicam sacerdos, eiusdem evolvens petitionem, pacem et liberationem a peccato expetit «ope misericordiae tuae» adiuvante. Et ante signum pacis, quo fideles communionem mutuanque caritatem pro ratione impetratae remissionis peccatorum sibi exprimunt, rursum exorat: «Ne respicias peccata nostra, sed fidem Ecclesiae tuae». ⁷ Per haec verba, humiliter fidenterque deprecamur unitatis et pacis pro sancta Matre Ecclesia dona. Divinae misericordiae celebratio ad summum fastigium pervenit in sacrificio eucharistico, quod memoriale est Christi mysterii paschalis, ex quo singulis hominibus historiaeque et universo mundo profluit fons salutis. Omne minimum eucharisticae celebrationis tempus denique ad Dei refert misericordiam.

In universa vita sacramentali misericordiae nobis ministratur copia. Haud parum quidem est quod Ecclesia in formulis utriusque sacramenti “sanationis”, *Reconciliationis* videlicet et *Unctionis infirmorum*, misericordiam apertius revocare voluit. Formula absolutionis dicit: «Deus, Pater misericordiarum, qui per mortem et resurrectionem Filii sui mundum sibi reconciliavit et Spiritum Sanctum effudit in remissionem peccatorum, per ministerium Ecclesiae indulgentiam tibi tribuat et pacem»; ⁸ et formula Unctionis infirmorum affirmat: «Per istam sanctam Unctionem et suam piissimam misericordiam, adiuvet te Dominus gratia Spiritus Sancti». ⁹ Proinde, in oratione Ecclesiae omnino mentio misericordiae a mera invocatione abest et summopere est *ad efficaciam relata*, id est quam cum fide invocamus, eadem nobis conceditur, et quam vivam et realem confitemur, revera nos innovat. Hoc fidei nostrae est summa, a nobis omni genuina natura sua servanda: ante culpam caritas Dei nobis revelatur, qua Deus mundum humanumque genus creavit. Caritas actus princeps est, quo Deus enotescit et nobis obviam venit. Cor igitur servemus fiducia patens nos a Deo amari. Cuius caritas semper nos praevenit, comitatur et, contempto peccato nostro, iuxta assidet.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Praefatio VII de dominicis «per annum» .

⁶ *Ibid.*, Prex eucharistica II.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Ritus communionis.

⁸ *Ordo Paenitentiae*, n. 46.

⁹ *Ordo Unctionis infirmorum eorumque pastoralis curae*, n. 76.

6. In his adiunctis etiam *Verbum Dei auscultare* peculiarem sumit significationem. Quaque die dominica apud communitatem christifidelium Verbum Dei proclamatur, ut dies Domini luce e mysterio paschali manante collustretur.¹⁰ In celebratione eucharistica verum dialogum inter Deum et populum eius audire videtur. Nam in Lectionibus biblicis proclamandis historia salutis nostrae repetitur per iuge opus misericordiae, quae annuntiatur. Deus usque adhuc «nos tamquam amicos alloquitur», nobiscum «conversatur»,¹¹ ut suam nobis donet societatem et semitam patefaciat vitae. Verbum eius petita nostra et curas interpretatur iisque feraciter respondet, ut eum nobis proximum esse reapse experiri valeamus. Quantum ponderis acquirit *homilia*, in qua «veritas pulchritudini ac bono comitatur»,¹² ut cor credentium vibret in multitudinem misericordiae! Homiliae praeparationem et curam praedicationis valde commendamus. Quae tanto erit uberior quanto magis sacerdos misericordem benignitatem Domini in seipso erit expertus. Participare Deum nos pro certo amare non est scholasticorum suasoria, sed condicio credibilitatis proprii sacerdotii. Vivere ergo misericordiam via praecipua est, ut ea genuinus fiat nuntius consolationis et conversionis in vita pastorali. Homilia, sicut et catechesis, huius micantis cordis vitae christianae iugi eget subsidio.

