



RETREAT ON MERCY

National Council of Catholic Women

Participant Booklet

In honor of The Jubilee Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis the Spirituality Commission of the National Council of Catholic Women initiated this Retreat in 2016.

2016 Spirituality Commission

Dear Sisters in Council:

In honor of *The Jubilee Year of Mercy*¹ proclaimed by Pope Francis, on April 11, 2015, Divine Mercy Sunday, the Spirituality Commission of the National Council of Catholic Women developed this Retreat with the theme of *Mercy*. We are asked to “constantly contemplate the mystery of mercy.” (Misericordiae Vultus, 2) Therefore, it is intended that this retreat continue to be offered—inviting us to step away from our everyday lives to rest, reflect, pray and discuss the mercy we receive from our Heavenly Father and the mercy we share with those we know as well as with the stranger.

Have a faith filled retreat and may we all draw closer to Christ as we live the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy in our everyday lives.

May God Bless You!

2016 Spirituality Commission

Many permissions were granted for use of resources in developing this retreat.

Please see the final page for all credits.ⁱ

¹ Jubilees began in the 13th century and run every 25 or 50 years with the last in 2000. The last *extraordinary* Jubilee was in 1983. Pope Francis proclaimed the Church would celebrate an *extraordinary* Jubilee -*The Jubilee Year of Mercy* beginning on December 8, 2015—The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and ending on November 20, 2016—The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe.

AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions	10 Minutes
Opening Prayer	5 Minutes
Centering Prayer	15 Minutes
Listening and Reflection Activities	70 Minutes
Prayer Service	15 Minutes
Closing	5 Minutes

WELCOME...

and thank you for taking time away from the usual daily schedule to be in a quiet space to pray, listen, reflect then return motivated to continue or begin to help a neighbor obtain what they may need both spiritually and materially as we try to imitate Our Lord's abundant mercy and love. May this time help bring you closer to God's voice in your heart.

We would like to introduce ourselves and invite each of you to introduce yourselves as we begin our time together.



“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink.’”

Matthew 25:35-42



OPENING PRAYER

PRAYER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

Lord Jesus Christ,

you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.

Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money;
the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things;
made Peter weep after his betrayal,
and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman:

“If you knew the gift of God!”

You are the visible face of the invisible Father,
of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy:
let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.
You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness
in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error:
let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor,
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed,
and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.

OPENING PRAYER FOR CENTERING PRAYER



God of heavenly wisdom, You have given us Mary, Mother of Jesus,
to be our guide and counselor.

Grant that we may always seek her motherly help in this life
and so enjoy her blessed presence in the life to come.

O Mother of Good Counsel, Patroness of the National Council of Catholic Women,
intercede for us, that we may be wise, courageous and loving leaders of the Church.
Help us, dear mother, to know the mind of Jesus, your son.

May the Holy Spirit fill us with reverence for God's creation,
and compassion for all God's children.

May our labors of love on earth enhance the reign of God
and may God's gifts of faith and living hope prepare us for the fullness of the world to come.

Amen

LISTENING AND REFLECTION

The actions and works of mercy have foundation from the Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 25:35-42) which reveals when we act mercifully to our neighbor, we are merciful to Our Lord who identifies completely with the hungry, the homeless, the sick, imprisoned and even the dead. God is rich in mercy and invites us to do the same.

