

The Catholic Women's League of Canada
Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

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Communique # 2



One Heart, One Voice, One Mission

TO: Diocesan Chairpersons of Spiritual Development
CC: Provincial Executive (for information)
CC: National Chairperson of Spiritual Development (for information)

FROM: Judy L., Provincial Chairperson of Spiritual Development
ATT: _____

Happy New Year! Happy “Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy” Year: a time of possible adjustments; a complete overhaul or maybe just a bit of tweaking through personal reflection centered on our relationship with God and with each other. To get the most out of this year we must become actively engaged in the Pope’s invitation. We must educate ourselves in what mercy means and what it does? Why is it so important to the Pope that he would designate a whole year for our focus? Could it be we have become complacent in our attitudes and we need a refresher course on mercy and sin? In reading an article by Bishop James Conley, Bishop of Lincoln Nebraska, I found that mercy begins with **humility**. (Humility can be defined as the moral virtue that keeps a person from reaching beyond themselves. It is the virtue that restrains the unruly desire for personal greatness and leads people to an orderly love of themselves based on a true appreciation of their position with respect to God and their neighbours. Religious humility recognizes one’s total dependence on God; moral humility recognizes one’s creaturely equality with others.) *Catholic Dictionary*: “Mercy is the generous forgiveness that restores relationships and rights wrongs. It is a manifestation of love in the face of sin. Each act of mercy requires a humble heart, a heart capable of approaching another, confessing a wrong, and asking for forgiveness. Mercy requires an awareness of our sinfulness, and an acceptance that sin is real, and harmful, and damages our relationships.” When we reflect on the Bishop’s words, as CWL members we realize that to become who we say we are as mercy must be central to everything we do. To have mercy central, we begin with a collective examination of conscience where we admit that we are sinners in need of forgiveness as well as giving forgiveness.

We can awaken ourselves to the rationalizing of our behaviour that denies our sinfulness and just admit to ourselves the fact that we are sinners in need of forgiveness and love.

Once we have awakened ourselves to the need of mercy, this special year calls us to grow in mercy by participating in a pilgrimage, works of mercy and reconciliation. To understand these areas of growth, we turn to Pope Francis' explanation in his papal bull: *Misericordiae Vultus*.

Pilgrimage:

“14. The practice of *pilgrimage* has a special place in the Holy Year, because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life. Life itself is a pilgrimage, and the human being is a *viator*, a pilgrim travelling along the road, making [their] way to the desired destination. Similarly, to reach the Holy Door in Rome or in any other place in the world, everyone, each according to his or her ability, will have to make a pilgrimage. This will be a sign that mercy is also a goal to reach and requires dedication and sacrifice. May pilgrimage be an impetus to conversion: by crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, we will find the strength to embrace God's mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as the Father has been with us.”

The Lord Jesus shows us the steps of the pilgrimage to attain our goal: “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” (Lk 6:37)

We can go to our Diocesan website and find the churches in our area that have a HOLY DOOR.

Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

“15. It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the *corporal and spiritual works of mercy*. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy. Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these *corporal works of mercy*: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. And let us not forget the *spiritual works of mercy*: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead.”

The CWL National Office <www.cwl.ca> has produced an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy brochure and pledge card that we may want to access and use in our councils to help our members become involved in this special year.

Indulgences

“22. A Jubilee also entails the granting of *indulgences*. This practice will acquire an even more important meaning in the Holy Year of Mercy. God's forgiveness knows no bounds. In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God makes even more evident his love and its power to destroy all human sin. Reconciliation with God is made possible through the paschal mystery and the mediation of the

Church. Thus God is always ready to forgive, and he never tires of forgiving in ways that are continually new and surprising. Nevertheless, all of us know well the experience of sin. We know that we are called to perfection (cf. *Mt 5:48*), yet we feel the heavy burden of sin. Though we feel the transforming power of grace, we also feel the effects of sin typical of our fallen state. Despite being forgiven, the conflicting consequences of our sins remain. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God forgives our sins, which he truly blots out; and yet sin leaves a negative effect on the way we think and act. But the mercy of God is stronger even than this. It becomes **indulgence** on the part of the Father who, through the Bride of Christ, his Church, reaches the pardoned sinner and frees him from every residue left by the consequences of sin, enabling him to act with charity, to grow in love rather than to fall back into sin.”

To obtain a Plenary Indulgence

Conditions ordinarily attached to a plenary indulgence (remission of temporal punishment for sins already forgiven, Canon 992) shall, with the proper intention and disposition, receive the plenary Jubilee Indulgence available during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.

These conditions are:

1. recipient must be a baptized Catholic in the state of grace (free from mortal sin) at time of indulgenced work (pilgrimage);
2. recipient must internally express a detachment from and rejection of sin at time of indulgenced work (pilgrimage);
3. recipient must make a sacramental confession within 20 days of indulgenced work (pilgrimage), preferably but not required on the day itself;
4. recipient must receive Holy Communion within 20 days of indulgenced work, preferably but not required on the day itself;
5. recipient must pray for the intentions of the Holy Father at the time of the indulgenced work (pilgrimage), and make a Profession of Faith, one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be, or other suitable prayers.

The Jubilee Plenary Indulgence may be obtained for the living or the dead and will be available only one time daily. (dioceseoftyler.org)

If we are to be recipients of all God’s blessings in this Holy Year I encourage

- the reading of the Papal Bull using it as a basis for personal and council reflection;
- making a pilgrimage to a Holy Door in the Diocese
- developing a plan of action that includes the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.

May God bless each one of us with a sense of our own sinfulness and the need for mercy so we in turn can reach out to others with forgiveness and mercy and truly become One Heart, One Voice, One Mission in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Have a very blessed 2016.