

# A Time of Mercy ~ Lent 2016

“God’s mercy transforms human hearts; it enables us, through the experience of a faithful love, to become merciful in turn. In an ever new miracle, divine mercy shines forth in our lives, inspiring each of us to love our neighbor and to devote ourselves to what the Church’s tradition calls the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. These works remind us that faith finds expression in concrete everyday actions meant to help our neighbors in body and spirit: by feeding, visiting, comforting and instructing them. On such things will we be judged. For this reason, I expressed that *‘the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; this will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty, and to enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God’s mercy’*. For in the poor, the flesh of Christ *‘becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us’*. It is the unprecedented and scandalous mystery of the extension in time of the suffering of the Innocent Lamb, the burning bush of gratuitous love. Before this love, we can, like Moses, take off our sandals (cf. *Ex 3:5*), especially when the poor are our brothers or sisters in Christ who are suffering for their faith. ... For all of us, then, the season of Lent in this Jubilee Year is a favorable time to overcome our existential alienation by listening to God’s word and by practicing the works of mercy. In the corporal works of mercy we touch the flesh of Christ in our brothers and sisters who need to be fed, clothed, sheltered, visited; in the spiritual works of mercy – counsel, instruction, forgiveness, admonishment and prayer – we touch more directly our own sinfulness. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy must never be separated. By touching the flesh of the crucified Jesus in the suffering, sinners can receive the gift of realizing that they too are poor and in need. ... Let us not waste this season of Lent, so favorable a time for conversion!”

-Pope Francis, *Lenten Message 2016*



## Lenten Guidelines

### PRAYER

Catholics are encouraged to pray more during Lent, especially with Scripture. Lent is also an ideal time to receive properly the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation in preparation for the celebration of Christ’s Passion, Death and Resurrection.

### FASTING AND ABSTINENCE

Catholics of age 14 and older abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all the Fridays of Lent. In addition, on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, Catholics from age 18-59 fast, limiting themselves to one full meal and two smaller meals each day.

### ALMSGIVING

Moved by the sacrifice of Christ, many Christians combine almsgiving with fasting, giving to the poor the money they saved by eating, drinking or buying less as they rely more upon God’s abundant grace.

## A Time of Pilgrimage

- ◆ Consider making a special pilgrimage to Saint Patrick Cathedral throughout this Jubilee Year to pass through the Holy Door. The Holy Door is a symbol of entering more deeply into our relationship with Jesus Christ who is the Door to Eternal Life and the Face of the Father’s Merciful Love.
- ◆ *Along with the Cathedral, Bishop Gainer has also designated these four churches as sites for the Jubilee Pilgrimage: Historic Saint Mary’s, Lancaster; Sacred Heart Basilica, Conewago; Saint Mary’s, Fairfield; and the Basilica of Saints Cyril & Methodius, Danville.*

## Plenary Indulgence

A plenary indulgence may be obtained in this Jubilee Year by making a pilgrimage to one of the designated shrines in the diocese or elsewhere.

- A plenary indulgence can be gained only once a day. In order to obtain it, the faithful must, in addition to being in the state of grace:
  - have the interior disposition of complete detachment from sin, even venial sin;
  - have sacramentally confessed their sins;
  - received the Holy Eucharist; and
  - prayed for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff.
- Pope Francis also asks that we complete a work of mercy.

- ◆ Indulgences can always be applied either to oneself or to the souls of the deceased, but they cannot be applied to other persons living on earth.