



Archbishop's Christmas Message 2015

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“When the goodness and loving-kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy” (Titus 3.4–5). These words from the Christmas Mass at Dawn tell us that Jesus’ Nativity was an act of God’s merciful love. How appropriate in this Jubilee Year of Mercy!

Mercy is “the bridge that connects God and humanity, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.” Pope Francis wrote this in his document instituting the Year of Mercy (*Misericordiae Vultus*, The Face of Mercy), which began on the Feast of Mary’s Immaculate Conception.

The Pope is asking two things of us in this year. First, make a good personal confession. Second, perform works of mercy.

The corporal works of mercy are feeding the hungry; giving drink to the thirsty; clothing the naked; sheltering the homeless; visiting the sick and imprisoned; and burying the dead. The spiritual works of mercy are instructing the ignorant; counselling the doubtful; admonishing sinners; bearing wrongs patiently; forgiving offences willingly; comforting the afflicted; and praying for the living and the dead.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we experience the loving and forgiving mercy of God. This graced encounter brings inner healing, peace, and joy. Once we have tasted God’s mercy, we want to share that gift with others.

Pope Francis has allowed each diocese to designate a Door of Mercy. Ours is in Notre Dame Cathedral. Traditionally, such a sacred door represents the passage to salvation as well as an entryway to God’s mercy.

I encourage you to make a pilgrimage through this special door during the Year of Mercy. When you do, reflect not only on God's mercy for yourself, but also on ways you can be charitable to those around you.

Ask for God's help to receive His mercy. He will gently show you where you need forgiveness, comfort, and hope. Be honest and trust Jesus. He is mercy itself.

Then, be merciful to others. Ask for the grace to be free of anger, resentment, and hard-heartedness. Ask for the grace to be kind and to forgive. Who is close to you? Be kind to them. Who has hurt you? Forgive them. Who is unlovable? Love them and release them to God's blessing.

As we gaze upon Jesus in the manger this Christmas, let us realize the truth the Holy Father has been stressing - that "Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's Mercy." May Mary, Mother of Mercy, draw us close to her Son and the gifts of merciful love he wishes to give us.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terrence Prendergast, S.J.", with a small cross symbol to the left.

✠ Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
Archbishop of Ottawa