7. *Sacrarum Scripturarum* libri magna narratio sunt mirabilium misericordiae Dei. Pagina quaque caritate imbuitur Patris, qui inde a creatione signa amoris sui in universo imprimere voluit. Spiritus Sanctus per prophetarum verba et scripta sapientialia historiam Israelis informavit suavitatis et proximitatis Dei indicibus, populi infidelitate seposita. Vita et praedictio Iesu historiam christianae communitatis certissime signant, quae mandatum suum de Christi mandatu sane intellexit, ut instrumentum esset constans misericordiae eius et peccatorum remissionis (cfr *Io* 20, 23). Per Sacram Scripturam, Ecclesiae fide sustentatam, Dominus cum Sponsa sua colloqui perserverat eidemque semitas ostendit calcandas, ut Evangelium salutis omnes attingat. Verbum Dei magis magisque celebrari, cognosci ac diffundi ardentem exoptamus, ut mysterium amoris, qui ex illo misericordiarum fonte manat, melius intellegere adiuvet. Cuius plane commonefacit Apostolus:

¹⁰ Cfr CONC. OECUM. VAT. II, Const. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 106.

¹¹ ID., Const. dogm. *Dei Verbum*, 2.

¹² Adhort. ap. *Evangelii gaudium*, 142.

«Omnis Scriptura divinitus inspirata est et utilis ad docendum, ad arguendum, ad corrigendum, ad erudiendum in iustitia» (2 *Tm* 3, 16).

Omnem communitatem oporteret, quadam die dominica Anni liturgici, renovare posse munus Sacrae Scripturae diffundendae, docendae ac perdiscendae: die videlicet dominica Verbo Dei omnino consecrata, ut indesinens perspiciatur thesaurus, qui de constanti hoc dialogo Dei cum populo eius redundat. Ne desit quidem ingenium tempus istud locupletans inceptis, quae credentes concitent, ut instrumenta sint viva Verbi tradendi. Inter haec profecto exstat *lectionis divinae* amplificatio, ut de sacri textus oranti lectione vita spiritualis fulciatur atque augeatur. *Lectio divina* de propositis misericordiae concedet, ut manibus astringatur copia ubertatis quae e sacro textu exoritur, ad lumen universae traditionis spiritualis Ecclesiae perspecto, quae gestus et actuosae caritatis opera necessario affert.¹³

8. Misericordiae celebratio peculiari prorsus modo per *Sacramentum Reconciliationis* fit. Hoc tempus est quo sentimus amplexum Patris qui obviam procedit ad gratiam nobis restituendam ut iterum eius filii simus. Nos peccatores sumus et nobiscum pondus contradictionis ferimus inter ea quae agere velimus et ea quae re facimus (cfr *Rom* 7, 14-21); gratia tamen semper nos praecedat vultumque prae se fert misericordiae quae in reconciliatione et venia efficaciam demonstrat. Immensus suus amor ut intellegatur, dat Deus utique coram nostra peccatorum condicione. Gratia fortior est cunctamque superat resistantiam, si qua adest, quoniam caritas omnia vincit (cfr *1 Cor* 13, 7).

In Remissionis Sacramento Deus viam conversionis ad Se ostendit atque invitat ut eius proximitatem denuo experiamur. Venia est quae recipi potest ante omnia cum quis incipiat *vivere caritatem*. Memorat hoc etiam Petrus apostolus scribens «quia caritas operit multitudinem peccatorum» (*1 Pe* 4, 8). Solus Deus dimittit peccata, sed petit etiam a nobis ut parati simus ad aliis ignoscendum, sicut et Ipse nostra remittit: «Dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris» (*Mt* 6,12). Quam triste est intra nos concludi, haud ad ignoscendum paratos! Praealent rancor, furor, ultio, vitam infelicem efficientes et ad nihilum iucundum misericordiae studium redigentes.

¹³ Cfr BENEDICTUS XVI, Adhort. ap. post-syn. *Verbum Domini*, 86-87.

9. Gratiae experientia, quam Ecclesia Anno iubilari tam efficaciter vixit, fuit profecto ministerium *Missionariorum Misericordiae*. Nempe sua actione pastoralis ipsi conati sunt patefacere Deum nullum limitem ponere iis qui Eum contrito corde quaerunt, quoniam cunctis obviam it tamquam Pater. Plurima gaudii testimonia recepimus ob renovatum occursum cum Domino in Sacramento Confessionis. Ne amittamus opportunitatem vivendi fidem etiam uti reconciliationis experientiam. «Reconciliamini Deo» (2Cor 5, 20): invitatio est quam adhuc nostro tempore Apostolus dirigit ad omnem credentem ut vim reperiat caritatis quae efficit «novam creaturam» (cfr 2Cor 5, 17).

