

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Do you remember that we are still in the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy? We have until November! God is still gracing us with a superabundance of opportunities for mercy... DON'T MISS THEM! Remember that we have the Holy Doors throughout the Diocese, including one right over at St. Matthew Parish in Windham. If you go through the Holy Door with the intention of receiving mercy and changing your life, say prayers for the Pope, receive Sacramental Communion on that day, and Confession within 20 days or so (being in a state of grace), you have the opportunity to receive a Plenary Indulgence for yourself, or someone who has died. This means being completely washed clean of all effects of sin, and going right into Heaven!

The Year of Mercy is about reconnecting with the truth that *love's other name is mercy*, and God IS love. It is an opportunity to examine our lives, and pour out all of our sins before our Heavenly Father without fear of punishment or retribution. God loves us so much, so tenderly, so dearly, that He longs for us to come back into union with Him, and in deeper union with Him.

But the Year of Mercy is not only about receiving the mercy of God – as incredible as that is. It is also about becoming a **People of Mercy**. The theme for the Year of Mercy is “**Merciful like the Father**” (as you can see to the left). We are called to grow in mercy each day. It is not meant to be a year when we give mercy to others, but the beginning of setting patterns in our lives so that we are ALWAYS merciful to each other. This is the whole point of our 1,000,000 Acts of Mercy campaign – to draw attention to how we truly can be merciful to each other, and to grow in the habit of mercy. Note that mercy is not the same as service. While service is wonderful, and calls us beyond ourselves, mercy *always* has to do with *someone else* in their brokenness. This can be lived out with service, but service isn't always done in mercy.



This weekend's Gospel is a chilling reminder to us of the necessity of giving mercy. The story of the rich man and Lazarus reminds us that what we choose to do – or not do – truly affects our **eternity**. The rich man in the story was in torment not because he didn't help the people suffering halfway around the world from an earthquake, nor because he didn't help the poor in a distant city, but because he ignored the man who was at his doorstep. This reminds us that we don't have to go far to find people who are in need of mercy.

This brings us to ask: Who in our lives are in need of mercy? They are all around us. Some are member of our household. Some work with us. They are the annoying ones, who are in desperate need of love and attention. They are the ones whom we try to avoid because we know they will suck up our time and energy. They are our bosses who have been raised to management and who are failing as they do something they were never capable of doing. They are the ones we pass on the way to work (and try to ignore) who have become the nameless in society, just trying to get another meal (and, yeah, maybe they are trying to dull the deep pain in their lives through alcohol or drugs). Maybe it is a parent or guardian who hurt us and in need of forgiveness. Actually, when you think about it, every person we know, every person we meet – including ourselves – are in need of mercy!

Jesus' way of acting was always to see the *person*. Even should we give money or a meal to a poor person, if we have done it in a way that “dismisses” them, we have not been merciful. Our call is to *raise the dignity of the person*. It may mean truly looking at the person – looking at him or her in the eye – and recognizing that beneath the dirt and smell, beneath the arrogance and irritation, beneath the annoyance and anger is a person, a child of God who is hurting and in desperate need of the love that only God can give. When we look beyond what people *deserve*, and look to what *love desires to give*, we can start to see the image of God in each person; we respect their dignity, and pour out mercy on them. When we recognize Jesus present in the person that is hardest to love, then we begin to see with the eyes of God, and truly become a **People of Mercy**.

Let us pray, begging Jesus to help us to become Merciful like the Father.