

Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et misera*, for the conclusion of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Dec. 8, 2015 – Nov. 20, 2016.

Rome. Nov. 21, 2016. Zenit.org

FRANCIS; to all who read this Apostolic Letter mercy and peace

Misericordia et misera is a phrase used by Saint Augustine in recounting the story of Jesus' meeting with the woman taken in adultery (cf. *Jn* 8:1-11). It would be difficult to imagine a more beautiful or apt way of expressing the mystery of God's love when it touches the sinner: "the two of them alone remained: *mercy with misery*".¹ What great mercy and divine justice shine forth in this narrative! Its teaching serves not only to throw light on the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, but also to point out the path that we are called to follow in the future.

1. This page of the Gospel could easily serve as an icon of what we have celebrated during the Holy Year, a time rich in mercy, which must continue to be *celebrated and lived out* in our communities. Mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the Church; it constitutes her very existence, through which the profound truths of the Gospel are made manifest and tangible. Everything is revealed in mercy; everything is resolved in the merciful love of the Father.

A woman and Jesus meet. She is an adulteress and, in the eyes of the Law, liable to be stoned. Jesus, through his preaching and the total gift of himself that would lead him to the Cross, returned the Mosaic Law to its true and original intent. Here what is central is not the law or legal justice, but the love of God, which is capable of looking into the heart of each person and seeing the deepest desire hidden there; God's love must take primacy over all else. This Gospel account, however, is not an encounter of sin and judgment in the abstract, but of a sinner and her Saviour. Jesus looked that woman in the eye and read in her heart a desire to be understood, forgiven and set free. The misery of sin was clothed with the mercy of love. Jesus' only judgment is one filled with mercy and compassion for the condition of this sinner. To those who wished to judge and condemn her to death, Jesus replies with a lengthy silence. His purpose was to let God's voice be heard in the conscience not only of the woman, but also in those of her accusers, who drop their stones and one by one leave the scene (cf. *Jn* 8:9). Jesus then says: "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?... Neither do I condemn you. Go your way and from now on do not sin again" (vv. 10-11). Jesus helps the woman to look to the future with hope and to make a new start in life. Henceforth, if she so desires, she can "walk in charity" (*Eph* 5:2). Once clothed in mercy, even if the inclination to sin remains, it is overcome by the love that makes it possible for her to look ahead and to live her life differently.

2. Jesus had taught this clearly on another occasion, when he had been invited to dine at the home of a Pharisee (cf. *Lk* 7:36-50) and a woman, known by everyone to be a sinner, approached him. She poured perfume over his feet, bathed them with her tears and dried them with her hair (cf. vv. 37-38). To the scandalized reaction of the Pharisee, Jesus replied: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little" (v. 47).

Forgiveness is the most visible sign of the Father's love, which Jesus sought to reveal by his entire life. Every page of the Gospel is marked by this imperative of a love that loves to the point of forgiveness. Even at the last moment of his earthly life, as he was being nailed to the cross, Jesus spoke words of forgiveness: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (*Lk* 23:34).

Nothing of what a repentant sinner places before God's mercy can be excluded from the embrace of his forgiveness. For this reason, none of us has the right to make forgiveness conditional. Mercy is always a gratuitous act of our heavenly Father, an unconditional and unmerited act of love. Consequently, we cannot risk opposing the full freedom of the love with which God enters into the life of every person.

Mercy is this concrete action of love that, by forgiving, transforms and changes our lives. In this way, the divine mystery of mercy is made manifest. God is merciful (cf. *Ex* 34:6); his mercy lasts forever (cf. *Ps* 136). From generation to generation, it embraces all those who trust in him and it changes them, by bestowing a share in his very life.

3. What great joy welled up in the heart of these two women. Forgiveness made them feel free at last and happy as never before. Their tears of shame and pain turned into the smile of a person who knows that he or she is loved. Mercy gives rise to *joy*, because our hearts are opened to the hope of a new life. The joy of forgiveness is inexpressible, yet it radiates all around us whenever we experience forgiveness. Its source is in the love with which God comes to meet us, breaking through walls of selfishness that surround us, in order to make us in turn instruments of mercy.

How meaningful in this regard are the words of encouragement found in an early Christian text: "Clothe yourselves in joy, which always is agreeable and acceptable to God, and rejoice in it. For all who are joyful do what is good, think what is good, and despise sadness... All who put aside sadness and put on joy will live in God".² The experience of mercy brings joy. May we never allow this joy to be robbed from us by our troubles and concerns. May it remain rooted in our hearts and enable us to approach with serenity the events of our daily lives.

