



Meeting #2: Our call to be merciful

Preparing for the Jubilee of Mercy

Theme: What is mercy? Why a Jubilee of Mercy?

Preparatory Reading and Reflection [Attachment 1]

The attached readings (or other readings preferred by the local group) can be distributed prior to the meeting so that all can read and reflect beforehand. Or some portion of them may be read out loud at the meeting. Or one member of the group may summarize the readings.

Excerpts from:

Misericordiae Vultus

Pope Francis' general audience on February 12, 2014

Membership in the Order of Malta, Regulations & Commentary (2011)

Opening Prayer: Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi [Attachment 2]

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:30-37 [Parable of the Good Samaritan Attachment 3]

Discussion questions:

1. What does it mean – to be merciful?
2. Can you think of a time when you were especially aware of yourself (or someone else) being merciful?
3. What do you as an individual feel called to do during the Jubilee of Mercy?
4. Who needs my (our) merciful help?
5. What do you think we, as a group in the Order of Malta, are called to do during the Jubilee of Mercy?
6. How will I act differently as a result of this group reflection? (This may be discussed, or it may be a question for each to consider in a few minutes of silence.)

Closing Prayer: Prayer of the Order [Attachment 4]

Attachment 1: Readings on Our call to be merciful

Excerpts from *Misericordiae Vultus* for Meeting # 2

9. ...From another parable, we cull an important teaching for our Christian lives. In reply to Peter's question about how many times it is necessary to forgive, Jesus says: "I do not say seven times, but seventy times seven times" (Mt 18:22). He then goes on to tell the parable of the "ruthless servant," who, called by his master to return a huge amount, begs him on his knees for mercy. His master cancels his debt. But he then meets a fellow servant who owes him a few cents and who in turn begs on his knees for mercy, but the first servant refuses his request and throws him into jail. When the master hears of the matter, he becomes infuriated and, summoning the first servant back to him, says, "Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (Mt 18:33). Jesus concludes, "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (Mt 18:35).

This parable contains a profound teaching for all of us. Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are. In short, we are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us. Pardoning offences becomes the clearest expression of merciful love, and for us Christians it is an imperative from which we cannot excuse ourselves. At times how hard it seems to forgive! And yet pardon is the instrument placed into our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart. To let go of anger, wrath, violence, and revenge are necessary conditions to living joyfully. Let us therefore heed the Apostle's exhortation: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Eph 4:26). Above all, let us listen to the words of Jesus who made mercy an ideal of life and a criterion for the credibility of our faith: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7): the beatitude to which we should particularly aspire in this Holy Year.

10. Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love. The Church "has an endless desire to show mercy". Perhaps we have long since forgotten how to show and live the way of mercy. The temptation, on the one hand, to focus exclusively on justice made us forget that this is only the first, albeit necessary and indispensable step. But the Church needs to go beyond and strive for a higher and more important goal. On the other hand, sad to say, we must admit that the practice of mercy is waning in the wider culture. In some cases the word seems to have dropped out of use. However, without a witness to mercy, life becomes fruitless and sterile, as if sequestered in a barren desert. The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.

Excerpt from Pope Francis' General Audience, February 12, 2014

Now we, when participating in Holy Mass, we find ourselves with all sorts of men and women: young people, the elderly, children; poor and well-off; locals and strangers alike; people with

their families and people who are alone.... But the Eucharist which I celebrate, does it lead me to truly feel they are all like brothers and sisters? Does it increase my capacity to rejoice with those who are rejoicing and cry with those who are crying? Does it urge me to go out to the poor, the sick, the marginalized? Does it help me to recognize in theirs the face of Jesus? We all go to Mass because we love Jesus and we want to share, through the Eucharist, in his passion and his resurrection. But do we love, as Jesus wishes, those brothers and sisters who are the most needy? For example, in Rome these days we have seen much social discomfort either due to the rain, which has caused so much damage to entire districts, or because of the lack of work, a consequence of the global economic crisis. I wonder, and each one of us should wonder: I who go to Mass, how do I live this? Do I try to help, to approach and pray for those in difficulty? Or am I a little indifferent.... We must concern ourselves with our brothers and sisters who need us because of an illness, a problem.

Excerpt from "Membership in the Order of Malta, Regulations and Commentary" (2011)

I. §3

Serving the Lord by serving "the least of his brothers" (Mt 25:40), the Order of Malta realizes one of the fundamental precepts of Christian faith. The unity of love of God and love of neighbor (Lk 10:27) has always been practiced by the followers of Christ by serving the sick and the poor, whom Christ himself served and with whom He has identified himself. Since the days of the first hospital in Jerusalem up to today, members of the Order of Malta have responded to what Christ meant when He said: "In so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did to me" (Mt 25:40).

II. §1

One of the early documents of the Order says: "By general consensus of the Christian people, hospitality takes the first place among all actions of piety and humanity, as the one which embraces all others. And if it has to be realized and revered by all good people with great emphasis, how much more by those who want to be known by the name of Knights Hospitallers? Because more than everything we must implement what we say in the name."

Attachment 2

Prayer of St. Francis Assisi

Opening Prayer: Meeting #2

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

Attachment 3

Scripture Reading: Meeting #2

Luke 10:30-37 – The Good Samaritan

30 ... "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. **31** And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. **32** Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, **34** and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them*; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35** On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' **36** Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' *hands*?" **37** And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

Attachment 4

Closing Prayer: Meeting #2

The Prayer of the Order

Lord Jesus, Thou hast seen fit to enlist me for Thy service in the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem. I humbly entreat Thee, through the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin of Philermos, of Saint John the Baptist, of Blessed Fra' Gerard, and of all the Saints, to keep me faithful to the traditions of our Order.

Be it mine to practice and defend the Catholic, the Apostolic, the Roman Faith against the enemies of religion. Be it mine to practice charity towards my neighbors, especially the poor and the sick.

Give me the strength I need to carry out this my resolve, forgetful of myself, learning ever from Thy Holy Gospel a spirit of deep and generous Christian devotion, striving ever to promote God's glory, the world's peace, and all that may benefit the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem.

Amen.