Cuique Missionario Misericordiae Nostrum gratum animum demonstramus pro hoc pretioso ministerio oblato ad efficacem reddendam veniae gratiam. Extraordinario tamen huic ministerio haud finis imponitur clausa Porta Sancta. Exoptamus enim ut adhuc maneat, usque ad nova mandata, uti certum signum producendi Iubilaei gratiam, variis in mundi partibus, vivam quidem efficacemque. Pontificio Consilio de Nova Evangelizatione Promovenda curae erit hoc tempore Missionarios Misericordiae prosequi, tamquam directa manifestatio Nostrae sollicitudinis necessitudinisque, ac magis congruas formas invenire ad hoc magni momenti ministerium exercendum.

10. Ad sacerdotes renovamus invitationem ut magna diligentia se comparent ad Confessionis ministerium, quod est vera missio sacerdotalis. Maximas gratias agimus vobis pro vestro servitio et vos rogamus ut omnes *benigne excipiatis*; *testes* ut sitis paternae affabilitatis quamvis grave sit peccatum; *solliciti* in adiuvando ad considerandum malum patratum; *clari* in principiis moralibus praebendis; *parati* ad comitandos fideles in itinere paenitentiali, eorum gressus patienter sequentes; *praevidentes* in singulis casibus decernendis; *liberales* in Dei venia largienda. Sicut Iesus qui coram muliere adultera silere maluit, ut eam a mortis damnatione eriperet, ita etiam sacerdos in confessione magnanimus sit corde, sciens se ab omni paenitente ad eandem suam personalem condicionem revocari: videlicet peccatoris, sed misericordiae ministri.

11. Optamus ut nos omnes meditemur verba Apostoli, quae vitae cursum conficiens scripsit, cum Timotheo confiteretur se primum esse peccatorum, addens: «sed ideo misericordiam consecutus sum» (1Tim 1, 16). Eius verba nos quoque magna vi compellunt ad nostram existentiam considerandam atque cernendam item Dei misericordiam agentem in mutando, conver-

tendo transformandoque nostro corde: «Gratiam habeo ei, qui me confortavit, Christo Iesu Domino nostro, quia fidelem me existimavit ponens in ministerio, qui prius fui blasphemus et persecutor et contumeliosus; sed misericordiam consecutus sum» (*1Tim* 1, 12-13).

Ideo renovato usque pastoralis ardore in memoriam revocemus effatum Apostoli: Deus «reconciliavit nos sibi per Christum et dedit nobis ministerium reconciliationis» (*2 Cor* 5, 18). Nos, ad hoc ministerium destinati, primi veniam accepimus, ipsi testes effecti universalitatis veniae. Non datur lex nec praeceptum quod impedire possit quominus iterum Deus amplectatur filium ad Se revertentem, qui agnoscit se erravisse, sed denuo incipere cupit. Legem tantum respicere idem est ac fidem et divinam misericordiam ad nihilum redigere. Vis propedeutica in lege latet (cfr *Gal* 3, 24), quae uti finem habet caritatem (cfr *1Tim* 1, 5). Sed christianus vocatur ad vivendam Evangelii novitatem, «legem Spiritus vitae in Christo Iesu» (*Rom* 8, 2). Etiam in implicationibus casibus, ubi allicimur ad anteferendam quandam iustitiam quae e normis tantum depromitur, credere oportet in vim e divina gratia manantem.

Nos confessarii experimur tot conversiones quae sub oculis nostris sunt. Sentiamus igitur responsalitem de gestibus et verbis quae in paenitentis interiora cordis pervenire possint, ut dimittentis Patris proximitatem et benignitatem reperiat. Ne haec momenta ad nihilum redigamus rationibus quae contradicere possunt experientiam misericordiae quae requiritur. Operam potius demus ut personalis conscientiae spatium infinito Dei amore illuminetur (cfr *1Io* 3, 20).

Reconciliationis Sacramentum debet denuo invenire medium locum in vita christiana; quapropter opus est sacerdotibus qui disponant suam vitam ad «ministerium reconciliationis» sustinendum (*2Cor* 5, 18), ita ut nemo vere paenitens prohibeatur accedere ad amorem Patris qui eius adventum praestolatur, ac omnibus facultas praebeatur veniae liberatricem vim experiendi.

