



THE JUBILEE OF MERCY

Merciful Like the Father

MESSAGE FOR THE YOUNG

Dear Young Friends,

The Church is celebrating the Holy Year of Mercy, a time of grace, peace, conversion and joy. It is meant for everyone: people of every age, from far and near. There are no walls or distances which can prevent the Father's mercy from reaching and embracing us. The Holy Door is now open in Rome and in all the dioceses of the world.

This grace-filled moment also concerns you, dear young people. I encourage you to take an active part in this celebration and to realize that each of you is a child of God (cf. 1 John 3:1). I would like to invite you, one by one, calling you by name, as Jesus does each day. For you know that your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20), in the heart of the Father, that Merciful Heart which is the source of all reconciliation

A time of grace. *God's blessing is always with us. What blessings, graces have been shared with you? 'Counting your blessings' is a healthy spiritual practice. It makes us aware of the goodness we benefit from, even when other things can be tough.*

A time of peace. *In our world there is much that is not peaceful, and much that is violent and vicious. But the peace of Christ is offered to us, in our hearts, to help us face the worst, and to be free from fear. God is with us, and he is love for us.*

A time of conversion. *Other people may have more to repent of than we do. But none of us is perfect, and if we can say sorry, if we can try to do better, love and care more, then we can make a difference. Let the improvement start with you – choose the humble way, and lead the way.*

A time of joy. *God is good and God is for us. And it is good to say thank you, to express our gratitude. Our pleasure pleases God, and the action of giving thanks helps us not be turned in on ourselves. THE way of prayer for Catholics is the Eucharist – and though it might be too obvious to those who don't know Greek, the word 'Eucharist' means thanksgiving, joyful thanksgiving for good gifts.*

and kindness.

The Jubilee is a year-long celebration, in which every moment becomes a chance for us to grow in holiness. It is a time when we can discover that life together as brothers and sisters is like a great party, perhaps the most beautiful party we can imagine, the endless party that Jesus has taught us to celebrate by his Spirit. The Jubilee is the party to which Jesus invites us all, without excluding anyone. That is why I also wanted to have some days of prayer and celebration with you. I am looking forward to seeing many of you in April.

'Merciful like the Father'. This is the theme of the Jubilee, but it is also the prayer we make for all of you as we welcome you in the name of Jesus. To be merciful means to grow in a love which is courageous, generous and real. It means to grow physically and spiritually. You are preparing to be Christians capable of making courageous

Pope Francis is calling young people to be united with him in joy at Eastertime – on 23rd April – either in Rome or wherever they are throughout the world:

- *How might you use Lent well so as to have still more to give thanks for at Easter?*
- *How might you be a blessing for others?*
- *Where is peace needed? How might you help peace grow there?*
- *What might you ask God's help to change – for your good and the good of others?*
- *The 23rd April is a Saturday. Will you celebrate on the day itself, or the day before? At school? With friends or family? In your parish? Whose help might be necessary so you can prepare the sort of celebration you would like?*



Pope Francis at the Holy Door, St Peter's Basilica, Rome.

choices and decisions, in order to build daily, even through little things, a world of peace.

Yours is a time of life which is full of amazing changes. Everything seems possible and impossible all at once. I repeat what I said to some of your friends: 'Remain steadfast in the journey of faith, with firm hope in the Lord. This is the secret of our journey! He gives us the courage to swim against the tide. Pay attention, my young friends: to go against the current; this is good for the heart, but we need courage to swim against the tide. Jesus gives us this courage! ... With him we can do great things; he will give us the joy of being his disciples, his witnesses. Commit yourselves to



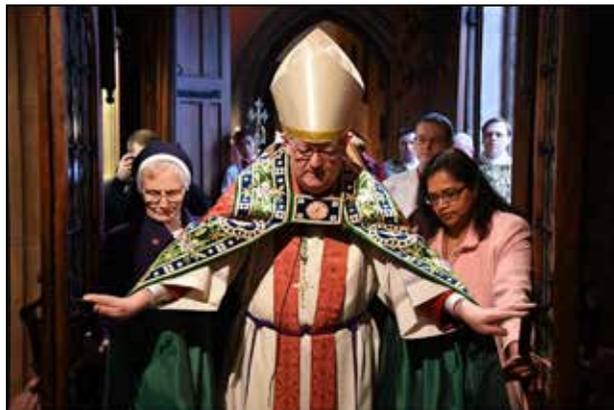
Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation

You don't have to be very bad to find great help in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Confession!

Simply coming to God to say sorry and saying we want to cooperate more fully with his plan of reconciling and healing makes such a difference. Receiving the assurance of his love and mercy can give us that life and encouragement to do much more good than we would ever do just by ourselves.

Here I cannot forget those of you who are living in situations of war, extreme poverty, daily troubles and loneliness. Don't ever lose hope! The Lord has a great dream which, with your help, he wants to come true! Your friends, young people your age living in less trying conditions than your own, have not forgotten you; they are working for peace and justice for everyone everywhere. Don't be taken in by the messages of hatred or terror all around us. Instead, make new friends. Give of your time and always show concern for those who ask your help. Be brave and go against the tide; be friends of Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace (cf. *Isaiah 9:6*). 'Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion' (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 8).

I realize that not all of you can come to Rome, but the Jubilee is truly for everyone and it is also being celebrated in your local Churches. You are all invited to this moment of joy. Don't just prepare your rucksacks and your banners,



Archbishop Bernard at the Holy Door, St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham.

great ideals, to the most important things. We Christians were not chosen by the Lord for little things; push onwards toward the highest principles. Stake your lives on noble ideals' (*Homily at the Conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation*, 2013).

but your hearts and your minds as well. Think carefully about the hope and desires you will hand over to Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and in the Eucharist which we will celebrate together. As you walk through the Holy Door, remember that you are committing yourselves to grow in holiness and to draw nourish-

ment from the Gospel and the Eucharist, the Word and the Bread of life, in order to help build a more just and fraternal world.

May the Lord bless your journey towards the Holy Door. I pray that the Holy Spirit will guide your steps and enlighten you. For you and your families, and for all who help you to grow in goodness and in grace, may the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of us all, be true Door of Mercy.

Franciscus

From the Vatican, 6 January 2016, Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord



Pope Francis at the Holy Door, St Peter's Basilica, Rome

The Year of Mercy is a gift to the Church to help us know in every year how much we are loved by God

The Year is to help us also to know what a privilege it is to try to echo or reflect God's love in our lives and in the decisions we make about how we live our lives.

What might God be calling you to? How do you feel about that?

What are the choices that you are going to be facing in the coming weeks and months that are going to shape your life? Choices about how you approach your studies? About your friendships? And how you use your leisure time? About the sort of studies you might take in the 6th form or College or University? About the sort of career you would like to follow? About the way you would like to live your life so it makes a difference, so that it serves the call to love?



The Chaplaincy,
Bishop Walsh Catholic School,
Wylde Green Road,
Sutton Coldfield, B76 1QT

<http://bishopwalsh.net>