



## **Meeting #1: God's mercy to us**

### **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 June 18, 2014

*Mercy* by Walter Kasper

Opening Prayer: Psalm 136 [Attachment 2]

Scripture Reading: Micah 7:18-20 [Attachment 3]

Discussion questions:

1. How, in your own words, would you define "God's mercy"?
  - a. What are some synonyms for mercy?
2. What does it mean to say that Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy?
3. What does it mean to say that God's mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence?
4. What is the relationship between mercy and forgiveness?
5. Can you think of a time when you were especially aware of God's mercy?
6. Why do you think the Holy Father has proclaimed a Jubilee of Mercy?

Closing Prayer: Prayer of the Order [Attachment 4]

## Attachment 1: Readings on God's mercy to us

### Excerpts from *Misericordiae Vultus* for Meeting #1

1. Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy... Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. Jn 14:9). Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.
2. We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.
3. At times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives. For this reason I have proclaimed an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy as a special time for the Church, a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective.
6. God's mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence. For this reason the liturgy, in one of its most ancient collects, has us pray: "O God, who reveal your power above all in your mercy and forgiveness." Throughout the history of humanity, God will always be the One who is present, close, provident, holy, and merciful.  
  
"Patient and merciful." These words often go together in the Old Testament to describe God's nature. His being merciful is concretely demonstrated in his many actions throughout the history of salvation where his goodness prevails over punishment and destruction. In a special way the Psalms bring to the fore the grandeur of his merciful action: "He forgives all your iniquity, he heals all your diseases, he redeems your life from the pit, he crowns you with steadfast love and mercy" (Ps 103:3-4). Another psalm, in an even more explicit way, attests to the concrete signs of his mercy: "He executes justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin" (Ps 146:7-9). Here are some other expressions of the Psalmist: "He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds... The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, he casts the wicked to the ground" (Ps 147:3, 6). In short, the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a "visceral" love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy.
9. 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...

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Excerpt from Pope Francis' General Audience on June 18, 2014

God does not tire, God has patience, He has a great deal of patience, and in time continues to educate and to form His people, as a father with His own child. God walks with us. The Prophet Hosea says: "I have walked with you and I taught you how to walk as a father teaches his child to walk". It's beautiful, this image of God! And this is He with us: He teaches us to walk. And it is the same attitude He maintains towards the Church. We too despite our resolve to follow the Lord Jesus, experience every day the selfishness and hardness of our heart. When however we recognize ourselves as sinners, God fills us with His mercy and with His love. And He forgives us, He always forgives us. And it is precisely this that makes us grow as God's people, as the Church: not our cleverness, not our merits — we are a small thing, it's not that — but the daily experience of how much the Lord wishes us well and takes care of us. It is this that makes us feel that we are truly His, in His hands, and makes us grow in communion with Him and with one another.

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Excerpt from Mercy by Walter Kasper

To think that God, who is all-powerful and holy, concerns himself with the distressing and self-caused situation of human beings, that God sees the wretchedness of poor and miserable people, that he hears their lament, that he bends down in condescension, that he descends to persons in their need and, despite every human infidelity, concerns himself with them again and again, and that he forgives them and gives them another chance, even though they had deserved just punishment – all this exceeds normal human experience and expectation; all this transcends human imagination and thought.

Attachment 2: Opening Prayer Meeting #1

Psalm 136: 1-16; 23-26

Leader: Praise the LORD, for he is good;  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: Praise the God of gods;  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: Praise the Lord of lords;  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: Who alone has done great wonders,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: Who skillfully made the heavens,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: Who spread the earth upon the waters,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: Who made the great lights,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: The sun to rule the day,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: The moon and stars to rule the night,  
Group: for his mercy endures forever;

Leader: Who struck down the firstborn of Egypt,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: And led Israel from their midst,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: With mighty hand and outstretched arm,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: Who split in two the Red Sea,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: And led Israel through its midst,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: But swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: Who led the people through the desert,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: The Lord remembered us in our low estate,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: Freed us from our foes,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever;

Leader: And gives bread to all flesh,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever.

Leader: Praise the God of heaven,  
Group: For his mercy endures forever.

### Attachment 3

#### Scripture Reading: Meeting #1

Micah 7:18-20

(18) Who is a God like you, who removes guilt  
and pardons sin for the remnant of his inheritance;  
Who does not persist in anger forever,  
but instead delights in mercy,

(19) And will again have compassion on us,  
treading underfoot our iniquities?  
You will cast into the depths of the sea all our sins;

(20) You will show faithfulness to Jacob,  
and loyalty to Abraham,  
As you have sworn to our ancestors  
from days of old.

## Attachment 4

Closing Prayer: Meeting #1

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.