



Simla Chandigarh Diocese

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**TO ALL THE LAY FAITHFUL, CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS OF SIMLA-CHANDIGARH DIOCESE
EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY - 8TH DECEMBER 2015 TO 20TH NOVEMBER 2016**

Dear People of God,

Greetings of Peace and Joy in the Lord Jesus Christ, the living face of the Father's Mercy.

"This year, the beginning of our Catholic New Year (Advent) coincides with our preparations for a **JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY** which Pope Francis has invited us to celebrate from 8th December 2015 to 20th November 2016. The Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy was declared with the Bull of Indiction, (Formal Announcement/Document) 'Misericordiae Vultus' (MV) - The Face of Mercy) on April 11, 2015.

As Advent is the season of preparation for the coming of our Lord, I encourage all the faithful, notwithstanding our hectic schedule over the coming weeks, to make time to pray – alone and with loved ones – and by so doing to draw nearer to Christ." Jesus Christ is the face of God, the face that brought to the world not the condemnation but a saving redemption. (John 3:16). It will be a Holy Year of Mercy. We want to live in the light of the word of the Lord: *"Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful"* (Luke 6:36). *"This is the time for mercy. It is the favourable time to heal wounds, a time not to be weary of meeting all those who are waiting to see and to touch with their hands the signs of the closeness of God, a time to offer everyone the way of forgiveness and reconciliation."*

Practically every day, we are listening, reading, viewing and sometimes reviewing in our news channels, magazines and newspapers, many sad and horrific events taking place in many countries. In some countries in West Asia, in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Turkey, parts of Africa like Sudan, Nigeria and Central African Republic there are so many families, children and youth who have been killed, drowned, maimed and wounded because of inhumane terrorism, bombings, shootings, explosions etc. Wars are producing millions of refugees. Many thousands are fleeing to safety. In Europe and in parts of Asia we have thousands of refugees pleading for food and shelter. We see a vast ocean of humanity in refugee camps who are *hurting, lost, confused, distracted, distraught, diseased, and disgraced, and desperately need healing, hope, and salvation. This is a tragedy of the greatest tragedies of history – not just in the region, but in the world – since the World Wars.*

Pope Francis besides drawing attention of the world to this unfolding tragedy also spoke of the *ongoing Christian persecution, recognizing that today, "Perhaps more than in the early days, [Christians] are persecuted, killed, driven out, despoiled, only because they are Christians."*

When Jesus exhorted his disciples *"Go and Proclaim the Good News"* (Mt 28:18) he is urging us to reflect Jesus face of Mercy to all our brothers and sisters. Bring Mercy to a wounded world – that is the message of this Special Jubilee year. There is no other name to call on at a time such as this but Jesus Christ. It does matter that people know Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century.

The motto of the Holy Year of Mercy, *"Merciful like the Father,"* (Lk. 6:36) serves as an invitation to follow the example of the compassionate Father who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and give love and forgiveness without measure. As Pope Francis said during his presentation of the Year of Mercy, *'God forgives all, and God forgives always. Let us never tire of asking forgiveness'*. We too wish to live this Jubilee Year in the light of the Lord's words: *"Be merciful just as your Father is merciful"* (Lk 6:36).



6. **PILGRIMAGE:** "The Practice of Pilgrimage has a special place in the Holy Year, because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life" (MV.14). "May pilgrimage be an impetus to conversion, by crossing the threshold of the Holy Door; we will find the strength to embrace God's Mercy" (MV.14).

7. **LENT 2016:** "The season of Lent during this Jubilee Year should also be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God's Mercy" (MV 16). Lent 2016 should be considered with new fervour and more reading and meditation of the Sacred Scriptures should be promoted. "In order to be capable of Mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God" (MV.13). All the baptized could be recommended to have a 'Personal Bible' and 'Personal Prayerful Bible Reading Time' especially in the forthcoming season of Lent.

