



RETREAT ON MERCY

National Council of Catholic Women

Facilitator Guide

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

FACILITATOR GUIDE: RETREAT ON MERCY

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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)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.

Our hope is that this retreat packet will inspire members to host this retreat for each other. The current outline is for a two to three-hour retreat, however, we have provided many prayers, resources, and activities which could extend the retreat to half a day or full day. Please feel free to use the pieces included as you believe best for your membership...there is no wrong way to host a retreat.

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

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.

² *Misericordiae 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.

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

Facilitator Note:

The times listed for each agenda item are based on a two-hour retreat. Please feel free to adjust times and activities to meet the needs of your members.

You may also consider scheduling the Sacrament of Reconciliation and/or Mass with your parish priest.

Facilitator Note:

In the next few pages you will find text you can read and/or adapt for each agenda item. In addition, you will continue to see these “Facilitator Notes” to help you prepare and plan to host this retreat. We have provided multiple options. As you plan the retreat feel free to use the pieces which will best fit the needs of your members within the timeframe you have set for the retreat.

You can also invite a Priest, Religious Sister or another guest speaker to join you during this retreat and offer a “Talk”.

Facilitator Note:

In preparation for the Retreat on Mercy, it is very important to set a prayerful environment. As the Retreat Facilitator be sure to confirm your reservation and communicate how you would like the room to be set-up. You may have to arrive at least one hour before to ensure that the building is open, the room is set as requested, and the temperature is fine. In addition, please have the space prepared at least 30 minutes in advance. Below is a Checklist to assist you.

Checklist:

1. Place a tablecloth and either one large candle or two medium size candles. You may want to include some spiritual items such as a crucifix, statue of Mary and/or a Bible.
2. Bring any necessary supplies such as the prayer rocks, bookmarks, pens, etc.
3. Choose music to play for the ½ hour before the start time, live or selections played on a smart phone.
4. Decide whether you want to lower the lights, if you deem it appropriate, before the actual start time to create a prayerful environment as people are arriving.
5. Signs for restrooms – place location signs so people do not need to ask.
6. Designate someone (or two people depending upon size of expected group) to welcome people.
7. Determine whether there is a program or a song sheet to be distributed.
8. We have also provided a Participant Packet which you can print and provide to attendees.

Preparation for Opening Prayer:

In small groups: have a basket of rocks, some markers and an empty basket on the table. Read the Jubilee Year of Mercy prayer written by Pope Francis.

Invite the participants to take a rock, a marker and write a word that connects to one of the Corporal or Spiritual Works of Mercy. When finished have them place the rock in the empty basket. Continue doing this until the rocks all have a word on them and are in the empty basket.

Invite the participants to take a rock for someone they know who is in need of prayers and a rock for themselves.

WELCOME...

and thank you for taking time away from the usual daily schedule to be in a quiet space to pray, listen, reflect and 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.



Facilitator Note:

The Opening Prayer was written by Pope Francis in honor of *The Jubilee Year of Mercy*. At the end of this packet you will find a Bookmark template in which you can insert the “date” and “location” of your Retreat and provide a copy of this prayer as well as The Divine Mercy Chaplet, and The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.



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.

Guidelines for Centering Prayer:

As the Facilitator, you will want to share these Guidelines with your participants and guide them through “Centering Prayer” as a form of meditation.

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God’s presence and action within you.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God’s presence and action within you.
 - A. The sacred word expresses your intention to be in God’s presence and to yield to the divine action.
 - B. The sacred word should be chosen during a brief period of prayer asking the Holy Spirit to inspire you with one that is especially suitable to you.

Examples: Lord, Jesus, Father, Mother, Mary.

Other possibilities: Love, Peace, Mercy, Silence, Stillness, Calm, Faith, Trust, Yes.

3. When you become aware of thoughts, gently return to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

Depending on the group, this prayer period can be for 10 to 30 minutes. All depends on how long you have for the entire program. You need to make that decision. There is no right or wrong with the time.

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

Facilitator Note:

We have provided you with three different “Talks” with a “Reflection Activity” for each:

- Women of Mercy: Living The Corporal Works of Mercy
- The Spiritual Works of Mercy
- Our Lady of Mercy

Please feel free to use these “Talks” and “Reflection Activities” or parts of these “Talks” and “Reflection Activities” as you feel best fit the needs of your membership during this retreat. We also encourage you to develop your own talk and reflection activity if you feel so inspired. You can also invite a Priest, Sister or guest speaker to provide an additional talk.

More information and materials can be found on the website for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at www.usccb.org.

LISTENING AND REFLECTION

The Works of Mercy are found in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 25:35-42). Matthew 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 into 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 the sinner
- Comfort the afflicted
- Forgive offences
- Bear patiently with those who do us ill
- Pray for the living and the dead



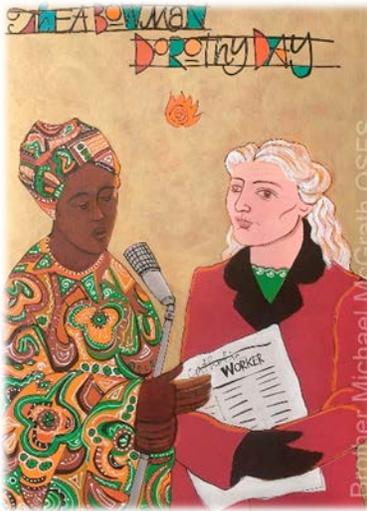
“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give 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.”



