

1. Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Divine Mercy

Pope Francis and the Jubilee Year of Mercy

1. Jubilee “Year of Mercy”: December 8, 2015—November 20, 2016
2. Pope Francis, Bull of Indiction, *The Face of Mercy* (Misericordiae Vultus)
3. What is the Jubilee Year of Mercy?
 - a. Biblical Roots of the Mercy
 - b. Biblical Roots of the Jubilee

Pope Saint John Paul II: [M]ercy signifies a *special power of love*, which *prevails over the sin and infidelity* of the chosen people.

Pope Francis: [M]ercy is an indispensable dimension of love; it is as it were *love's second name* and, at the same time, *the specific manner in which love is revealed and effected vis-a-vis the reality of the evil* that is in the world. (Pope Francis, *The Face of Mercy*, no. 7)

“Mercy” in the Old Testament

1. Two Hebrew Words for “Mercy”:
 - a. *Hesed*: “steadfast love/faithfulness” (masculine)
 - b. *Raham*: “compassion” (feminine)
2. One Greek Root Word for Mercy: *eleos* (compare, “Lord, have mercy” *kyrie elēson*)
3. Latin word for Mercy: *misericordia* from “to pity” (*misereri*) and “heart” (*cor*)

Moses and the God of Mercy (Exodus 34)

⁵ And the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. ⁶ The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God *merciful* (Hebrew *raham*; Greek *eleēmōn*) and gracious, *slow to anger*, and *abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*, ⁷ keeping *steadfast love* (Hebrew *hesed*; Greek *eleos*) *for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” (Exodus 34:5-7)

The Jubilee Year of Mercy (Leviticus 25)

⁸ “And you shall count seven weeks of years, *seven times seven years*, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall be to you *forty-nine years*. ⁹ Then you shall send abroad the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall send abroad the trumpet throughout all your land. ¹⁰ And you shall hallow the *fiftieth year*, and *proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants*; it shall be a *jubilee for you*, when each of you shall *return to his property* and each of you shall *return to his family*. ¹¹ A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be to you; in it you shall neither sow, nor reap what grows of itself, nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat what it yields out of the field. ¹³ “In this year of jubilee each of you shall *return to his property*. ¹⁴ And if you sell to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not wrong one another... (Leviticus 25:8-14)

The Coming of the Messiah: The Jubilee of 490 Years (Daniel 9)¹

²⁰ While I [Daniel] was speaking and praying... ²¹ the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. ²² He came and he said to me, ²³ "...At the beginning of your supplications a word went forth, and I have come to tell it to you... therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

²⁴ "Seventy weeks of years [7 X 70 = 490 Years] are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, *to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness*, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy. ²⁵ Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem *to the coming of a messiah* (Hebrew *mashiah*), a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. ²⁶ And after the sixty-two weeks, a messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war; desolations are decreed. ²⁷ And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week; and for half of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator." (Daniel 9:20-27)

<i>The Coming of the Messiah (Daniel 9)</i>		
<i>Daniel's Prophecy</i>	<i>Historical Events</i>	<i>Dates</i>
"Going forth of the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem."	Decree to Rebuild Temple by King Artaxerxes of Persia	c. 457 BC
"Seventy Weeks of Years"	70 x 7 Years= 490 years	457BC-33AD
"Messiah" will be "Cut off"	Jesus is Crucified	ca. 33 AD
"City and Sanctuary" will be Destroyed	Temple and Jerusalem Destroyed by Romans	70 AD

The Timing of the Messiah's Coming

Josephus: We are convinced... that Daniel spoke with God, for he did not only prophesy future events, as did the other prophets, but *he also determined the time at which these would come to pass*. (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 10.267-68; trans. LCL)

Eusebius: [W]e must count the numbers, that is to say the seventy weeks, which are 490 years, from the going forth of the word of answer and from the building of Jerusalem. *This took place in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, King of Persia*. For Nehemiah his cup-bearer made the request, and received the answer that Jerusalem should be rebuilt, and the order went forth to carry it out... *And from that date to the coming of Christ is seventy weeks*. (Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel*, 8.2.389; trans. W. J. Ferrar)

¹ See Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ* (New York: Image, 2016).