8. **REGULAR CONFESSION INITIATIVES:** "Let us place the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the centre once more in such a way that it will enable people to touch the grandeur of God's Mercy with their own hand"(MV 17). We need confessors who would be available to lead the penitents to experience Divine Mercy. Special motivational recollections for priests on the theme of 'God's Mercy and the Sacrament of Reconciliation' will be conducted. We can invite also Confessors from outside the diocese especially during the season of Lent. As we have entered Advent, and as this year unfolds, let us pray for priests who want to be embodiments of the profoundly merciful love that Christ has for all people, and thus to lend their full humanity to the task of bringing those souls to heaven.

9. **MISSIONARIES OF MERCY:** "During this Holy Year I (Pope Francis) intend to send out Missionaries of Mercy" (MV 18). They will be persuasive preachers of Mercy. As Pope Francis advises "I ask my brother Bishops to invite and welcome these Missionaries of Mercy" (MV 18). From every Diocese some priests can be recommended by the Local Ordinaries to the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of New Evangelization and can be registered as Missionaries of Mercy for this Holy Year. For our Diocese, I will be designating some priests for this mission.

10. **24 HOURS FOR THE LORD:** Pope Francis has urged that "The initiative of 24 Hours for the Lord to be celebrated on the Friday and Saturday preceding the Fourth week of Lent-2016, should be implemented in every Diocese" (MV 17) March 4 and 5, 2016 can be marked as the days of intense prayer in every Diocese, Parish, Religious House, Institution and Mission Station. There can be an organized 24 Hours of chain prayer involving different groups which could be nominated, motivated and trained.

11. **MERCY OUTREACHES:** "May we reach out to them (wounded and hurt) and support them so that they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship and our fraternity" (MV 15). As members of the Body of Christ, we are called upon to respond with deep compassion and mercy to all our brothers and sisters who have feel hurt in some way by any member of the Church or by any minister of the Church.

There is an urgent need to identify 'Agents of Reconciliation' who will take the initiative to reach out to those who feel wounded by the ministers and the members of our own community. There can be a 'Team of Agents of Reconciliation' well trained for peace making, out-reach, and special Healing Services.

12. **DIVINE MERCY DEVOTION:** "Our Prayer also extends to the Saints and blessed ones who made Divine Mercy their mission in life. I am especially thinking of the great apostle of Divine Mercy, Saint Faustina Kowalska" (MV 24). During this year of Divine Mercy we can concentrate and promote the devotion to Divine Mercy through the recitation of the Divine Mercy Chaplet and litany. We can also make our people aware of the Messages on Divine



The Holy Year of Mercy is a call to the Church to refashion herself as a body not for judgment or condemnation but for pardon and merciful love. It is an occasion and an opportunity for us to deepen our faith and transform our Church into a more compassionate and merciful instrument.

Pope Francis has suggested numerous ways of experiencing and practicing Mercy in *Misericordiae Vultus* (MV). Keeping this in mind here are some guidelines, which we could consider in all the pastoral initiatives in the 5 Deaneries, parishes, institutions and mission stations of our diocese in the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

1. ORGANISING COMMITTEE: "*Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life*" (MV.10). All the Commissions of the Diocese, could come together to form an Organising Committee that would initiate, lead and co-ordinate the initiatives of the Year of Mercy, both, at the Diocesan, Deanery and Parish levels. The organising committee or task force would comprise of the Deans, Lay Representatives and Religious Men and Women.

2. OPENING OF THE HOLY DOOR OF MERCY: "On the same Sunday, (the Third Sunday of Advent, December 13, 2015). Pope Francis has announced that in every Diocese in the respective Cathedral – the Mother Church a Door of Mercy will be opened for the duration of the Holy Year" (MV.3). In our Diocese of Simla Chandigarh, in all our parishes and mission stations we will inaugurate the Jubilee year of Mercy, on this day with the Holy Eucharist; also in the following five designated places of pilgrimage;

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| I. SIMLA | : ST MICHAEL'S CATHEDRAL | II. PATIALA | : OUR LADY OF FATIMA CHURCH; |
| III. AMBALA | : HOLY REDEEMER CHURCH | IV. BATHINDA | : HOLY ROSARY CHURCH |
| V. KARNAL | : IMMACULATE HEART CHURCH. | | |

These Pilgrim Centers for this Holy Year ought to have teams to help the pilgrims experience Mercy and conversion through faith.