TALK: “WOMEN OF MERCY”³
LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY”⁴

Feed the Hungry

DOROTHY DAY “The Bread Line of Mercy”



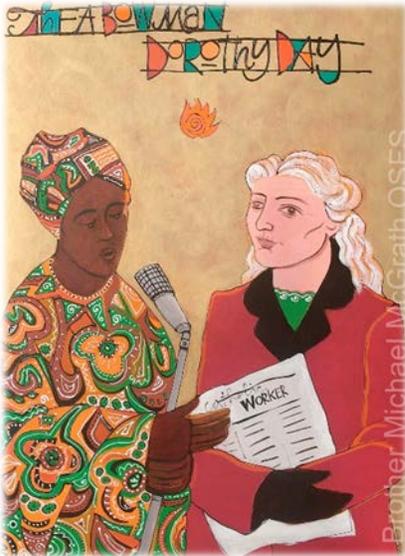
- Activism with poverty and love of nature & beauty around her
- She wrote from home, in jails, fields with migrant workers, with coal miners, on reservations, slums and hospice homes
- Daughter, Tamar, named after a women of mercy ~ Saint Teresa of Avila. Dorothy also studied Saint Thérèse of Lisieux’s writings ~ “the significance of our smallest acts.” (p.135)
- Began the *Catholic Worker* newspaper and the Catholic Worker House that saw “constant crisis, impossible odds.” She wrote books “so the bills would be paid for a very big family.” (p.136)
- Her “manifesto of mercy” came in response to a social worker who asked how long “guests” could stay at the Worker. Day answered, “We let them stay forever. They live with us, they die with us, and we give them a Christian burial. We pray for them after they are dead. Once they are taken in, they become members of the family. Or rather they always were members of the family. They are brothers and sisters in Christ.” (p. 138)
- Her relationship with her daughter, Tamar, was so important to her. “I have not even to this day ceased to look upon her with wonder.” (p.139)

³ This talk is based on the book Women of Mercy by Kathy Coffey (2006), ORBIS BOOKS, Maryknoll, New York. Cited here with permission. It is recommended that this book be read by whoever gives this talk.

⁴ Images Credits: “Women of Mercy” artwork by Michael O’Neill McGrath, OSFS with permission granted: M.O. McGrath/bromickeymcgrath.com

- When she prayed, she prayed in thanksgiving not hopelessness. Her mentor, Saint Teresa of Avila, was an example for her by dancing with castanets “to make life more bearable.” (p.141)
- “Throughout her arduous life, she trusted providence so completely that the symbol of loaves and fishes, which she saw multiplied a hundredfold to feed many, appeared on her tombstone.” (p.140)

Feed the Hungry



SISTER THEA BOWMAN “Sung Mercy”

- She felt “Song feeds the spirit as surely as abundant biscuits nourish the body.” (p.124)
- A Catholic at age 10; at 16 the only African American of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration living in La Crosse, Wisconsin.
- She regained her musical heritage; affirmed black Catholic identity; helped found the Institute of Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University in New Orleans in 1980.
- Songs from slavery to the civil rights movement.
- She heard a report on National Public Radio that, “Research in Britain measured the difference between people singing in church and in other group settings. They found that song in the worship setting released endorphins that help health. These were not present in any other setting nor in speaking.” (p.129)
- Completed her doctorate at the Catholic University of America.
- Diagnosed with breast cancer in 1984, used song to help alleviate her pain. She died at age 53. She accomplished much in a racist society. People especially the young were fed with song & spirit.

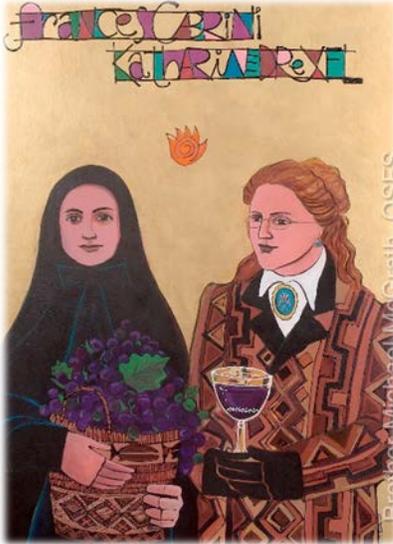
Give Drink to the Thirsty

SAINT KATHARINE DREXEL



- Very wealthy ~ inherited \$14 million (\$200 million today) but grew up believing the wealth belongs to God and to share it with the poor.
- Great concern with living conditions of Native Americans as well as African Americans.
- She became a Sister of the Blessed Sacrament at 33 and began her own convent. She began a school to educate African American girls with Christian principles. She endured the wrath of the Ku Klux Klan with a burned cross on her lawn.
- She continued to want college for her students and contributed \$750,000 toward founding Xavier University in New Orleans, the first Catholic college in the U.S. for African Americans. She led by “You have no time to occupy your thoughts with consideration of what others think. Your business is simply, ‘What will my Father in heaven think?’” (p.112)
- St. Katharine went to New Mexico and Arizona. She started St. Katharine School which incorporated the Native American culture with the arts and prayer. “Mercy flourished as diverse groups learned to communicate and work together.” (p. 113)
- In four years there were thirteen Native American schools to which she donated \$1 million - the Catholic Indian Missions and \$100,000 a year to support the schools on the reservations.
- After developing a severe heart condition in 1935 she could only pray but at the fiftieth anniversary of her order the Native American students of Xavier University Music Department performed in celebration of her vision ‘what you and I could be.’ Her canonization took only forty years after her death in 1955.