In a culture often dominated by technology, sadness and loneliness appear to be on the rise, not least among young people. The future seems prey to an uncertainty that does not make for stability. This often gives rise to depression, sadness and boredom, which can gradually lead to despair. We need witnesses to hope and true joy if we are to dispel the illusions that promise quick and easy happiness through artificial paradises. The profound sense of emptiness felt by so many people can be overcome by the hope we bear in our hearts and by the joy that it gives. We need to acknowledge the joy that rises up in a heart touched by mercy. Let us keep in mind, then, the words of the Apostle: "Rejoice in the Lord always" (*Phil* 4:4; cf. *1 Thess* 5:16)

St. Gerard Catholic Church



640 Edrie St. NE
Aiken, SC 29801
803 649-3203

SUNDAY READINGS

First Reading:

Isaiah 11:1-10(4A)

Responsorial:

Psalms 72:1-2,7-8,12-13,17

Second Reading:

Romans 15:4-9

Gospel:

Matthew 3:1-12

Today's Missal

Lectionary Readings for the week of December 4, 2016

Monday: Isaiah 35:1-10;
Luke 5:17-26

Tuesday: Isaiah 40:1-11;
Matthew 18:12-14

Wednesday: Isaiah 40:25-31;
Matthew 11:28-30

Holy Day: Genesis 3:9-15,20;
Psalm 98:1,2-3ab,3cd-4;
Ephesians 1:3-6,11-12; Luke 1:26-38

Friday: Isaiah 48:17-19;
Matthew 11:16-19

Saturday: Sirach 48:1-4,9-11;
Matthew 17:9a,10-13

Mass Times: Weekdays Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 8:15 AM,

First Friday Benediction after Mass

Weekend Saturday 4:00 PM, Sunday 7:00 AM and 11:00 AM

Confessions: after weekday Masses and by Appointment

Office Hours: 9:00 AM till 3:00 PM Tuesday - Thursday

Bible Study: Fridays 10:00 AM, CCD: Sundays 10:00 AM,

RCIA: 9 AM Thursdays

Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages and Funerals: By Appointment, Contact the office.

Contact Us: Phone 803 649-3203, E-Mail stgerardscatholi@atlanticbbn.net

Facebook @stgerardaiken, **Emergency number for Father 803 341-5933**

The Second Sunday of Advent December 4, 2016

Mission Statement

Called to be a People for Others

Vision Statement

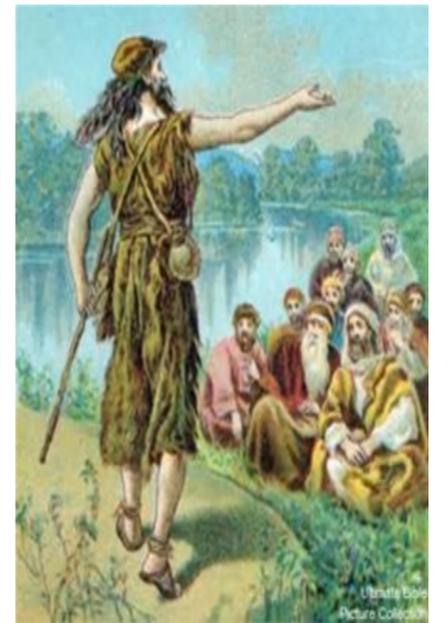
*Anchored by faith hope and love in Jesus Christ,
we strive to be active disciples, serving each
other and all God's people by welcoming and
embracing the enriching diversity of our community of faith.*

Father Emmanuel Andinam: Administrator

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he proclaimed this message in the desert of Judaea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.'

This was the man spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said: A voice of one that cries in the desert, 'Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.' This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather loin-cloth round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole Jordan district made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins.

Matthew 3:1-6



Pray for our sick:

Judy Riley
Marge Glauser
Leonard Saunders
Shirley Paige
William and Jackie Cobbs
Woody Alexander
Lena Mickens
Rosa Johnson
Brenda and Ike
Ligons
Joe Fulmer
Chuck Simkin

"And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value..." (Ph.1:9-10A)

Stewardship a way of life



Pastoral Council:

Wayman Johnson,
Chairman
Payson Borst
Jacqueline Brown
Fredrick Cadek
Nancy Durden
Marge Glauser
Joan Hesik
Janet Menefee
Gregory Wright

Finance Council:

Robert Erikson,
Chairman
Leon Gagnon and
Anna Marie Key,
Auditors
Lisa Solenberger,
Secretary
Art Wagner

Mass Intentions

4:00 PM, 7:00 AM and 11:00 AM Masses are said for your own personal intentions

Weekend Offering

November 26-27, 2016

Collection \$1,798.00
Needed \$2,612.00
Short \$814.00
Attendance 110

The Gathering Hymn 22 M
On Jordan's Bank
The Offertory Hymn is 30 M
The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns
The Communion Hymn is CHOIR 379 BB
The City of God
Our Song of Praise is 20 M
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



Lay Ministers



Saturday December 10	Sunday December 11	Sunday December 11
4:00 PM Vigil Mass	7:00 AM Mass	11:00 AM Mass
Lector: Tami Schaeffer	Mary Kay L'Esperance	Lisa Solenberger
E E Ministers: Jerry Schaeffer/Joe Dennis	Gerard L'Esperance	Mike Solenberger
Saturday December 17	Sunday December 18	Sunday December 18
4:00 PM Vigil Mass	7:00 AM Mass	11:00 AM Mass
Lector: Joan Hesik	Denise Gelinis	Sheila Wagner
E E Ministers: Ellen Heim/Joe Dennis	Roger Gelinis	Mary Rose
Refreshments December 4	Refreshments December 11	Refreshments December 18
Jackie Brown/Jeanette Coleman	Jackie Cobbs/Rosa DiStefano	Sheila Wagner/Patricia Hayes



Christmas flowers in memory of loved ones.