Propitiam occasionem constituere potest inceptum *XXIV horae pro Domino* prope Dominicam IV Quadragesimae celebrandum, de quo apud dioeceses mira iam consensio est et ipsum, quod ad rem pastorem spectat, magnopere compellit ad Sacramentum Confessionis intente experiendum.

12. Hoc urgente, ne inter reconciliationis petitionem ac Dei veniam ullum impedimentum interponatur, in posterum cunctis sacerdotibus, vi eorum ministerii, concedimus facultatem absolvendi peccatum eorum qui abortum

procuraverunt. Quod nempe ad tempus iubilaei concessimus,¹⁴ nunc ultra extenditur, contrariis quibuslibet non obstantibus. Omnibus viribus repetere cupimus abortum gravissimum esse peccatum, quoniam innocentem vitam exstinguit. Eodem tamen robore licet et oportet Nobis affirmare nullum esse peccatum quod divina misericordia attingere ac delere non valeat, cum cor contritum inveniatur quod reconciliari cum Deo poscit. Quisque igitur sacerdos studeat ducere, sustinere et consolari paenitentes, quos hoc in itinere peculiaris reconciliationis comitatur.

Anno Iubilari fidelibus dedimus copiam, qui varias ob causas ecclesias adeunt ubi sacerdotes Fraternalitatis Sancti Pii X sacra celebrant, ut ibi valide liciteque suorum peccatorum absolutionem sacramentalem recipere possent.¹⁵ Horum fidelium pro pastoralis bono, confidentes omnino in bonam voluntatem eorum sacerdotum unde, Deo adiuvante, plena communio in Ecclesia Catholica recuperari possit, Nostra ipsorum deliberatione decernimus ac statuimus hanc facultatem ultra iubilare tempus producere, usque ad nova hac de re mandata, ne ulli desit umquam reconciliationis signum sacramentale per Ecclesiae veniam.

13. Misericordiae est etiam vultus *consolationis*. «Consolamini, consolamini populum meum» (Is 40,1): verba sunt maerore referta quae propheta etiam hodie proclamat, ut spei sermo attingat eos qui maerore ac dolore affliguntur. Ne quidem umquam sinamus ut nobis spes auferatur quae ex fide in Dominum resuscitatum oritur. Revera, saepe acerbo temptamini subicimur, sed certitudo Dominum diligere nos numquam deficere debet. Eius misericordia exprimitur etiam proximitate, affectu ac sustentatione tot fratrum sororumque oblatis cum dies veniunt maerore et afflictionis. Lacrimas tergere actio est vera quae circum solitudinis frangit, intra quem saepe claudimur.

Omnes consolatione egemus, quia nemo est ab aegritudine, dolore et neglectatione immunis. Quantum dolorem gignere potest acre verbum, ex invidia, aemulatione et ira ortum! Quantam aegritudinem affert proditoris, violentiae et desertionis experientia; quantam amaritudinem infert mors eorum quos caros habemus! At numquam Deus longe est cum haec tristitia

¹⁴ Cfr *Litterae quibus conceditur indulgentia occasione data Iubilaei Misericordiae*, 1 Septembris 2015.

¹⁵ Cfr *ibid.*

experimur. Verbum quod animum addit, amplexus in quo quis intellegi se sentit, blanditia qua dilectio percipitur, oratio quae adiuvat ad se fortiorem reddendum... haec omnia Dei proximitatem ostendunt per consolationem a fratribus oblatam.

Interdum etiam *silentium* multum iuvare potest; quoniam saepe non habentur verba ad respondendum quaestionibus illius qui patitur. Sed ubi deest verbum, compassio supplere potest ipsius qui adest, assidet, diligit manumque tendit. Minime silentium actus est deditiois, immo, momentum est virtutis et amoris. Etiam silentium ad nostrum pertinet consolationis sermonem, quoniam in opus certum convertitur communicationis et participationis aegritudinis fratris.