SAINT FRANCES CABRINI – “Mercy in Motion”



- A native of Italy and a young woman of poor health, she was rejected by two religious communities. With the suggestion of her bishop, she started her own order and later was sent to the United States in 1889 by Pope Leo XIII. In time she opened 67 charitable institutions and houses. One school was opened in a Newark store front. Though freezing in winter, the children came because they felt happy and loved and the sisters spoke their language.
- Her order had more freedom and started a small orphanage and school in New York City in 1889 which grew into national institutions for education, medical and social services especially supporting the Italian immigrants. A prison chaplain said the sisters could do more good in one visit to the prisons than all his visits in a month. Saint Frances was always in motion. She felt God’s mercy came through her, **“I have the strength for everything through Him who empowers me.” (Phil. 4:13)** When once asked how she manages all they do, she replied, “Oh, I put it all in the Sacred Heart and then I don’t get the headache.” (p. 104) Saint Frances once met Saint Katharine Drexel in 1915 in Philadelphia. The work of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart continues today through the Cabrini Mission Corps of laypeople serving the neediest and the Cabrini Medical Center in New York, a 499 capacity center serving the elderly, poor and AIDS patients.

Welcome the Stranger

SARAH

- Sarai was the wife of Abraham who sometimes asked her to say she was his sister to be in favor with authority. Sarai was not always kind to others until God’s intervention. When she was much older and improved in behavior, she changed her name to Sarah.
- While Sarah was cooking one day, Abraham offered hospitality to strangers who happened to be angels. Later on she was able to view Abraham’s vision. Late in their lives she and Abraham were granted a child, a son named Isaac. Sarah was an ancestor of the Redeemer.

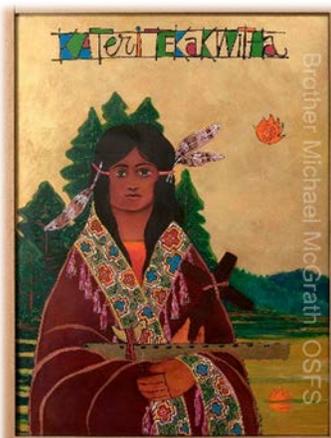
Clothe the Naked



SAINT TERESA OF CALCUTTA – “Mercy as Beauty”

- The work of Saint Teresa of Calcutta and the sisters was with the poor, homeless, hungry, and ill who received more than the physical relief but love, attention and affection. “To see the worst suffering wasn’t being naked but being unloved.” (p.146)
- Saint Teresa based her work on spirituality with the rosary and daily Mass which was her ‘sustenance & strength’ and then would go ‘to meet Jesus in the needy people.’ She also reflected, “In the slums we are the light of God’s kindness to the poor.” (p. 147)
- Saint Teresa and the sisters were joyous even with the most difficult work they did. Saint Teresa said, “Joy is a net of love in which souls are captured. A heart burning with love is a joyous heart. Modern medicines can now heal leprosy, tuberculosis, and other diseases. But only love can cure the pain of being unwanted.” (p.153)
- One can sometimes see Saint Teresa holding a peacock feather. It is the sacred, national bird of India and lives wild. The feather is beautiful ~ a favorite symbol for her. “For the first ten centuries of Christianity, the peacock symbolized the resurrected Christ ~ compassionate, immortal, beautiful. Its golden eyes represented the ‘beatific vision,’ like the mythical phoenix in religious art, its flesh did not rot, so it rose eternally.” (p. 154)

Heal the Sick and Visit the Imprisoned



SAINT KATERI TEKAKWITHA

- Her father was a Mohawk Chief, her mother was an Algonquin and a Christian. Both parents and little brother died in the 1660 smallpox epidemic. She was half blind and scarred.
- Her uncle took her in under the clan’s belief to care for the orphaned, the weak and the aged. Two Jesuit priests visited their tribe. The people loved the Christian songs and images especially the infant’s crib. Kateri was baptized at age 20. She was named after Saint Catherine of Siena.
- She suffered through gossip and hostility so she left to walk a long way to the Sault mission with other Native American Christians. She took care of the

sick and dying and became a wonderful storyteller for the children.