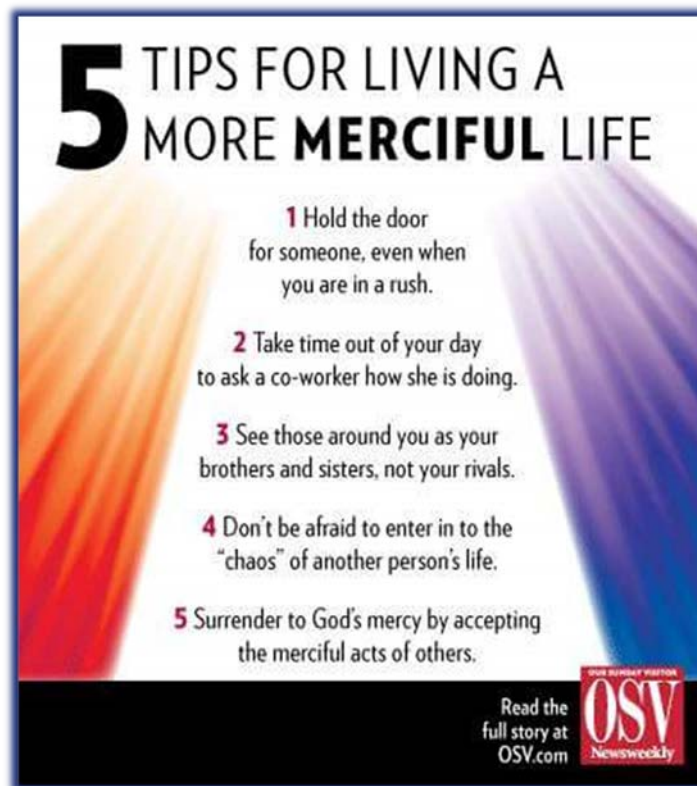
The Works of Mercy are grouped in two parts: The Corporal Works of Mercy and The Spiritual Works of Mercy.

The Corporal Works of Mercy:

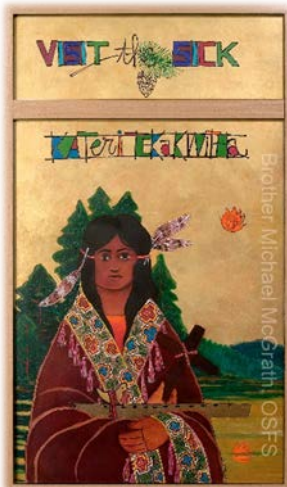
- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Welcome the stranger
- Heal the sick
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the dead

The Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- Counsel the doubtful
- Instruct the ignorant
- Admonish sinners
- Comfort the afflicted
- Forgive offences
- Bear patiently with those who do us ill
- Pray for the living and the dead



**TALK: “WOMEN OF MERCY
LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY”**



**REFLECTION ACTIVITY: “WOMEN OF MERCY
LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY”**

After learning about these amazing women of faith, what stands out for you?

Which of these women inspired you the most? How can you bring this inspiration into action in your daily life?



REFLECTION ACTIVITY: “THE SPIRITURAL & CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY”

In small groups: take some time to review the Spiritual Works of Mercy and the Corporal Works of Mercy. Discuss how you concretely live them in our councils, dioceses, families, workplaces. Share projects that have worked and projects that are in the works.

Share some actions that can be taken. What can you do in your everyday life to show mercy?

The Corporal Works of Mercy:

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Welcome the stranger
- Heal the sick
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the dead

The Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- Counsel the doubtful
- Instruct the ignorant
- Admonish sinners
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REFLECTION ACTIVITY: “OUR LADY OF MERCY”

The Canticle of Mary (Luke 1:46-55)

*“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness;
behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.
The Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is from age to age
to those who fear him.
He has shown might with his arm,
dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.
He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones
but lifted up the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things;
the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped Israel his servant,
remembering his mercy,
according to his promise to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”*

How can we use Mary’s Canticle to remind us of God’s Mercy and inspire us to live the Works of Mercy in our lives?



CLOSING PRAYER



Divine Mercy Chaplet

You expired, Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls, and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fount of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy, envelop the whole world and empty Yourself out upon us.

O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fountain of Mercy for us, I trust in You! (3x)

Our Father, Hail Mary, Apostle's Creed

For each decade...

On "Our Father" beads pray...

Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

On "Hail Mary" beads pray...

For the sake of His Sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world (3x)

Eternal God, in whom mercy is endless and the treasury of compassion inexhaustible, look kindly upon us and increase Your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might not despair nor become despondent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to Your holy will, which is Love and Mercy itself. **AMEN.**

CLOSING PRAYER

Intercessions A

Let us give glory to God, who has concern for us all.

