

HOLY YEAR OF MERCY

December 8, 2015 - November 20, 2016

“Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful!”

Dear Church,

Symbolically calling on the entire global Roman Catholic Church to take up his papacy's central message of compassion and pardon, Pope Francis last Spring announced that he is convoking a jubilee year to be called the Holy Year of Mercy.

Saying he has "thought often about how the church can make more evident its mission of being a witness of mercy," the pope announced that..."I am convinced that the whole church -- that has much need to receive mercy because we are sinners -- will find in this jubilee the joy to rediscover and render fruitful the mercy of God, with which we are all called to give consolation to every man and woman of our time."

"Let us not forget that God pardons and God pardons always," the pope continued. "Let us never tire of asking for forgiveness.....We entrust it as of now to the Mother of Mercy, because she looks to us with her gaze and watches over our way," Francis said. The pope also said he wants the church to live the upcoming holy year "in the light" of Jesus' words in the Gospel of Luke: "Be merciful, just as your father is merciful."

A jubilee year is a special year called by the church to receive blessing and pardon from God and remission of sins. The Catholic church has called jubilee years every 25 or 50 years since the year 1300 and has also called special jubilee years from time to time, known as extraordinary jubilee years. The last jubilee year was held in 2000 during the papacy of Pope John Paul II and was known as "the Great Jubilee." The last extraordinary jubilee year was held in 1983 to celebrate 1,950 years since the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Beginning last August members of St. Matthias were invited to meet to plan how we would celebrate the year. About thirty parishioners met for five weeks to pray and discern what the Lord was calling us to do. Well over 60 ideas were presented. I took those ideas and distilled them into several specific actions we, as a parish community, might use to become a more merciful community. Other ideas continue to be proposed and the parish staff will consider them as they come in. Listed below are the specific plans as they stand now:

- 1) We will investigate the possibility of starting the Stephens Ministry here at St. Matthias to reach out on a one to one basis to folks in need of having the Church walk with them in their deepest needs.
- 2) We will Hold an Alpha Course for the parish beginning January 28, 2016 and running through Holy Week culminating in the Celebration of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday
- 3) We are hoping to have a Parish Mission for the parish during Advent 2016
- 4) We will recite the Divine Mercy Chaplet after ALL Masses beginning on December 8, 2015
- 5) We will experiment with a baby-sitting service to allow parents "a night out."
- 6) We will designate an entrance from the Gathering Area into the Church as our "Door of Mercy", reminding ourselves each time we gather for Eucharist of the great mercy offered us through the Eucharist.
- 7) We will strive in various small ways to be an even more welcoming community.

Many details need to be worked out to accomplish these goals and we will be calling upon the members of the church community to help make St. Matthias a more merciful community.

Praying that we will all learn to be 'merciful as the heavenly Father is merciful',

In God's Love,

Fr. Ray