- A “hallmark of holiness: people wanted to be near her, so they could pray better. . . Within one young woman, the terrible hostilities between peoples were resolved. Our era desperately needs her peacemaking, her sense of the earth’s sacredness, and her tender nursing.” (p. 96, 97)

SAINT THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX – “Little Mercies”

- The favorite saint of Dorothy Day. When Dorothy spent 30 days in jail for protesting, she felt it was the ideal setting for St. Thérèse and she turned to St. Thérèse to “celebrate the ordinary”. St. Thérèse even ‘adopted’ a murderer. Although the prisoner refused a priest, St. Thérèse “imaginatively” understood the need, prayed and felt a “hint of repentance.” (p.58)
- “She saw enormous potential in the daily grind.” (p.58) At thirteen she decided to be in control of her actions, not have them control her. Thérèse’s mother died when she was four leaving five children, at age nine, her sister Pauline left for the Carmelite Order she then became ill with constant headaches. When she was fifteen, her father may have begun ‘mental troubles’ and she entered Carmel. In her journal she wrote, “My vocation is love.” (p.63) Her outlook was completely colored by trusting surrender to a “Great Love.” (p.63) Her works of mercy were healing the sick and feeding the meals in the convent. She showed “the grace in the ordinary task.” (p.65)
- Her final illness produced constant pain, but she made her visitors laugh. Some paid to be near her, she was so happy. With her wish to travel she became the patron saint of airline pilots.



Bury the Dead

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA – “A Mystic with Muddy Feet”

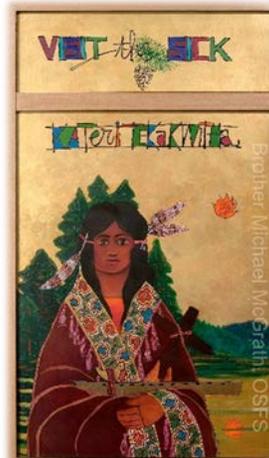
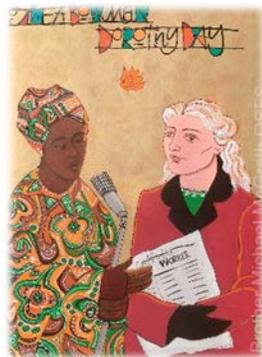


- Saint Catherine was the 25th child in her family. She was said to be “stubborn, blunt, outspoken.” (p.38) When seen with a shovel, Saint Catherine had the courage to bury the dead after a plague in Italy.
- Catherine believed heaven started here and now. She became a Dominican sister and turned to the streets and prisons. God would speak to her: “It was necessary for me to build a bridge that would join your humanity with my divinity. In order for you to have life, it is not enough that I have built the bridge, you must walk across it.” (p.40) She is credited with ending a sixty-eight year split in the church, counseled a political prisoner and saw him welcomed into infinite mercy at his execution. She did a tremendous amount before she died at age thirty-three. When Catherine spoke to God on His unimaginable love for us the reply was “**You are never alone. You have me.**” (p.43)

**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?



TALK: “SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY”⁵

Spiritual Works of Mercy - The Spiritual Works of Mercy are anchors to the Corporal Works of Mercy. They are the care for the soul. “Though one’s body may suffer for lack of provisions, one’s soul may be lost for all eternity for want of the spiritual works. Hence the need is not only wider but deeper, and eternal in its consequences.” Msgr. Charles Pope, “Abandoned: The Spiritual Works of Mercy” <http://www.courageouspriest.com/abandoned-spiritual-works-mercy>

Admonish the Sinner

In Luke 17:1-4, we read of Jesus speaking to his disciples,

“He said to his disciples, ‘Things that cause sin will inevitably occur, but woe to the person through whom they occur. It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he wrongs you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times saying, ‘I am sorry,’ you should forgive him.’”

We are warned about sin and told to rebuke our brother's sins and to forgive him if he repents. We are not to judge an action. But we can warn, teach, and guide a person. We go to our brother or sister for the sake of their wellbeing which is why these are Spiritual Works of Mercy, unlike the more tangible Corporal Works of Mercy. We want to share the good news and offer guidance and correction. St. Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:15,

“Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ.”

This, often times, proves to be challenging. It can be difficult to find the right moment or just the right words. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide the situation. Ask for the virtues of temperance and kindness when using words of restraint and compassion while affirming the dignity of the person and encouraging their potential. Remember, silence can be dangerously and incorrectly interpreted as consent.

⁵ This talk is based on the resources provided by www.TheDivineMercy.org/library

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*Instructing the Ignorant*⁶

Why do we need instruction? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* states that "parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children" (CCC2223), and parents are told that through the grace of matrimony, they "receive the responsibility and privilege of *evangelizing their children*" (CCC2225). Therefore, it is important that we commit ourselves to learning about our Catholic faith and share our understanding of the faith with our children and others and with all those who welcome it. Jesus says in Luke 6:39,



“And he told them a parable, ‘Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit?’”

As baptized Catholics, we have a responsibility to share our insights, knowledge, and skills with friends, fellow students, and coworkers. We can be role models for our children and instill in them a love for celebrating Holy Mass. By reading good literature and books, taking time to “tutor” those who are just beginning tasks, and using computer apps like *Laudate* we can encourage others to do the same and share what we've learned.

Counsel the Doubtful

Confusion and doubt are not unheard of in the believer, but common in society today is hard core skepticism. If left untreated, it can lead to cynicism and despair. We must make every effort to counsel the doubtful. True faith and love of God, when perceived by the doubtful as genuine, begins to build trust in the doubtful. Catholics believe that the Holy Spirit dwelling in us has given us the gifts necessary to assist in this counsel. As Instruments of Mercy, we need to be courageous yet compassionate in calling people and institutions to be faithful to Gospel values; intervene in situations in which people are clearly doing harm to themselves or others; respond to negative and prejudicial comments with positive statements; put an end to gossip by walking away; set a good example for others; work at being optimistic and avoiding cynicism; respond to cynicism, skepticism, and doubt with hope; be articulate about your own hopes; ask people about their hopes and support them in trying to attain them. What an act of charity we provide when we give solid advice, not just what we think the person wants to hear; but what they need to hear to come to a greater understanding of a loving God.