Jesus' First Sermon in Nazareth: Proclaiming the Jubilee of the Messiah (Luke 4)

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the Sabbath day. And he stood up to read; ¹⁷ and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸ “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.*

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,

to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

¹⁹ *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”*

²⁰ And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, “*Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*” (Luke 4:16-21)

Peter's Question: How Many Times Should I Forgive (Matthew 18)

²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but *seventy times seven* [=490 times]” (Matthew 18:21-22)

The Crucifixion of Jesus: The Blood and the Water (John 19)

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; ³³ but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ *But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.* ³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe. (John 19:32-35)

The Blood and Water from the Side of the Temple

At the south-western corner [of the Altar] there were two holes like two narrow nostrils by which *the blood that was poured* over the western base and the southern base *used to run down and mingle in the water-channel and flow out into the brook Kidron.* (Mishnah Middoth 3:2; trans. Herbert Danby)

St. Faustina and the Meaning of the Divine Mercy Image of Jesus

When, on one occasion, my confessor told me to ask the Lord Jesus the meaning of the two rays in the image, I answered, “Very well, I will ask the Lord.” During prayer I heard these words within me: “The two rays denote Blood and Water. The pale [=white] ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls... These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized heart was open on the Cross... Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to My Mercy... Proclaim that Mercy is the greatest attribute of God. (St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, no. 299).²

² See esp. Michael E. Gaitley, MIC, *The Second Greatest Story Ever Told: Now is the Time of Mercy* (Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press, 2015).

Pope Francis: Is Mercy Opposed to Justice?

Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God's way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe... Saint Augustine... says: "It is easier for God to hold back anger than mercy". And so it is. God's anger lasts but a moment, his mercy forever. If God limited himself to only justice, he would cease to be God, and would instead be like human beings who ask merely that the law be respected. But mere justice is not enough. Experience shows that an appeal to justice alone will result in its destruction. This is why God goes beyond justice with his mercy and forgiveness. Yet this does not mean that justice should be devalued or rendered superfluous. On the contrary: anyone who makes a mistake must pay the price. However, this is just the beginning of conversion, not its end, because one begins to feel the tenderness and mercy of God. God does not deny justice. He rather envelopes it and surpasses it with an even greater event in which we experience love as the foundation of true justice... God's justice is his mercy given to everyone as a grace that flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus the Cross of Christ is God's judgement on all of us and on the whole world, because through it he offers us the certitude of love and new life. (Pope Francis, *The Face of Mercy*, no. 20)

Pope Francis on Timing of the Jubilee Year: 50 Years after Vatican II

I have chosen the date of 8 December because of its rich meaning in the recent history of the Church. In fact, I will open the Holy Door on *the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*. The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning. It was a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father's love in the world.

We recall the poignant words of Saint John XXIII when, opening the Council, he indicated the path to follow: "*Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity...*" The Catholic Church, as she holds high the torch of Catholic truth at this Ecumenical Council, wants to show herself a loving mother to all; patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness toward her separated children". (Pope Francis, *The Face of Mercy*, no. 4)

2. The Message of Jesus: “I Desire Mercy”

Mercy: at the Heart of Jesus Message

[M]ercy constitutes the fundamental content of the messianic message of Christ and the constitutive power of His mission. (John Paul II, *The Mercy of God*, no. 6)

The Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the Merciful”

“Blessed are the merciful (), for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matthew 5:7)

The Sermon on the Plain: “Be Merciful as Your Heavenly Father” (Luke 6)

²⁷“But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. ³¹And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them. ³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. ³⁶*Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.*

³⁷“*Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.*” (Luke 6:27-38)

The Call of Matthew: “I Desire Mercy, Not Sacrifice” (Matthew 9)

⁹As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him. ¹⁰And as he sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹²But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³*Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy (Greek *eleos*), and not sacrifice.’* For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Matthew 9:9-13, quoting Hosea 6:6)

The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7)

¹Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” ³So he told them this parable: ⁴“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.’ ⁷Just so, I

tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)

⁸“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.’ ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

John Paul II: The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Although the word "mercy" does not appear [in the Prodigal Son], it nevertheless expresses the essence of the divine mercy in a particularly clear way. (John Paul II, *The Mercy of God*, no. 5)

The Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32)

¹¹ And he said, “There was a man who had two sons; ¹² and the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.’ And he divided his living between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; ²³ and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; ²⁴ for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to make merry.