14. Peculiari hac nostra aetate, qua inter tot discrimina habetur etiam familiae periculum, magni est ponderis nostras familias verbo fortis consolationis attingere. Matrimonii donum est magna vocatio cui, Christi suffragante gratia, amore magnanimo, fideli et patienti est simul respondendum. Familiae pulchritudo stabilis permanet, non obstantibus tot tenebris aliisque optionibus: «Amoris laetitia quae in familiis viget laetitia est quoque Ecclesiae». ¹⁶ Iter vitae quod efficit ut vir et femina convenient, vicissim se ament et coram Deo sibi spondeant fidelitatem in omne tempus, saepe evertitur aegritudine, prodicione et solitudine. Gaudium ob filiorum donum non caret parentum sollicitudinibus, quae respiciunt eorum progressum et institutionem, aequae ac futurum aevum dignum quod acriter transigatur.

Sacramenti Matrimonii gratia non tantum fortificat familiam ut locus sit privilegio munitus ad vivendam misericordiam, sed christianam communitatem cunctamque pastoraalem curam implicat, ut familiae magnum momentum proponendum extollat. Utcumque etiam post Annum Iubilarem cernere oportet implicatas condiciones familiae hoc tempore. Misericordiae experientia aptos nos efficit ut omnes humanas difficultates conspiciamus imitando Dei caritatem, qui accipere et comitari non defatigatur. ¹⁷

Oblivisci haud possumus unumquemque secum ferre divitias pondusque suae historiae, quae eum ab omni alia persona distinguit. Vita nostra, suis cum gaudiis et doloribus, unum et haud iterabile est quiddam quod Deo misericordiae inspectante decurrit. Hoc postulat, praesertim a sacerdote, at-

¹⁶ Adh. Ap. postsynodalis *Amoris laetitia*, I.

¹⁷ Cfr *ibid.*, 291-300.

tentum, altum et providum spirituale discrimen, ut omnis homo, nemine dempto, in qualibet condicione vivat, se a Deo revera acceptum sentire possit, actuose communitatis vitam participare et includi in Dei Populum qui indefesse progreditur versus regni Dei plenitudinem, regni iustitiae, amoris, veniae et misericordiae.

15. Singulare pondus habet *hora mortis*. Ecclesia semper vixit hunc luctuosum transitum sub lumine Iesu Christi resurrectionis, quae viam aperuit certitudini futurae vitae. Magna est nobis provocatio suscipienda, praecipue apud cultum huius temporis qui saepe nititur mortem ad nugas redigere, adeo ut mera fictio consideretur, vel eam abscondere. Mors e contra accipitur oportet atque praeparetur tamquam transitus dolorosus et inevitabilis, sed sensu onustus: videlicet extremo actu dilectionis erga personas quae relinquuntur et erga Deum cui occurritur. Cunctis in religionibus horam mortis, sicut horam nativitatis, praesentia religiosa comitatur. Nos *exsequias* experimur ut spei plenam orationem pro defuncti anima et ad consolationem praebendam iis qui a dilecta persona separationem patiuntur.

Persuasum habemus in cura pastorali viva fide animata nos indigere revera ostendere quo pacto signa liturgica ac nostrae preces Domini misericordiam expriment. Nam Ipse spei verba offert, quoniam nihil ac nemo umquam separare poterunt ab eius caritate (cfr *Rom* 8, 35). Cum hanc rem communicat sacerdos, is magnopere opitulatur, quoniam christianae communitatis proximitatem suppeditari sinit tempore infirmitatis, solitudinis, incertitudinis et fletus.

16. Concluditur Iubilaeum et clauditur Porta Sancta. Sed misericordiae porta nostri cordis semper patet. Didicimus Deum ad nos inclinare (cfr *Os* 11, 4), ut nos quoque Eum imitari valeamus ad fratres nos inclinantes. Tot hominum desiderium in Patris domum revertendi, qui eorum adventum praestolatur, etiam a divinae suavitatis testibus sinceris et magnanimis incitatur. Porta Sancta quam hoc Anno Iubilari sumus ingressi nos in *viam caritatis* induxit quam cotidie fideliter ac laetanter sequi debemus. Misericordiae via est quae sinit ut occurramus tot fratribus sororibusque qui manum tendunt ut eam quis arripere possit ad simul progrediendum.