⁶ Image Credit: Caption: Vatican City - May 5, 2016. Participants at the prayer vigil "To Dry the Tears," dedicated to those who suffer in soul and body, with the reliquary of Our Lady of Tears of Syracuse in St. Peter's Basilica on May 5, 2016. Photographer: Daniel Ibañez/CAN Credit: Catholic News Agency

*Comfort the Afflicted*⁷

In the Gospel of Matthew 5:4 Jesus tells us,

**“Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.”**

When we put away all distraction and become totally present to the sorrowing that moment is tender and a soothing balm. We allow ourselves to be an instrument of Jesus’ healing at that moment. His love is poured out through the touch of a hand, a comforting word, a listening ear or our mere presence. St. Teresa of Avila said, “Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless



His people.”⁸ We can model this when we walk with others through their pain; offer words of encouragement to those who seem discouraged; offer positive words to fellow students or coworkers who are having a difficult time with their tasks; be present to those who are struggling or in emotional pain or despair; offer sympathy to those who are grieving.

Bear patiently with those who do us ill

We read in Matthew 5:9,

**“Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.”**

How many times are we wronged, gossiped about, cut off in traffic, made to feel inadequate? Over and over again we have to remember, Jesus said in Matthew 5:39,

“But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on [your] right cheek, turn the other one to him as well.” (Mt. 5:39).

Looking to Christ, we find the perfect example of bearing wrongs with patience. He carried His cross, a symbol of injustice, with patience. In a world full of violence, apathy, and indifference as Instruments of Mercy we are to practice being less critical of others; overlook minor flaws and mistakes; give people the benefit of the doubt; assume that people who may have hurt you did so because they are enduring pain of their own; pray for those who have wronged you. It is said that hurting people hurt people. If we can reach these people with the Love and Mercy of God by our actions, perhaps we can transform their actions instead of transmitting them. Bearing wrongs patiently is an exercise in helping others along their way to holiness. For Jesus said it best from the Cross,

⁷ 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

⁸ <http://www.catholicity.com/prayer/prayer-of-saint-teresa-of-avila.html>

**“Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’”
(Luke 23:34)**

Forgive Offences

In Matthew 18:21-22, we read,

“Then Peter approaching asked him, ‘Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.’”

We've all been wounded one time or another. Our faith challenges us to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. This can be very difficult. Our human nature is to hold on to the hurt, desire punishment and/or seek revenge. Vengeance belongs to the Lord. He is the only qualified one to do it. For the Lord alone knows the secrets of all hearts. Jesus does not expect us to walk this path to forgiveness alone. He wants to lead us by the hand and help us learn how to forgive all injuries as He did. Real forgiveness requires charity, it requires mercy, it also requires justice. Pray for those who have wronged you and pray for the courage to forgive. Let go of grudges; go out of your way to be positive with someone you are having a difficult time with. To be the Mercy of God is to forgive another person.

Pray for the Living and the Dead⁹

As part of our Profession of Faith we pray in the Apostles Creed that we believe in “the communion of saints.” (cfCCC946) This includes “pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church; and we believe that in this communion, the merciful love of God and his saints is always [attentive] to our prayers.” (CCC962, Paul VI, CPG§30). Having Holy Mass said in the honor of a loved one, spending an hour in adoration with the Blessed Sacrament, offering up the Eucharist for a special intention, praying a rosary; all these works are advantages and lend Mercy and Grace to the Church. Let us remember, Jesus’ words in John 6:27,



“Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal.”

⁹ Image Credit: Caption: Hanceville, Alabama - April 1, 2016. The Solemn Funeral Mass of Christian Burial for EWTN Foundress, Mother Mary Angelica of the Annunciation, on April 1, 2016 at the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville, AL. The Mass was presided by Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Philadelphia, PA. Photographer: Jeff Bruno/EWTN Credit: Catholic News Agency

TALK: “OUR LADY OF MERCY”

At the **REGINA CAELI** Divine Mercy Sunday, 7 April 2013, Pope Francis stated: *“Together let us pray the Virgin Mary that she help us, Bishop and People, to walk in faith and charity, ever trusting in the Lord’s mercy: he always awaits us, loves us, has pardoned us with his Blood and pardons us every time we go to him to ask his forgiveness. Let us trust in his mercy.”*

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Implore Our Lady of Mercy to help you understand and receive the love and mercy Jesus has for you. Her Feast Day is September 24th.