3. CLOSING OF THE HOLY DOOR OF MERCY: On November 20, 2016, the day of the closing of the Holy Year of Mercy, all the doors designated as Holy Doors of Mercy will be solemnly closed (MV.5).

4. CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY: "Jesus introduces us to these works of Mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these corporal works of Mercy:

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| I. To feed the hungry, | II. Give drink to the thirsty, | III. Clothe the naked, |
| IV. Welcome the stranger, | V. Heal the sick, | VI. Visit the imprisoned and |
| VII. Bury the dead." (MV.15). | | |

If we can motivate every baptized person to do "*One Small Act of Mercy Daily*" it will bring about a mercy revolution in our Church.

5. SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY: "And let us not forget the spiritual works of Mercy:

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| I. To counsel the doubtful, | II. Instruct the ignorant, | III. Admonish sinners, |
| IV. Comfort the afflicted, | V. Forgive offences, | VI. Bear patiently those who do us ill |
| VII. Pray for the living and the dead" (MV.15). | | |

We are recommended to form Missionary Disciples (MD) (*Evangelii Gaudium - 120*) who can exercise the above spiritual works and motivate others to do the same."



Mercy revealed to Saint Faustina Kowalska. Moreover we can celebrate the Divine Mercy Sunday, which follows the Sunday after Easter, April 17, 2016, with greater solemnity.

13. CATECHESIS ON JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY: An in-depth awareness of the Jubilee year of Mercy is essential to celebrate the year meaningfully and fruitfully. Special conferences on Mercy will be organized systematically by having selected resource persons reaching out to different places and groups throughout the year. These selected personnel would need to explain the meaning of the Year of Mercy, Door of Mercy, Indulgence, Sacrament of Reconciliation, and other works of Mercy recommended by the Church in *Misericordiae Vultus*. They can be also encouraged to write articles and books on Mercy of God and the Jubilee year of Mercy.

14. DISSEMINATION OF THE MESSAGE OF MERCY: The diocesan and deanery task force for the Year of Mercy can also help in managing the diocesan website wherein the events, resources, information, links, samples, short films, documentaries and support programmes can be uploaded for a speedy awareness and co-ordination, use of social media is also very effective.

The main focus and aim of this Jubilee Year is to live out in our daily lives the Mercy which the Father constantly extends to all of us and to introduce everyone to the great mystery of God's Mercy. (MV. 25).

15. PRAYER FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY: In order to have a fruitful experience of the programmes of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, we urge everyone to pray regularly the prayer for the Year of Mercy prepared by the Holy Father, Pope Francis. This prayer will be available in English in Hindi and Punjabi to be prayed in our homes and churches.

I encourage all of you to take initiatives based on these guidelines to celebrate the Year of Mercy meaningfully in our parishes, neighbourhoods, institutions.

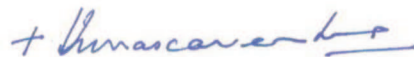
Our Mother Mary, Mother of Mercy, was the first herald of Mercy in the house of Elizabeth, at the Marriage at Cana, under the Cross at Calvary and in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost. May our Mother of Mercy intercede for each one of us especially during this Jubilee Year. Let us also look at the crib and pray, asking the Blessed Mother: "O Mary, show us Jesus!"

On 13th December 2015, I appeal to the Parish Priests to send two Lay Representatives (Male & Female) and a Religious as representatives from your parish to Christ the King Cathedral- Chandigarh, for the Opening of the Holy Door of Mercy to inaugurate the Jubilee Year of Mercy Celebration. The Holy Eucharist will commence at 9.30 am with a solemn procession along with these representatives of your parish.

Wish you all a fruitful Holy Year of Mercy.

GIVEN IN CHANDIGARH ON THE FEAST OF ST FRANCIS XAVIER-THE PATRON OF INDIA ON 3 DECEMBER 2015.

Yours Sincerely in Christ,


+Ignatius L. Mascarenhas,
Bishop of Simla Chandigarh



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Bishop of Simla-Chandigarh

Kindly Note: The circular be explained in the vernacular on the 2nd Sunday of Advent in our parishes/mission stations.