

January 15, 2016

Dear Parishioners:

Last month on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Pope Francis formally opened the Holy Year. The theme is that of mercy. The Motto of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy is: “Merciful like the Father.” At the very start of Pope Francis’ pastoral leadership as our Supreme Pontiff, he defined his papacy as a time of mercy so that the world may rediscover God’s gift of love, compassion and forgiveness. However, he added that as the God has been always merciful, we are also called to be sharers and givers of that grace and consolation to everyone, to be compassionate as God is compassionate. God’s mercy is beyond our comprehension. In the Bull of Indiction, “*Misericordiae Vultus*,” the Holy Father said: “*The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person. The Spouse of Christ must pattern her behavior after the Son of God who went out to everyone without exception.*”

The Jubilee of Mercy is a great occasion for the Holy Father to remind us of our God who is compassionate and who always forgives. He dedicates this entire year that we may become open vessels of His mercy and never get tired of asking forgiveness for our sins. This theme seems especially during the period of Lent. Lent comes early this year. The first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, occurs on February 10.

In light of this Holy Year of Mercy, I would like to recommend a special Lenten practice: read the Pope’s recent book on mercy, *The Name of God is Mercy*. The book is 88 pages long and was simultaneously released this past week in 86 countries. I found it an easy read and quite inspirational. Pope Francis reveals his vision of God’s mercy in a series of interviews with Vatican reporter Andrea Tornielli. He speaks of his own personal experience of the sacrament of Reconciliation. He comes across as a humble man who sees himself as a sinner and as a compassionate man who understands the human condition.

You can purchase it on Amazon.com or download it in your electronic reader. I have ordered some copies and will make them available for purchase at the parish office. If you read just one chapter a day, you would have it done in little over a week.

The Church condemns sin but shows mercy to the sinner. May you have a blessed Lent and experience the mercy of a God who loves us unconditionally.

Yours in Christ,

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Pastor