In his Apostolic Letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, St. John Paul II spoke of *“Contemplating Christ with Mary.”*

He said, in paragraph 9. *“And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun” (Mt 17:2). The Gospel scene of Christ’s transfiguration, in which the three Apostles Peter, James and John appear entranced by the beauty of the Redeemer, can be seen as an icon of Christian contemplation. To look upon the face of Christ, to recognize its mystery amid the daily events and the sufferings of his human life, and then to grasp the divine splendour definitively revealed in the Risen Lord, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father: this is the task of every follower of Christ and therefore the task of each one of us. In contemplating Christ’s face we become open to receiving the mystery of Trinitarian life, experiencing ever anew the love of the Father and delighting in the joy of the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul’s words can then be applied to us: “Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2Cor 3:18).*

St. John Paul II went on to explain in paragraph 10. *“The contemplation of Christ has an incomparable model in Mary. In a unique way the face of the Son belongs to Mary. It was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance which points to an even greater spiritual closeness. No one has ever devoted himself to the contemplation of the face of Christ as faithfully as Mary. The eyes of her heart already turned to him at the Annunciation, when she conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the months that followed she began to sense his presence and to picture his features. When at last she gave birth to him in Bethlehem, her eyes were able to gaze tenderly on the face of her Son, as she “wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger” (Lk2:7).*

APOSTOLIC LETTER ROSARIUM VIRGINIS MARIAE OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF JOHN PAUL II TO THE BISHOPS, CLERGY AND FAITHFUL ON THE MOST HOLY ROSARY From the Vatican, on the 16th day of October in the year 2002, the beginning of the twenty- fifth year of my Pontificate. JOHN PAUL II © Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

And referring to Christ's humanity Pope Francis said, *"God chose to come into the world in a human family, which He himself formed."*

GENERAL AUDIENCE Wednesday, 17 December 2014 © Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

In these five stories of the life of Jesus in his human family, Mary reveals God's mercy in the events that she lives.

1. Finding Jesus in the Temple

Mother and son encounter – Jesus learns about doing the will of his heavenly father and being respectful of his earthly parents. This is true of parents with their children when they are deciding what they want to do in life. Parents need to allow their children to listen to the will of God in their lives and at the same time children need to be respectful of the desires of their parents about what they feel their children should do.

2. Wedding Feast at Cana

Mother and son encounter – Mary has confidence in her son that he can help this couple at their wedding. A mother instills confidence in her son and the son acts upon this confidence. Parents encourage their children and children respond from this confidence.

3. Look of Sorrow – Crucifixion

Mother and son encounter – Mary reveals the pain that she carries within her heart as she watches her son die on the cross. The encounter of a mother with her child as he enters eternal life is such a gift – yet so painful.

4. Resurrection

Mother and son encounter – the joy that Mary had when she saw her son after the resurrection. The example of God's mercy on this encounter is something that we experience when we have been away from each other and encounter each other once again. The joy of reuniting with someone is a powerful experience and God is with us.

5. Pentecost

Mother and son encounter – often we assist others to discern. Mary is with the apostles in the upper room. They are frightened and not sure of what they should do. The gift of the spirit descends upon them. This encounter gives Mary the assurance that her son will be with us forever.

In these five encounters, Mary gives witness of her son's mercy in our lives which provides us with the knowledge that we just need to approach him and he will be right there for us. He gives himself to us in every Mass and we most gratefully receive him in the Eucharist.

St. John Paul II provided a beautiful explanation of the Eucharist through Mary in CHAPTER SIX, AT THE SCHOOL OF MARY, “WOMAN OF THE EUCHARIST” ENCYCLICAL LETTER *ECCLESIA DE EUCHARISTIA*.

*53. If we wish to rediscover in all its richness the profound relationship between the Church and the Eucharist, we cannot neglect Mary, Mother and model of the Church. In my Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, I pointed to the Blessed Virgin Mary as our teacher in contemplating Christ's face, and among the mysteries of light I included the institution of the Eucharist. Mary can guide us towards this most holy sacrament, because she herself has a profound relationship with it.*

At first glance, the Gospel is silent on this subject. The account of the institution of the Eucharist on the night of Holy Thursday makes no mention of Mary. Yet we know that she was present among the Apostles who prayed “with one accord” (cf. Acts 1:14) in the first community which gathered after the Ascension in expectation of Pentecost. Certainly Mary must have been present at the Eucharistic celebrations of the first generation of Christians, who were devoted to “the breaking of bread” (Acts 2:42).

But in addition to her sharing in the Eucharistic banquet, an indirect picture of Mary's relationship with the Eucharist can be had, beginning with her interior disposition. Mary is a “woman of the Eucharist” in her whole life. The Church, which looks to Mary as a model, is also called to imitate her in her relationship with this most holy mystery.

*54. *Mysterium fidei!* If the Eucharist is a mystery of faith which so greatly transcends our understanding as to call for sheer abandonment to the word of God, then there can be no one like Mary to act as our support and guide in acquiring this disposition. In repeating what Christ did at the Last Supper in obedience to his command: “Do this in memory of me!”, we also accept Mary's invitation to obey him without hesitation: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). With the same maternal concern which she showed at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary seems to say to us: “Do not waver; trust in the words of my Son. If he was able to change water into wine, he can also turn bread and wine into his body and blood, and through this mystery bestow on believers the living memorial of his passover, thus becoming the ‘bread of life’”.*

55. In a certain sense Mary lived her Eucharistic faith even before the institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that she offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of God's Word. The Eucharist, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation. At the Annunciation Mary conceived the Son of God in the physical reality of his body and blood, thus anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord's body and blood.

As a result, there is a profound analogy between the Fiat which Mary said in reply to the angel, and the Amen which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord. Mary was asked to believe that the One whom she conceived “through the Holy Spirit” was “the

Son of God” (Lk 1:30-35). In continuity with the Virgin's faith, in the Eucharistic mystery we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in his full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine.

