



'Light for the Path' a Resource for Families in the Year of Mercy

Session One: Mary, Mother of Mercy

We Look: Today we think about Mary saying YES when God chose her to be the mother of Jesus, Son of God. She goes to tell her cousin Elizabeth, who is also expecting a baby. And Mary waits for her baby to be born. What do you think a new born baby is like? What were you like as a new baby? What did your family feel when you were born?

We call Mary 'Mother of Mercy' because she is the mother of Our Lord Jesus, and she gives Jesus to us. She knows how to listen to God. She says 'yes' to God. And wherever she goes, Mary spreads the joy that comes from Jesus, who shows us all how to be **loving and kind, caring for all, especially the sick, the poor, the hungry and thirsty, those in prison, those who are very sad and lonely. That's being 'merciful'!**

We Listen:

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, to a young girl called Mary, engaged to be married to a man called Joseph. Gabriel appeared to Mary and said "Greetings, favoured lady! The Lord is with you." Mary was troubled by his words, but the angel said "Don't be frightened, for God has chosen to bless you wonderfully! Very soon now, you will become pregnant and have a baby boy and you are to name him 'Jesus' and he will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; he will be King and his kingdom will never end'. A few days later, Mary hurried to visit her cousin Elizabeth in Judea. At the sound of Mary's voice, Elizabeth felt her own baby inside her leap! She said 'Of all women, you are the most blessed, and blessed is the baby you are going to have. When you spoke, the baby within me jumped! Something wonderful is going to happen with your baby and with mine too.' And Mary sang a song of praise 'Oh how I praise the Lord. How I rejoice in God my Saviour! For he has done great things for me, and Holy is his Name. **His faithful love and mercy extends to all generations'**. *Adapted from the Living Bible*

We Wonder...

What you like best about the story?
What Mary might feel like, waiting for her baby?
How Mary and Elizabeth helped each other?
How we care about one another in our families?



At Home

Mary's song, on the doorstep of her cousin Elizabeth's home, **was about God's mercy** – **God's loving kindness** - to all grandparents, parents, children – including us!

At home this week, what kind, loving thing you could do?

- **Be welcoming** to visitors and look after them
- **Notice when we hurt each other**, and say sorry and mean it, and ask for forgiveness
- **Be close** to people when they are worried



Pope Francis says 'mercy' is like a well, full of joy and peace. And it's always there inside us, ready to use. We can be 'merciful' like God the Father and Jesus – by sharing our love, joy and peace with others. In **this Holy Year of Mercy**, Pope Francis asks us to be loving and kind to one another. Don't forget!



Draw a picture of one way you might be kind and loving this week. Put it up somewhere you can see it, to remind you about your own 'work of mercy'.

Tips For Using This 'Year Of Mercy' Resource with Children at Home

1. **We Gather:** Decide on the best time – before or after school, evening or weekend – for a quiet 10-30 minutes together
2. **Background:** Give them a bit of 'background' to the Holy Year. You will find some notes below.
3. We look at our experience and our Catholic Tradition: Ask the children what the word 'mercy' means for them? Have they heard it, ever? What do they think?
4. **We Listen To God's Word:** Read the story. For the very young, the pictures might help to talk about the story.
5. **We Wonder:** Ask the 'wondering' questions. Have a conversation about these.
6. **Pope Francis Says:** Look at the 'Pope Francis' box, and his teaching about mercy. What catches your attention?
7. **We Respond:** Look at the 'At Home' box – and talk about this.
8. **What Difference Does This Make?** Finally, draw or write out what you have decided to do this week, and stick it on the fridge!
9. **We Pray:** Finish with a simple prayer (see an example below)

Prayer moment:

Let's sit quietly for a moment, and remember the story and all we have shared together. (... pause) As we think about Mary and the Angel, and Mary's visit to Elizabeth, let's ask Mary to pray for us and our family and our wider community, to help us to say 'YES' to sharing God's love and kindness:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen

Dear Father in Heaven, your love and mercy are for everyone, without exception. May we follow Jesus your Son, and be the kind and loving face of mercy in our family, and for all the people we meet today. We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Helpful Background

We have had 'Holy Years' in the Church for about 1000 years. **From 8th December 2015 to 20 November 2016**, the Pope has asked us to celebrate a whole **Year of Mercy**, and in this year, to think about what mercy really means. Special 'Years' in first part of the Bible, are to do with God's faithful mercy, in the twists and turns of the story of His People. God expects them in turn to **give generously from what they have, time and money and kindness, to care for others**. In the New Testament, **Jesus shows us** in person how to be merciful like the Father.

1. **In our Catholic Tradition**, we describe being 'merciful' as '**love in action**' (*feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, and clothes to those who have none; welcoming the stranger, healing the sick, visiting those in prison, burying the dead*).
2. We also say it is **merciful to be there for others** (*when there is confusion and doubt; to educate out of ignorance and poverty; to be close and give comfort to lonely and grieving people; to forgive; to be patient and peace-loving; to pray for one another, living and dead*).

Together, these are known as the '**works of mercy**' – the first group are about the physical body (corporal), and the second are about the minds and spirits of people (spiritual).