Qui Christo proximi esse cupiunt, debent fratribus proximi fieri, quia nihil est magis acceptum Patri quam signum verum misericordiae. Suae natura misericordia efficitur visibilis et manifesta in actione vera et vehementi. Qui semel eam expertus est eius in veritate, retro non revertitur:

ea crescit iugiter et vitam immutat. Est vera nova creatio quae cor novum efficit, plene diligendi capax, atque oculos purificat ut maxime occultas agnoscant necessitates. Quam vera sunt verba, quibus Ecclesia in Vigilia Paschali orat post creationis narrationem: «Deus, qui mirabiliter creasti hominem et mirabilius redemisti».¹⁸

Misericordia *renovat et redimit*, quia duo simul conveniunt corda: Dei qui obviam venit et hominis. Hoc calefacitur atque primum sanat illud; cor lapideum immutatur in cor carneum (cfr *Ez* 36, 26), aptum ut diligit, non obstante eius peccato. Hic percipit quispiam se revera novam esse creaturam (cfr *Gal* 6, 15): diligor, ergo sum; veniam accepi, ergo in vitam novam nascor; misericordia donatus sum, ergo vas fio misericordiae.

17. In hoc Anno Sancto, praesertim *feria sexta misericordiae*, fere manu tangere potuimus quantum adesset bonum in mundo. Saepe haud cognoscitur quoniam cotidie tecte quidem ac silenter efficitur. Etiam si non proclamantur, tamen exstant tot signa vera bonitatis et affectus, conversi in infimos et indefensos, maxime solos et derelictos. Revera existunt caritatis heroes qui praebent solidale auxilium pauperioribus et infeliciores. Domino gratias agimus pro his donis magni pretii quae invitant ad reperiendum gaudium notum ei qui proximus fit infirmitati hominis sauciati. Grato animo cogitamus de tot voluntariis qui cotidie suum tempus insumunt ut sua deditioe Dei praesentiam et proximitatem manifestent. Eorum servitium verum est opus misericordiae, quod complures adjuvat ut Ecclesiae se appropinquent.

18. Tempus est ut locus detur excogitandae misericordiae ad nova tot opera agenda, quae ex gratia oriuntur. Ecclesia oportet hodie narret «multa quidem et alia signa» quae Iesus fecit quaeque «non sunt scripta» (*Io* 20, 30) ut plane pateat fecunditas amoris Christi et communitatis quae ex Eo vivit. Plus quam duo milia annorum transierunt, et opera misericordiae omnino continuantur ad visibilem reddendam Dei bonitatem.

Etiam hodie tot populi fame laborant et siti, et quantam sollicitudinem suscitant imagines infantium cibo omnino carentium. Turbae pergunt ex una Natione in aliam migrare nutrimentum quaerentes, opus, domum et pacem. Morbus, variis ex formis, perpetuam dat ansam dolendi et auxilium postulat, consolationem et solidum adiumentum. Carceres sunt loca in

¹⁸ *Missale Romanum*, Vigilia Paschalis, Oratio post primam lectionem.

quibus saepe poenae coacticiae adduntur nonnumquam gravia incommoda, quae condicionibus efficiuntur vitae inhumanis. Litterarum ignorantio usque adeo diffunditur atque pueri puellaeque prohibentur quominus instituantur iique ad novas servitutis formas apponantur. Cultura extremi individualismi, potissimum in occidentalibus regionibus, solidaritatis sensum amittit et responsalitates erga alios. Ipse Deus compluribus hodie est ignotus quidam; quod maximam efficit paupertatem maximumque impedimentum ut dignitas inviolabilis vitae humanae agnoscat.

Denique opera misericordiae corporalis spiritualisque ad nostram usque aetatem germanam constituunt agnitionem magni et certi effectus misericordiae veluti *boni socialis*. Illa enim compellit ut opera detur ad dignitatem restituendam innumeris hominibus, qui nostri sunt fratres sororesque, nobiscum vocati utique ad «credibilem civitatem» aedificandam¹⁹.

19. Tot certa misericordiae signa hoc Anno Sancto sunt effecta. Communitates, familiae et singuli credentes laetitiam reppererunt in communicatione et pulchritudinem solidaritatis. Tamen hoc non sufficit. Mundus usque novas pergit formas spiritualis paupertatis generare et materialis quae personarum dignitatem aggrediuntur. Quam ob rem oportet Ecclesia vigilet et prompta sit ad nova misericordiae opera significanda eaque magnanime audacterque efficienda.