“Blessed is she who believed” (Lk 1:45). Mary also anticipated, in the mystery of the incarnation, the Church's Eucharistic faith. When, at the Visitation, she bore in her womb the Word made flesh, she became in some way a “tabernacle” – the first “tabernacle” in history – in which the Son of God, still invisible to our human gaze, allowed himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating his light as it were through the eyes and the voice of Mary. And is not the enraptured gaze of Mary as she contemplated the face of the newborn Christ and cradled him in her arms that unparalleled model of love which should inspire us every time we receive Eucharistic communion?

56. Mary, throughout her life at Christ's side and not only on Calvary, made her own the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist. When she brought the child Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem “to present him to the Lord” (Lk 2:22), she heard the aged Simeon announce that the child would be a “sign of contradiction” and that a sword would also pierce her own heart (cf. Lk 2:34-35). The tragedy of her Son's crucifixion was thus foretold, and in some sense Mary's Stabat Mater at the foot of the Cross was foreshadowed. In her daily preparation for Calvary, Mary experienced a kind of “anticipated Eucharist” – one might say a “spiritual communion” – of desire and of oblation, which would culminate in her union with her Son in his passion, and then find expression after Easter by her partaking in the Eucharist which the Apostles celebrated as the memorial of that passion.

What must Mary have felt as she heard from the mouth of Peter, John, James and the other Apostles the words spoken at the Last Supper: “This is my body which is given for you” (Lk 22:19)? The body given up for us and made present under sacramental signs was the same body which she had conceived in her womb! For Mary, receiving the Eucharist must have somehow meant welcoming once more into her womb that heart which had beat in unison with hers and reliving what she had experienced at the foot of the Cross.

57. “Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19). In the “memorial” of Calvary all that Christ accomplished by his passion and his death is present. Consequently all that Christ did with regard to his Mother for our sake is also present. To her he gave the beloved disciple and, in him, each of us: “Behold, your Son!”. To each of us he also says: “Behold your mother!” (cf. Jn 19: 26-27).

Experiencing the memorial of Christ's death in the Eucharist also means continually receiving this gift. It means accepting – like John – the one who is given to us anew as our Mother. It also means taking on a commitment to be conformed to Christ, putting ourselves at the school of his Mother and allowing her to accompany us. Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist. If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist. This is one reason why, since ancient times, the commemoration of Mary has always been part of the Eucharistic celebrations of the Churches of East and West.

RETREAT ON MERCY

58. In the Eucharist the Church is completely united to Christ and his sacrifice, and makes her own the spirit of Mary. This truth can be understood more deeply by re-reading the Magnificat in a Eucharistic key. The Eucharist, like the Canticle of Mary, is first and foremost praise and thanksgiving. When Mary exclaims: “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour”, she already bears Jesus in her womb. She praises God “through” Jesus, but she also praises him “in” Jesus and “with” Jesus. This is itself the true “Eucharistic attitude”.

At the same time Mary recalls the wonders worked by God in salvation history in fulfilment of the promise once made to the fathers (cf. Lk 1:55), and proclaims the wonder that surpasses them all, the redemptive incarnation. Lastly, the Magnificat reflects the eschatological tension of the Eucharist. Every time the Son of God comes again to us in the “poverty” of the sacramental signs of bread and wine, the seeds of that new history wherein the mighty are “put down from their thrones” and “those of low degree are exalted” (cf. Lk 1:52), take root in the world. Mary sings of the “new heavens” and the “new earth” which find in the Eucharist their anticipation and in some sense their programme and plan. The Magnificat expresses Mary's spirituality, and there is nothing greater than this spirituality for helping us to experience the mystery of the Eucharist. The Eucharist has been given to us so that our life, like that of Mary, may become completely a Magnificat! Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 17 April, Holy Thursday, in the year 2003, the Twenty- fifth of my Pontificate, the Year of the Rosary. IOANNES PAULUS II © Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

The Magnificat is Latin for “The Canticle of Mary” which is found in the Gospel of Luke 1:46-55.¹⁰

The Canticle of Mary

And Mary said:

*“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.”*



¹⁰ Image Credit: Title: Madonna of Mercy c. 1472 Painted by: Domenico Ghirlandaio Location: Private Collection Year: 1472 Courtesy of www.domenico-ghirlandaio.org

In the Angelus in St. Peter's Square, December 1, 2013, Pope Francis said:

“This journey never comes to an end. Just as in each of our lives we always need to begin again, to get up again, to rediscover the meaning of the goal of our lives, so also for the great human family it is always necessary to rediscover the common horizon toward which we are journeying. The horizon of hope! This is the horizon that makes for a good journey. The season of Advent, which we begin again today, restores this horizon of hope, a hope which does not disappoint for it is founded on God’s Word. A hope which does not disappoint, simply because the Lord never disappoints! He is faithful! He does not disappoint! Let us think about and feel this beauty.

The model of this spiritual disposition, of this way of being and journeying in life, is the Virgin Mary. A simple girl from the country who carries within her heart the fullness of hope in God! In her womb, God’s hope took flesh, it became man, it became history: Jesus Christ. Her Magnificat is the canticle of the People of God on a journey, and of all men and women who hope in God and in the power of his mercy. Let us allow ourselves to be guided by her, she who is mother, a mamma and knows how to guide us. Let us allow ourselves to be guided by her during this season of active waiting and watchfulness.”