We pause to bring our prayers to God:

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of all mercy, bring to us your loving embrace.

- Help us approach you with hungry hearts to receive your mercy.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Jesus our brother, you witness to us what it is to forgive with deep mercy,

- provide us with the compassion we need to embrace those who have hurt us.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Holy Spirit, you inspired the apostles in the upper room to have courage to proclaim God's word,

- shower us with your Spirit so that we may boldly share our faith each and every day.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Mary, Our Lady of Good Counsel, you carried your son for nine months and gave witness to his life,

- inspire us to be a voice for those who don't have one and give them comfort.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Our Father...

Most Blessed Mother Mary, we pause at the end of this retreat day (time) to give praise and glory to your son, Jesus. We received much information at our retreat today and have much to be thankful for as Catholic Women. Taking this time with your son is so refreshing for us; to be in his loving presence and to be guided by his gentle inspiration.

Lord Jesus – touch our hearts with your mercy – so we can proclaim with one voice: Lord we pray in your mercy, hear our prayer. **Amen.**

Intercessions B

Let us give thanks to our Savior who came into this world as God's presence among us:

Let our prayer rise up to him:

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of Mercy, many who are around us are hurting and see no hope,

- give us the insight to reach out to them with a loving and caring hand.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Jesus of Nazareth, you know what it is to not be heard in your own land,

- grace us with the courage to speak out even within our own families.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Spirit of the living God, you came to the apostles in the upper room when they were frightened,

- come to us as we gather to pray and fill our hearts with the fire of your love.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Mary, our Blessed Mother, you watched your son live his public life,

- help us to be the witnesses God has called us to be in life.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

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Lord Jesus – touch our hearts with your mercy – so we can proclaim with one voice: Lord we pray in your mercy, hear our prayer. **Amen.**

Intercessions C

Through the intercession of holy women, let us pray for the Church in these words,

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, you forgave the sinful woman because she loved much,

- Forgive us who have sinned much.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, the holy women ministered to your needs during your journeys,

- Help us to follow your footsteps.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, master, Mary listened to your words while Martha served your needs,

- Help us to listen to your Word and serve you with love and devotion.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, you call everyone who does your will your brother, sister, and mother,

- Help us to do what is pleasing to you in word and action.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

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i CREDITS

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Misericordia Vultus BULL OF INDICATION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY, FRANCIS BISHOP OF ROME SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD TO ALL WHO READ THIS LETTER GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE *Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 11 April, the Vigil of the Second Sunday of Easter, or the Sunday of Divine Mercy, in the year of our Lord 2015, the third of my Pontificate.* © Copyright – Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

The 5 Tips for Living a Merciful Life appears in a story in Our Sunday Visitor:

<https://www.osv.com/OSVNewsweekly/Story/TabId/2672/ArtMID/13567/ArticleID/10731/Blessed-are-the-merciful.aspx>

The talk "WOMEN OF MERCY - LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY" is based on the book Women of Mercy by Kathy Coffey (2006), ORBIS BOOKS, Maryknoll, New York. Cited here with permission.

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Image Credit: Caption: Dawodiya, Iraq - April 10, 2016. Bishop William Murphy of Rockville Centre, New York visits a displacement center in Dawodiya, Iraq on April 10, 2016. The center holds refugees displaced from Mosul when ISIS attacked in June 2014, with about 60-70% Yazidi refugees (others are Christians, Muslims and a few other small minority religions.) Photographer: Elise Harris/CAN Credit: Catholic News Agency.

The Magnificat is Latin for "The Canticle of Mary" which is found in the Gospel of Luke 1:46-55.

Image Credit: Title: Madonna of Mercy c. 1472 Painted by: Domenico Ghirlandaio Location: Private Collection Year: 1472 Courtesy of www.domenico-ghirlandaio.org

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