Omni ope ergo studeamus genera caritatis re persequi et eodem tempore misericordiae opera intellegere. Haec enim inclusionis aliquid possidet actionem et quapropter laxius dilatatur veluti olei macula neque sunt ei limites. Hac cum notione vocamur ad novum vultum operibus misericordiae praebendum quae iam semper novimus. Misericordia revera excedit; procedit longius, fecunda est. Est sicut fermentum quod farinam fermentat (cfr *Mt* 13, 35) et sicut granum sinapis quod arbor fit (cfr *Lc* 13, 19).

Cogitemus tantum exempli gratia opus misericordiae corporale quod est *nudum operire* (cfr *Mt* 25, 36.38.43.44). Illud nos adducit ad primordia, in hortum Eden, cum Adam et Eva cognovissent se esse nudos, et cum audissent Dominum appropinquare, verecundiam habuerunt et se absconderunt (cfr *Gn* 3, 7-8). Novimus Dominum eos puniisse; tamen «fecit quoque Dominus Deus Adae et uxori eius tunicas pelliceas et induit eos» (*Gn* 3, 21). Verecundia superata est et dignitas restituta.

¹⁹ Litt. enc. *Lumen fidei*, 50.

Intueamur etiam Iesum in Golgotha. Filius Dei in cruce nudus est; milites de tunica eius sunt sortiti eamque sumpserunt (cfr *Io* 19, 23-24); nunc nihil est Ei. In cruce summum in gradum communicatio Iesu revelatur cum omnibus qui dignitatem amiserunt quia necessario orbati. Sicut Ecclesia ut sit "tunica Christi"²⁰ ad suum Dominum operiendum vocatur, ita implicatur ut nudorum terrae fiat particeps ut dignitatem iterum assequantur qua sunt spoliati. Ideo sententia: eram «nudus, et operuistis me» (*Mt* 25, 36) praecipit nobis ne avertamus ab oculis nova paupertatis exclusionisque genera quae impediunt personas quo minus vivant cum dignitate.

Opere carere et iustum salarium non recipere; domum non habere vel terram incolendam; ob fidem, stirpem, sociale statum in discrimine versari...: hae et multae aliae sunt condiciones quae dignitati personae insidias ponunt, quibus navitas misericors christianorum vigilantia potissimum et solidaritate subvenit. Quot sunt hodie rerum adiuncta in quibus dignitatem personis restituere possumus atque ut vita humana agatur efficere! Cogitamus solum de tot parvulis utriusque sexus qui violentias sustinent multiplicis generis laetitia vitae eos despoliantes. Eorum tristes vultus et deperditi in mente Nostra defiguntur; auxilium nostrum postulant ut a servitutibus liberentur mundi nostrae aetatis. Hi parvuli sunt futuri iuvenes; quomodo eos paramus ad vivendum cum dignitate et responsalitate? Qua spe possunt suum tempus praesens obire et futurum?

Indoles socialis misericordiae requirit ne inertes maneamus, immo ut neglegentiam et simulationem eiciamus, ne proposita et incepta ad inane recidant. Spiritus Sanctus iuvet nos ut semper prompti simus ad agendum re et gratuito, ne iustitia et vita dignitatis sint vana verba ad tempus accommodata, sed ut officium sint certum illius qui praesentiam Regni Dei testari studet.

20. Operam oportet demus ut *misericae cultus* augeatur, qui adest cum alius alium convenit: ex hoc quippe cultu nemo neglegenter alium respicit neque oculos avertit, cum fratres dolentes videt. *Misericae opera sunt "fabrilia"*: inter se non sunt aequalia; nostrae manus sexcentis modis eas fingere possunt, et quamvis unus sit Deus qui eas concitat atque una sit "materia" ex qua fabricantur, id est ex misericordia ipsa, unaquaeque diversam formam obtinet.

²⁰ Cfr CYPRIANUS, *De Ecclesiae catholicae unitate*, 7.