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In the Magnificat Luke 1:46-55:

1. Mary acknowledges the presence of God
2. Acknowledges her place
3. Expresses what God has done for her
4. Expresses how God relates to others
5. Reveals what God has done
6. Acknowledges her history

In conclusion let us reflect on the words of Pope Francis in his video message of October 14, 2013:

“When we are weary, downcast, beset with cares, let us look to Mary, let us feel her gaze, which speaks to our heart and says: “Courage, my child, I am here to help you!”. Our Lady knows us well, she is a Mother, she is familiar with our joys and difficulties, our hopes and disappointments.

When we feel the burden of our failings and our sins, let us look to Mary, who speaks to our hearts, saying: “Arise, go to my Son Jesus; in him you will find acceptance, mercy and new strength for the journey.”

**VIDEO MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRAYER VIGIL AT THE SHRINE OF DIVINE LOVE
Saturday, 12 October 2013 © Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana**

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?



Options for after the Retreat:

After the retreat the ladies may want to stay connected and continue to learn more about living out the Works of Mercy. Council members are doing good deeds, serving those in need, and praying for others every day. It is who we are, but you may also want to host a Book Club.

We recommend the following three books if you decide to host a Book Club:

[The Holy Year of Mercy – A Faith-Sharing Guide with Reflections](http://bookstore.wau.org/productdetails.cfm?sku=BHYRE5) by Pope Francis, Word Among Us Press, Frederick, MD 2015. <http://bookstore.wau.org/productdetails.cfm?sku=BHYRE5>

[The Name of God is Mercy: A Conversation with Andrea Torielli](http://www.randomhousebooks.com/campaign/the-name-of-god-is-mercy/) by Pope Francis, 2016 Penguin Random House LLC. New York, NY.

<http://www.randomhousebooks.com/campaign/the-name-of-god-is-mercy/>

[Women of Mercy](http://www.orbisbooks.com/women-of-mercy.html) by Kathy Coffey, 2006, ORBIS BOOKS, Maryknoll, New York.

<http://www.orbisbooks.com/women-of-mercy.html>

Closing Prayer Options:

We have provided multiple options for Closing Prayer. If you decide to extend the retreat over two hours you could use these additional prayers during the retreat as moments of reflection and preparation for Confession and/or Mass.

You can also purchase the Pamphlet: *Eight Ways to Live a Merciful Life* from Our Sunday Visitor found at <https://www.osv.com/Shop/Product?ProductCode=P1624> as a takeaway for retreat attendees. Don't forget to provide the Retreat Bookmark to all participants.

CLOSING PRAYER A



Divine Mercy Chaplet¹¹

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.**

Facilitator Note:

The Divine Mercy Chaplet is in the Participant Packet and on the back of the Retreat Bookmark.

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CLOSING PRAYER B

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.**

Intercession Options:

We have provided three sets of intercessions. You may choose which one you would like to use if you choose Closing Prayer B.

RETREAT ON MERCY

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.

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.**

RETREAT ON MERCY

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.

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.**

Resources:

Below are a few websites which may be helpful in preparing for the retreat and to share with participants:

Jubilee of Mercy: <http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en.html> and

<http://www.im.va/content/dam/gdm/documenti/pdfopuscolo/Opuscolo%20EN.pdf>

The Divine Mercy: <http://www.thedivinemercy.org/>

Catholic Relief Services: <http://www.crs.org/resource-center/year-mercy-resources>

Loyola Press: <http://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/scripture-and-tradition/catholic-living/year-of-mercy>

US Conference of Catholic Bishops: www.usccb.org/jubilee-of-mercy

Our Sunday Visitor: <https://www.osv.com/search.aspx?q=year%20of%20mercy>

Our Sunday Visitor: 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>

Music:

Below are a few songs which may be used during the retreat.

Blessings by Laura Story, 2011: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQan9L3yXjc>

How He Loves Us by David Crowder Band, Church Music, 2009:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzfPHnoT0-0>

Lead Me to the Cross by Hillsong, United, All of the Above, 2007:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_24IdbJ0Tw

The Motions by Matthew West, Something to Say, 2008:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHUppFNjy5E>

What Faith Can Do by Kutless, It is Well, 2009: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ur6Zznc407U>

Who Am I by Casting Crowns, Casting Crowns, 2003:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBcqria2wmg>

In addition, we have provided you with a Bookmark which you can personalize and distribute to participants as a gift.

*We hope this packet and these resources make planning and hosting a
Retreat on Mercy easy and FUN!*



Prayer for the Jubilee by: Pope Francis

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 His 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.**



Prayer for the Jubilee by: Pope Francis

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Retreat on Mercy

(Date)

(Location)

Divine Mercy Chaplet

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

O Blood & 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 & Blood, Soul & Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins & those of the whole world.

On "Hail Mary" beads pray...

For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us & on the whole world.

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

Eternal God, in whom mercy is endless & the treasury of compassion inexhaustible, look kindly upon us & 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 & Mercy itself.
AMEN.

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 & the dead

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**national council of
catholic women**
To support, empower, and educate all Catholic women

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(Date)

(Location)

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RETREAT ON MERCY
National Council of Catholic Women
2016 Spirituality Commission

