



OCTOBER 2016: THE CHURCH OF MERCY

Bulletin Reflection - *This reflection is sized to fit in a column of a parish bulletin.*

The Jubilee Year of Mercy – The Church of Mercy

"...a soldier thrust his lance into His side, and immediately blood and water flowed out." –Jn 19:34

Throughout the ages, the Church has understood this moment in the life of Christ as the birth of the Church. St. John Chrysostom (4th cent.) explains, "Water and blood symbolized Baptism and the holy Eucharist. From these two sacraments the Church is born." At the same time, we see in the blood and water flowing from the pierced heart of Jesus a perfect symbol of God's infinite mercy.

In this scene of Jesus' heart being pierced for us, we find simultaneously a revelation of the Church's sacraments and a revelation of Divine Mercy. The fact that *mercy* and *sacrament* are revealed in the same moment allows us to understand that sacraments *are* encounters with God's tender mercy.

The Holy Year is a good time to consider how much we actually experience this truth. Many times we approach the sacraments out of routine, not really knowing why we are receiving them and not really sensing that they have any effect in our lives. But if the sacraments truly flow from the merciful heart of Jesus Christ, then our reception of the sacraments should be – *each time!* - a deeply transformative moment.

Let us spend this time of grace asking God to unlock the power of the sacraments for us so that we experience them as they truly are, an encounter with the jaw-dropping, life-changing merciful love of God's Heart. –Meghan Cokeley, Office for the New Evangelization, Archdiocese of Philadelphia

How to Live It

During the Year of Mercy, ask God for the grace to experience the sacraments as they truly are. Make an effort to be more open and attentive each time you receive Holy Communion or go to Confession. Study the Church's beautiful teachings on the sacraments. Work on removing from your life the sin that might be "clogging up" your ability to receive the effects of the sacraments.

Quote from Catholic Tradition:

"A final question: what can I, a weak fragile sinner, do? God says to you, Do not be afraid of holiness; do not be afraid to aim high, to let yourself be loved and purified by God; do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit. Let us be infected by the holiness of God. Every Christian is called to sanctity (see Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 19–42); and sanctity does not consist especially in doing extraordinary things, but in allowing God to act." -Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*

To continue reflecting on this theme, consider one of these resources!

- **Recommended Book for the Month:** *Saints and Social Justice: A Guide to Changing the World*, Brandon Vogt
- **Lighthouse Catholic Media CD:** *God's Family and Ours: The Church and the Trinity* by Dr. Scott Hahn