

## Communiqué N. 88

November 21, 2016

To priests, permanent deacons, staff mandated in pastoral ministry, persons working in youth pastoral ministry.

**Subject : Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et Misera* from His Holiness Pope Francis**

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2016/11/21/misericordia-et-misera.html>



At the end of the Holy Year of Mercy that concluded yesterday in Rome, on the solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe, our Holy Father Pope Francis today published the Apostolic Letter, *Misericordia et Misera*, so that mercy “*continue to be celebrated and lived out in our communities*”. (n. 1)

According to St. Augustine’s expression, mercy comes to meet misery. The Pope focuses on the encounter between Jesus and the adulterous woman. (Jn 8: 1-11) Jesus invited that woman to turn toward the future. “*Mercy is this concrete action of love that, by forgiving, transforms and changes our lives.*”(n. 2) It “*gives rise to joy, because our hearts are opened to the hope of a new life.*” (n. 3)

The Pope describes his objective: “*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 God’s mercy*”, in a process of “*pastoral conversion*”. (n. 5)

To begin with, the Holy Father invites us to *celebrate* divine mercy. He shows how it is present in the *Eucharistic liturgy* (n. 5) and in all of sacramental life. The *Word of God* expressly reveals it to us (n. 6), hence the importance of the homily and the reading of Holy Scripture. “*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.*” (n. 7)

Next the Pope describes the Sacrament of Reconciliation (n. 8) in which “*God shows us the way to turn back to him and invites us to experience his closeness anew.*” Priests have a particular responsibility of their own: “*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 love whatever the gravity of the sin*

involved, **attentive** in helping penitents to reflect on the evil 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... (n. 10) *The Sacrament of Reconciliation must regain its central place in the Christian life*" (n. 11).

In this regard, the Pope grants every priest the faculty to absolve the sin of abortion. (n. 12)

In the second part of his Letter, the Holy Father looks at the Works of Mercy. He reminds us of the need for consolation (n. 13): "All of us need consolation because no one is spared suffering, pain and misunderstanding". This reality first of all touches families (n. 14) and marriage. "*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.*" People must be accompanied and helped to actively participate in the life of the community.

The moment of death (n. 15) is also of great importance.

"*The door of mercy of our heart continues to remain wide open.*" (n. 16) "*Now is the time to unleash the creativity of mercy, to bring about new undertakings, the fruit of grace.*" (n. 18) We are invited to act in the face of sickness, prisons of every kind, illiteracy, extreme individualism. "*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*". In the simplicity of gestures, we should give concrete form to charity (n. 19) and promote a *culture of mercy* (n. 20), founded on rediscovery of encounter with others.

In conclusion, the Holy Father plans to celebrate the World Day of the Poor on the 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the liturgical year. "*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*".

Sincerely,

✠ Serge Poitras  
Bishop of Timmins