²⁵ “Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.’ ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!’ ³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² *It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.*’ ” (Luke 15:1-32)

1. Pope Francis: Mercy must be at the “Centre”

Faced with a vision of justice as the mere observance of the law that judges people simply by dividing them into two groups – the just and sinners – Jesus is bent on revealing the great gift of mercy that searches out sinners and offers them pardon and salvation... The appeal Jesus makes to the text from the book of the prophet Hosea – “I desire love and not sacrifice” (6:6) – is important in this regard. Jesus affirms that, from that time onward, the rule of life for his disciples must place mercy at the centre, as Jesus himself demonstrated by sharing meals with sinners. Mercy, once again, is revealed as a fundamental aspect of Jesus’ mission. This is truly challenging to his hearers, who would draw the line at a formal respect for the law. Jesus, on the other hand, goes beyond the law; the company he keeps with those the law considers sinners makes us realize the depth of his mercy. (Pope Francis, *The Face of Mercy*, no. 20)

2. Pope Francis: The Parables of Mercy are the “Core of the Gospel”

In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy. We know these parables well, three in particular: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the father with two sons (cf. *Lk* 15:1-32). In these parables, God is always presented as full of joy, especially when he pardons. *In them we find the core of the Gospel and of our faith*, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon. (Pope Francis, *The Face of Mercy*, no. 8)

3. Pope Francis on Reconciliation: Confessors are the Father in the Prodigal Son

The initiative of “*24 Hours for the Lord*,” to be celebrated on the Friday and Saturday preceding the Fourth Week of Lent, should be implemented in every diocese. So many people, including young people, are returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation; through this experience they are rediscovering a path back to the Lord, living a moment of intense prayer and finding meaning in their lives. 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 hands. For every penitent, it will be a source of true interior peace.

I will never tire of insisting that confessors be authentic signs of the Father’s mercy. We do not become good confessors automatically. We become good confessors when, above all, we allow ourselves to be penitents in search of his mercy. Let us never forget that to be confessors means to participate in the very mission of Jesus to be a concrete sign of the constancy of divine love that pardons and saves. We priests have received the gift of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins, and we are responsible for this. None of us wields power over this Sacrament; rather, we are faithful servants of God’s mercy through it. *Every confessor must accept the faithful as the father in the parable of the prodigal son: a father who runs out to meet his son despite the fact that he has squandered away his inheritance.* Confessors are called to embrace the repentant son who comes back home and to express the joy of having him back again. Let us never tire of also going out to the other son who stands outside, incapable of rejoicing, in order to explain to him that his judgement is severe and unjust and meaningless in light of the father’s boundless mercy. *May confessors not ask useless questions, but like the father in*

the parable, interrupt the speech prepared ahead of time by the prodigal son, so that confessors will learn to accept the plea for help and mercy pouring from the heart of every penitent. In short, confessors are called to be a sign of the primacy of mercy always, everywhere, and in every situation, no matter what. (Pope Francis, *The Face of Mercy*, no. 17)

4. Pope Francis on “Not Judging”

The Lord Jesus shows us the steps of the pilgrimage to attain our goal: “Judge not, and you will not be judged...” (*Lk* 6:37-38). The Lord asks us above all *not to judge* and *not to condemn*. If anyone wishes to avoid God’s judgement, he should not make himself the judge of his brother or sister. Human beings, whenever they judge, look no farther than the surface, whereas the Father looks into the very depths of the soul. How much harm words do when they are motivated by feelings of jealousy and envy! To speak ill of others puts them in a bad light, undermines their reputation and leaves them prey to the whims of gossip. To refrain from judgement and condemnation means, in a positive sense, to know how to accept the good in every person and to spare him any suffering that might be caused by our partial judgment, our presumption to know everything about him. But this is still not sufficient to express mercy. Jesus asks us also to *forgive* and to *give*. To be instruments of mercy because it was we who first received mercy from God. To be generous with others, knowing that God showers his goodness upon us with immense generosity. *Merciful like the Father*, therefore, is the “motto” of this Holy Year. (Pope Francis, *The Face of Mercy*, no. 14)

3. Indulgences and the Year of Mercy—Explained

Pope Francis the Jubilee Year Indulgences

1. “A Jubilee also entails the granting of *indulgences*” (*The Face of Mercy*, no. 22)
2. Pope Francis, Letter regarding Actions tied to a Plenary Indulgence (see below)
3. Some Difficulties with the Jubilee Year Indulgence?
 - a. But what exactly *is* an Indulgence?
 - b. Hasn’t the Church done away with indulgences?
 - c. Is this some kind of “magic”?