Etenim misericordiae opera totam personae vitam attingunt. Hac de causa evertere revera cultum possumus, a simplicibus gestibus sumpto initio, qui ad corpus ac spiritum perveniunt, id est ad personarum vitam. Officium est quod christiana communitas pro suo indicare potest, conscia prorsus Domini Verbo se vocari, ut negligentia et individualismo se exuat, in quibus allecti includimur ad vitam agendam commodam et difficultatum expertem. «Pauperes enim semper habetis vobiscum» (Io 12, 8), suis discipulis dicit Iesus. Non sunt excusationes quae negligentiam comprobent, cum novimus Eum unicuique eorum se aequavisse.

Misericordiae cultus efformatur dum assidue oratur, Spiritui agenti obtemperatur, sanctorum vitae communicatur et propius ad pauperes re acceditur. Presse invitamur ne ambigue intellegamus ubi agere oporteat. Faciendi temptatio “misericordiae doctrinam” superatur cum haec participationis communicationisque cotidiana fit vita. Ceterum numquam oblivisci debemus verba, quibus Paulus apostolus, cum suum occursum narraret cum Petro Iacobo et Ioanne, post conversionem, praecipuam partem suae missionis totiusque christianae vitae extollit: «Tantum ut pauperum memores essemus, quod etiam sollicitus fui hoc ipsum facere» (Gal 2, 10). Pauperum memoriam deponere non debemus: haec invitatio plus quam umquam hodie propter eius evangelicam claritatem teneri debet.

21. Iubilaeum expertum verba in nobis infigat Petri apostoli: «Qui aliquando non populus, nunc autem populus Dei; qui non consecuti misericordiam, nunc autem misericordiam consecuti» (1Pe 2, 10). Ne solummodo nobis quae recepimus studiose servemus; cum fratribus dolentibus ea participemus, ut misericordiae Patris virtute sustineantur. Pateant nostrae communitates ad commorantes in nostra regione, ut cunctis Dei blanditia per credentium testimonium perveniat.

Hoc est misericordiae tempus. Singuli nostri itineris dies Dei praesentia signantur, qui gressus nostros gratiae vi dirigit, quam Spiritus in corda infundit ad eadem fingenda ut amare valeat. *Tempus est misericordiae* omnibus et unicuique, ut nemo cogitare possit a Deo proximo eiusque blanditiae virtute se longe abesse. *Tempus est misericordiae* ut debiles inermesque, longinqui solique reperire possint praesentes fratres ac sorores qui necessitatibus ipsorum subveniant. *Tempus est misericordiae* ut pauperes observantem sed sollicitum in se animadvertant intuitum eorum, qui, negligentia devicta,

vitae essentiam detegant. *Tempus est misericordiae* ut quisque peccator veniam petere non desinat atque Patris manum percipiat qui semper recipit et ad se admovet.

Iubilaei “personarum socialiter amotarum” sub lumine, dum in mundi omnibus ecclesiis cathedralibus et sanctuariis Misericordiae Ianuae clauderentur, percepimus ut, tamquam aliud signum certum huius Anni Sancti extraordinarii, celebrari debere in universa Ecclesia, in Dominica XXXIII Temporis Ordinarii, *Diem mundialem pauperum*. Dignissima quidem erit comparatio ad sollemnitatem agendam Domini Nostri Iesu Christi, Universorum Regis, qui parvulis et pauperibus se aequavit atque ex misericordiae operibus nos iudicabit (cfr *Mt* 25, 31-46). Dies erit quae communitates atque singulos baptizatos cogitare iuvabit quomodo paupertas in Evangelii corde resideat et illud teneant: usque dum Lazarus ante nostrae domus ostium iacet (cfr *Lc* 15, 19-21), iustitia non habetur neque socialis pax. Haec Dies etiam verum erit genus novae evangelizationis (cfr *Mt* 11, 5), qua Ecclesiae vultus renovabitur eius in perenni pastoralis conversionis opera, ut misericordiae sit testis.

22. Ad Nos semper misericordes convertuntur oculi Sanctae Matris Dei. Ipsa prima viam sternit nosque comitatur in amoris testificatione. Mater Misericordiae omnes sub sui praesidii amictum recipit, quemadmodum saepe eam ars vinxit. Materno eius auxilio confidamus atque ipsius perenne indicium sequamur Iesum contuendi, misericordiae Dei fulgentem vultum.

Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die xx mensis Novembris, in sollemnitate Domini Nostri Iesu Christi, Universorum Regis, Anno Domini MMXVI, Pontificatus Nostri quarto.

FRANCISCUS PP.