

1. Opening the Door to the Gift of Mercy



GATHERING SPACE

When Pope Francis called the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy he expressed confidence that the Church would open its doors to the full realisation of the power of mercy in our world, that ‘... the year to come will be steeped in mercy so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God’. (MV, 2015)

- > What does mercy mean to you?
- > Can you recall a time when you experienced mercy?

FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus often surprised and shocked his followers and his society more generally in choosing to embrace those on the outskirts – physically, socially or morally. These encounters were always transformational, reinforcing the Gospel call to justice and compassion, as well as a deeper challenge to honour God in all persons.

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchae’us; he was a chief tax collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd,

because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchae’us, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it they all murmured, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” And Zacchae’us stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19: 1-10)

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

- > What does the image suggest about the general understanding of mercy in the world?
- > Can you recall other occasions from the scriptures where an encounter with Jesus was transformational?
- > How does the understanding of mercy as bringing the goodness and tenderness of God to the world inspire your work as a Board?

PRAYER

Compassionate God, we thank you at the commencement of this Board meeting for the many blessings in our lives. We ask wisdom, compassion, justice and love to join us as directors in this meeting, to inspire and support us in our deliberations and decisions.

For the grace to honour everyone we meet as bearers of your great love

God of transforming mercy, hear our prayer

For the openness to be transformed by our encounters with Jesus in scripture, in the created world, in people and in life experiences

God of transforming mercy, hear our prayer

For the strength to avoid judgement or alienation of others

God of transforming mercy, hear our prayer

For the vision to govern with the needs of all in the ministry at the forefront of decisions

God of transforming mercy, hear our prayer

For the humility to attend to the needs of others through hospitality, care and a listening heart

God of transforming mercy, hear our prayer

For courage, in this Year of Mercy, to open the doors of our hearts to change

God of transforming mercy, hear our prayer

(Pause for any special intentions)

FOR THE END OF THE MEETING

God of compassion
Your merciful eyes
See not what we are
Nor what we have been
But what we long to be – loving and beloved
Forgiven and accepted
Give us a mind and heart
As free as your own
Open
To the possibility of change. (Simmonds)

Clothe yourselves then as fitting for God's people, holy and beloved.
Put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.
When you have put on all of these take love as your belt, so that the dress is perfect.
(Colossians 3)

Illustration from Sieger Köder 'Art and Inspiration'. Pope Francis: *Misericordiae Vultus* (2015). Luke 19: 1-10. Bible: Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition. Simmonds, G: *The Closeness of God* (2013)

COMPASSION JUSTICE RESPECT HOPE



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