Hasn’t the Church Done Away with Indulgences?

“Unfortunately, the practice of indulgences has on occasion been improperly applied...sometimes through the collection of ‘unlawful profits’ which blasphemously took away the good name of indulgences. The Church deplored and corrected these improper uses. It “teaches and commands that the usage of indulgences—a usage most beneficial to Christians and approved by the authority of the Sacred Councils—should be kept in the Church; and it condemns with anathema those who say that indulgences are useless or that the Church does not have the power to grant them.” (Paul VI, *ID* 8)

The Catechism: What Is An Indulgence?

“An indulgence is *a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven*, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints.” “An indulgence is *partial* or *plenary* according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin.” The faithful can gain indulgences for themselves or apply them to the dead. (CCC 1471)

The Consequences of Sin

To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church, it is necessary to understand that sin has *a double consequence*. *Grave sin* deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the “eternal punishment” of sin. On the other hand *every sin, even venial*, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the “temporal punishment” of sin. *These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin*. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain. (CCC 1472)

An Analogy: A Son Breaks His Father’s Window

1. Son breaks his Father’s Window (=Sin)
2. Father forgives the Son (=Reconciliation/Forgiveness)
3. The Window is still broken (=temporal punishment/consequences of sin)
4. Who is Going to Pay to Fix It? (=Indulgence)

Jesus on the Effects of Our Sin (Matthew 5)

²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; ²⁶ *truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.* (Matthew 5:21-26)

Why Does God allow the Consequences of Sin to Remain?

The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but temporal punishment of sin remains. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace. (CCC 1473)

Getting Help from the Communion of Saints

The Christian who seeks to purify himself of his sin and to become holy with the help of God's grace is not alone... In the communion of saints, "a perennial link of charity exists between the faithful who have already reached their heavenly home, those who are expiating their sins in purgatory and those who are still pilgrims on earth. *Between them there is, too, an abundant exchange of all good things.*" In this wonderful exchange, *the holiness of one profits others, well beyond the harm that the sin of one could cause others.* Thus recourse to the communion of saints lets the contrite sinner be more promptly and efficaciously purified of the punishments for sin. (CCC 1474-75)

The "Treasury" of the Saints

We also call these spiritual goods of the communion of saints the *Church's treasury*, which is "not the sum total of the material goods which have accumulated during the course of the centuries. On the contrary the 'treasury of the Church' is the infinite value, which can never be exhausted, which *Christ's merits have before God.* They were offered so that the whole of mankind could be set free from sin and attain communion with the Father. In Christ, the Redeemer himself, the satisfactions and merits of his Redemption exist and find their efficacy."

"This treasury includes as well *the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary.* They are truly immense, unfathomable, and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are *the prayers and good works of all the saints*, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission the Father entrusted to them. In this way they attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in saving their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body." (CCC 1476-77)

Jesus On Our Heavenly Treasure (Matthew 6)

¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)

Pope Francis on the Jubilee Year Indulgence

My thought first of all goes to all the faithful who, whether in individual Dioceses or as pilgrims to Rome, will experience the grace of the Jubilee. I wish that the Jubilee Indulgence may reach each one as a genuine experience of God's mercy, which comes to meet each person in the Face of the Father who welcomes and forgives, forgetting completely the sin committed. (Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis according to which an Indulgence is Granted to the Faithful on the Occasion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, September 1, 2015).³

The Doors of Mercy and the Jubilee Indulgence

1. Pilgrimage to the Holy Doors of Mercy:
 - a. Of Cathedrals
 - b. Churches designated by the Diocesan Bishop
 - c. Four Papal Basilicas in Rome
 - d. Shrines with the Door of Mercy and Jubilee Churches
2. Actions and Conditions: indulgenced act must be accompanied by
 - a. Sacrament of Reconciliation
 - b. Celebration of the Holy Eucharist with a reflection on mercy
 - c. Profession of faith
 - d. Prayer for Pope Francis and his Intentions for the Church and the world

