



Jubilee Year of Mercy

—2015-2016—

Archdiocese of Hartford

The Archbishop's Desk

Jubilee Year of Mercy

Next month, on Dec. 8, a special event will take place in Rome that has great significance for the whole church. Pope Francis will inaugurate a “Jubilee Year of Mercy” by opening the traditional Holy Year door of St. Peter’s Basilica.

In the words of the pope, it is the opening of a “Door of Mercy through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons and instills hope” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 3). And in dioceses throughout the world, a similar door is to be designated and opened by the local bishop the following Sunday for the same purpose.

The Holy Year Door is what the church calls a sacramental – not a sacrament, which can only be instituted by Christ himself, but rather something resembling a sacrament, something instituted by the church to signify and obtain spiritual effects through the church’s intercession with God.

When Pope Francis says that “anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons and instills hope,” he does not mean something magical or superstitious. The person who passes through the door has to be sincerely disposed in faith to receive God’s mercy and to amend his or her life through the grace of God. The sacrament of penance and reconciliation is a significant part of the Jubilee Year. In the words of the pope, going to confession has to be “at the center once more in such a way that it will enable people to touch the grandeur of God’s mercy with their own hands,” and be “a source of interior peace” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 17).

Nor is the Jubilee Year just about receiving Divine Mercy. It is also, and inseparably, about showing mercy – being “merciful like the Father.” Jesus made it crystal clear that we will not receive mercy and forgiveness if we have withheld mercy and forgiveness from others. For Pope Francis, this is not just a matter of forgiving our enemies or those who wrong us, but, far more expansively, it is about going out of ourselves and our comfort zones, individually and as a church to address the misery of others – those who are suffering spiritually, morally and materially.

That is why for the jubilee the Holy Father has placed special emphasis on what the church has traditionally called the “works of mercy,” both corporal and spiritual. The corporal works of mercy are charitable actions by which we help our neighbors in their bodily needs. These include feeding the hungry, giv-



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ing drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and prisoners, burying the dead and giving alms to the poor. The spiritual works of mercy are actions that help our neighbors in their spiritual needs. These include counseling the doubtful, instructing the ignorant, admonishing the sinner, comforting the sorrowful, forgiving injuries, bearing wrongs patiently and praying for the living and the dead.

All of these are actions. All are directed toward our neighbor. Thanks to the great generosity of many Catholics, there are any number of ministries, programs, offices and organizations that carry out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy in the Archdiocese of Hartford and beyond.

But what about each of us personally during the Jubilee Year? The pope in Rome and all of the bishops in their dioceses will be striving to give a public and personal witness to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. I invite everyone in the archdiocese to do the same over the next year. You may be surprised by the way you can do something you never imagined to help with prison ministry, for example, or to promote knowledge of the faith among the ignorant or the doubtful. Remember that the three “I”s of Christian stewardship include not just treasure, but time and talent, too.

You will be hearing much more in weeks to come about the particulars of the jubilee observance in our archdiocese. For more information and updates about ongoing and evolving calendar activities and celebrations, you can always turn to *The Catholic Transcript* or www.catholictranscript.org or go to www.ArchdioceseofHartford.org.

For now, I want to invite everyone to the opening ceremony for the archdiocesan Jubilee Door of Mercy at our Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford on Dec. 13 at 3 p.m. The liturgy will consist of the blessing and opening of our Holy Door, evening prayer, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. All the priests of the archdiocese are invited, and we would love to see the cathedral filled for the occasion with people from throughout the archdiocese.

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