Memorials are \$10 each. Please make donations not later than December 18 so we can purchase the flowers and put the memorials in the bulletin. Contact the office, Jackie Brown or put donation in the collection baskets with the info on the loved one. Thank you and have a blessed Advent



Advent And Christmas Mass Schedules:

Weekend Masses will remain the same with the exception of Christmas Masses.

Christmas Eve Mass is at 7:00 PM and Christmas Day Mass is at 9:00 AM.

Weekday Masses will remain the same with the exception of December the 8th,

Feast of The Immaculate Conception Holy Day, Masses are at 8:15 AM and 6:00 PM. We will have a Penitential Service at 7:00 PM Tuesday the 6th of December

(We need Servers for December 8 at 6 PM, the 24th at 7 PM and the 25th at 9 AM, Lectors for December 8 at 6 PM and the 25th at 9 AM, Eucharistic Ministers for December 8 at 6 PM, the 24th at 7 PM and the 25th at 9 AM, Ushers and Sacristans for the penance service on December the 6th, for December the 8th at 6 PM and for both Christmas Masses.) Call the Office or sign up in the lobby.

Remember that this Tuesday at 7:00 PM is our Advent penance service and this Thursday is The Feast of The Immaculate Conception a holy day of obligation Masses at 8:15 AM and 6:00 PM

BLOOD PRESSURE: Sheila Wagner will be taking blood pressures after the 11 AM Mass this Sunday. If anyone needs Communion or knows someone that needs Communion at home or elsewhere call Sheila Wagner at 803 643-8410

Black Catholics' heritage Celebration 2016 Theme: Forgiveness, reconciliation and Racial Harmony
Saturday December 10, 2016-9:00 AM-4:00 PM

Embassy Suites by Hilton Charleston Airport Hotel and Conference
Bishop Robert E. Guglielmone, Bishop Edward K. Braxton, Father Michael Okere,
The Heritage Choir under the direction of Mr. Charlton Singley, a youth track and much more.
Registration /information contact Office of Ethnic Ministries @ 864 331-2627
or ethnicministriessecretary@catholic-doc.org

The first of our ongoing Lector Development series was in November. If you are currently serving as a lector or wish to know more about how to serve in this capacity, you are strongly encouraged to attend. The second session will be on Monday December 5 at 3 PM. The same program was presented at the November 22nd session so it recommended that you attend if you missed the first one.

Choir Practice will be held on the following Tuesdays, December 6 & 13. Time 6:00 PM till 7:15 PM.

Glittery holiday ads can blind us to our *Stewardship* values and distort our needs and wants. It is important that during this season of endless buying we remember that each of us also has the need to give back to God and to those that are in need.



Social interaction before Mass in the Church

There is no doubt that the lack of a gathering place is a burden on many of us, especially when we gather for Mass. Many rightly see the time before Mass as a good opportunity for social contact. It would be much appreciated if our social interaction in the church before Mass is done with due consideration for those that may be saying prayers or are having a moment of reflection. It would be helpful if all social interactions could be stopped and a quiet moment is observed five minutes before the start of Mass. Thank you very much.

We look forward to the 2016 Black Catholic Heritage Celebration on December 10th. If you have not yet registered, you now may register ONLINE. You can still get the early bird special! Use this online registration link and mail your check to be postmarked by Wednesday November 30, 2016. Please note that our special rate of \$129.00++ for the Embassy Suites is good until December 3, 2016. Please help us to fill the room for our special guest, Bishop Edward Braxton, by encouraging your parishioners to get registered and forwarding the online registration via email.

<http://www.surveymshare.com/t/Black-Catholics-Heritage-2016-REGISTRATION-Charleston-December-10-2016>

Rachel's Vineyard Retreats bring spiritual healing and strengthening of faith to individuals who have had or participated in an abortion. Join us on the journey to healing, peace and reconciliation. December 9-11, 2016 in Rock Hill, SC. For information and registration please call Sarah 803 6271209. Or email grace4healing@gmail.com

The Legion of Mary is meeting at 1:30 on Fridays. Call the office with questions. Please Pray the Rosary.

Perpetual Novena in honor of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Tuesdays at the 8:15 Mass

If you attend St. Gerard on a regular basis and feel welcome, Why not consider becoming a member. We would love to have you. Feel free to talk to a member or call the office 649-3203.

Registration forms are in the the church hall lobby.

This is Feed the Valley Weekend, Thank you and bless your gifts of food.

There will be a jewelry party in the church hall at 7:00 PM on Monday the 5th of December. Refreshments will be served. Please join us and support Shirley Paige.