For Those Who Cannot Go Through the Holy Doors

1. The Sick, the Homebound, the Elderly and Alone:
 - a. "Live their sickness and suffering as an experience of closeness to the Lord"
2. Actions and Conditions:
 - a. Living with faith and joyful hope in this moment of trial
 - b. Receiving communion or attending Holy Mass and community prayer
 - c. Even through various forms of media (e.g., television)

For Those Who are In Prison

1. Prisoners and Those Incarcerated:
 - a. "May they all be touched in a tangible way by the mercy of the Father
 - b. "who wants to be close to those who have greatest need of his forgiveness
2. Actions and Conditions:
 - a. By attending the chapels of the prisons
 - b. By directing their thought and prayer to the Father each time they cross the threshold of their cell...

For the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy

1. "Each time that one of the faithful personally performs one or more of these actions, he or she shall surely obtain the Jubilee Indulgence."

[See Next Page]

³ https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150901_lettera-indulgenza-giubileo-misericordia.html

Corporal Works of Mercy

1. Feed the hungry.
2. Give drink to the thirsty.
3. Clothe the naked.
4. Shelter the Homeless.
5. Visit the Sick.
6. Visit the Imprisoned.
7. Bury the Dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

1. Instruct the ignorant.
2. Counsel the doubtful.
3. Admonish sinners.
4. Bear wrongs patiently.
5. Forgive offences willingly.
6. Comfort the afflicted.
7. Pray for the living and the dead

For the Dead

1. “Furthermore, the Jubilee Indulgence can also be obtained for the deceased.”
2. Actions and Conditions:
 - a. Remember them in the Eucharistic celebration
 - b. Pray for them the merciful Face of the Father free them of every remnant of fault and strongly embrace them in the unending beatitude

For Those Who Have Had An Abortion and Seek Forgiveness

One of the serious problems of our time is clearly the changed relationship with respect to life. A widespread and insensitive mentality has led to the loss of the proper personal and social sensitivity to welcome new life. The tragedy of abortion is experienced by some with a superficial awareness, as if not realizing the extreme harm that such an act entails. Many others, on the other hand, although experiencing this moment as a defeat, believe that they have no other option. I think in particular of all the women who have resorted to abortion. I am well aware of the pressure that has led them to this decision. I know that it is an existential and moral ordeal. I have met so many women who bear in their heart the scar of this agonizing and painful decision. What has happened is profoundly unjust; yet only understanding the truth of it can enable one not to lose hope. *The forgiveness of God cannot be denied to one who has repented, especially when that person approaches the Sacrament of Confession with a sincere heart in order to obtain reconciliation with the Father.* For this reason too, I have decided, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, *to concede to all priests for the Jubilee Year the discretion to absolve of the sin of abortion those who have procured it and who, with contrite heart, seek forgiveness for it.* May priests fulfil this great task by expressing words of genuine welcome combined with a reflection that explains the gravity of the sin committed, besides indicating a path of authentic conversion by which to obtain the true and generous forgiveness of the Father who renews all with his presence. (Pope Francis, Letter to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, September 1, 2015)

4. Mary, Mother of Divine Mercy

The Hail, Holy Queen (Latin *Salve Regina*)

Hail, holy Queen, *Mother of mercy*, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, *thine eyes of mercy* toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

Pope Francis: Mary and Divine Mercy

1. Year of Mercy: opened on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (Dec 8, 2015)

Mother of Mercy: the Annunciation and the *Magnificat* (Luke 1)

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary...³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I know not man?"³⁵ And the angel said to her, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.*"³⁶ And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible."³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

³⁹In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"⁴³ And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

⁴⁶And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

⁵⁰*And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation.*

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm,

he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,

⁵²he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.

⁵⁴*He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,*

⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity for ever."

⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home. (Luke 1:34-56)

Where is the Lost Ark of the Covenant?⁴

It was also in the writing that the prophet, having received an oracle, ordered that the tabernacle and the ark should follow with him, and that he went out to the mountain where Moses had gone up and had seen the inheritance of God. And Jeremiah came and found a cave, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense, and he sealed up the entrance. Some of those who followed him came up to mark the way, but could not find it. When Jeremiah learned of it, he rebuked them and declared: *“The place shall be unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy. And then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear,* as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated.” (2 Maccabees 2:4-8)

The Location of the Ark Revealed

The Ark of the Old Covenant

The glory of the Lord and the cloud cover the Tabernacle (containing the Ark) and *“overshadow”* (*episkiazen*) them (Exod 40:34-35, cf. v. 3)

David *“arose and went”* to the hill country of *Judah* to bring up *“the ark of God”* (2 Samuel 6:2)

David admits his unworthiness to receive the Ark by exclaiming: *“How can the ark of the Lord come to me?”* (2 Samuel 6:9)

David *“leaped”* before the Ark as it was brought in *“with shouting”* (2 Samuel 6:15-16)

The Ark remained in the hill country, in the house of Obed-Edom, for *“three months”* (2 Samuel 6:11)

Mary (Ark of the New Covenant)

The Holy Spirit comes upon Mary and the power of the Most High *“overshadows”* (*episkiasei*) her (Luke 1:35)

Mary *“arose and went”* into the hill country of *Judah* to visit Elizabeth (Luke 1:39)

Elizabeth admits her unworthiness to receive Mary by exclaiming: *“And why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”* (Luke 1:43)

John *“leapt”* in Elizabeth’s womb at the sound of Mary’s voice and Elizabeth cried *“with a loud shout”*: *“Blessed are you among women, and blessed in the fruit of your womb!”* (Luke 1:41-42)

Mary remained in the hill country, in Elizabeth’s house, *“three months”* (Luke 1:56)

⁴ See Brant Pitre, *Mother of the Messiah: A Bible Study on Mary* (www.BrantPitre.com)

Mary, Mother of Mercy and the Crucifixion (John 19)

But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother... ²⁶ *When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"* ²⁷ *Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home* (literally, "to be his own").

²⁸ After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), "I thirst." ²⁹ A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the Sabbath... the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; ³³ but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ *But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.* ³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe. (John 19:25-35)

John Paul II: Mary Knows the "Cost" of Mercy

Mary, then, is the one who has the deepest knowledge of the mystery of God's mercy. She knows its price, she knows how great it is. In this sense, we call her the Mother of mercy: our Lady of mercy, or Mother of divine mercy... (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *The Mercy of God*, no. 9).

Pope Francis: Mary, Mother of Mercy, Ark of the Covenant

My thoughts now turn to the Mother of Mercy. May the sweetness of her countenance watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God's tenderness. No one has penetrated the profound mystery of the incarnation like Mary. Her entire life was patterned after the presence of mercy made flesh. The Mother of the Crucified and Risen One has entered the sanctuary of divine mercy because she participated intimately in the mystery of His love.

Chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God, Mary, from the outset, was prepared by the love of God to be the *Ark of the Covenant* between God and man. *She treasured divine mercy in her heart in perfect harmony with her Son Jesus.* Her hymn of praise, sung at the threshold of the home of Elizabeth, was dedicated to the mercy of God which extends from "generation to generation" (*Lk1:50*). We too were included in those prophetic words of the Virgin Mary. This will be a source of comfort and strength to us as we cross the threshold of the Holy Year to experience the fruits of divine mercy.

At the foot of the Cross, Mary, together with John, the disciple of love, witnessed the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus. This supreme expression of mercy towards those who crucified him show us the point to which the mercy of God can reach. Mary attests that the mercy of the Son of God knows no bounds and extends to everyone, without exception. Let us address her in the words of the *Salve Regina*, a prayer ever ancient and ever new, so that she may never tire of turning her merciful eyes upon us, and make us worthy to contemplate the face of mercy, her Son Jesus. (Pope Francis, *The Face of Mercy*, no. 24)

Vatican II on Devotion to Mary

Perfect model of this apostolic spiritual life is the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles.... *Everyone should have a genuine devotion to her and entrust his life to her motherly care.* (Vatican II, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 4)⁵

⁵ See esp. Michael Gaitley, *33 Days to Morning Glory: A Do-It-Yourself Retreat In Preparation for Marian Consecration* (Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press, 2011).