



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

Session Two: The Doors of Mercy at Home

The church wants to show herself 'a loving mother to all; patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness toward her separated children' (Pope Francis, MV4)

Step One: We Gather in a Welcoming Space

Decide on the best time, before or after school, evening or weekend.

Welcome everyone. It's good to be here! How has life been recently?

Background

The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy or Holy Year of Mercy began when Pope Francis opened the great Holy Door in St Peter's Basilica in Rome on 8th December 2015. This Door is only opened in special 'Holy Years', and going through the door is to be a moment that is full of 'grace'. The Pope has asked for such a Holy Door in every diocese across the world, and said that **'anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons and instils hope'** (MV3) He wants everyone not only to *know* that God loves them, but to *experience* God's love in a powerful way.

When things go wrong in our lives, and we make selfish or unkind choices, and say and do things that hurt other people, we feel very sad and burdened. We know something's not right – we have damaged our relationships and it depresses us. We can feel angry and disappointed. We can be resentful and judgmental. But the loving kindness and compassion of God is so much stronger than our sorrow, fears, and wrong doing. In his enormous and limitless love, God reaches out to us through Jesus, and sets us free from all the negative consequences of our sin, healing us and making us whole again.

Everyone is invited to come and receive God's mercy and special blessing through the experience of entering the Holy Door and spending time in that holy place. It is hoped

there will be people there to welcome, to pray and to listen, perhaps a guide to open to God's love and mercy in Scripture, and the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Step Two: We Look At Our Experience

We are going to begin this session by thinking about our lives, and what might be our own **'holy doors of mercy' at home.**

- What's the best part of coming through the door and being at home, after a day at work or school, or having been out or away for a while? What sort of place is it?
- When is it sometimes difficult coming through the door at home?
- Family life is busy, with so many demands. But at best, in the midst of all our busyness, we try and love each other.
 - Where do you think we have the best 'quality time' or feeling of 'togetherness' at home? Which is the door we come through at home and feel accepted, '*I can really be fully myself here*'?
 - Which would be the doorway through to the room or rooms where we experience real kindness?
 - And when we have hurt one another, where and when do we experience feeling sorry, saying sorry, and being forgiven?

In our Catholic Tradition

Pope St John Paul II, in his teaching document on the family, says that the family home or household is the foundational place where we love one another, and show Jesus Christ present, not by doing specifically holy things, but by living out our love, which is the centre of a growing Christian life, as best we can. (*See Familiaris Consortio 54*) It is the natural environment in which we give and receive tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity and service (*see Catechism of the Catholic Church 2222*).

Pope Francis in his announcement of the Jubilee of Mercy said, '*the mercy of God is (like) that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child... full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy*' (MV6)

Step Three: We listen – the Word of God (see pictures on back page)

At this step you might like to use the '*lectio divina*' guide in this resource. Invite someone to read the Word of God slowly, pausing after each verse or couple of verses. Ask everyone to listen and see what catches their attention. Either use a bible, marking the pages in

advance (Gospel of John, Chapter 10, and Book of Revelation, or 'Apocalypse' Chapter 3) or read from the text box below.

Gospel of John, Chapter 10 (verse 7) Jesus spoke, 'In all truth I tell you, I am the gate of the sheepfold. (verse 9-11) I am the gate; anyone who enters through me will be safe. Such a one will go in and come out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come so that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. (v14-15) I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for my sheep. (v 27-28) My sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never be lost; and no one will ever steal them from my hand.

Book of Revelation, Chapter 3 (verse 20) Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal at that person's side.

(Excerpts from The New Jerusalem Bible, Darton, Longman & Tod, 1985 ©)

Step Four: We Respond

- What caught your attention in these verses from Scripture?
- What verse did you like best, and can you say why you like it?
- We notice that Jesus doesn't say 'I am like a door' but '**I AM the DOOR**' (or 'gate')! I wonder how a person can be a Door. How can we go through a person who is a Door?
 - **Did you know:** In biblical times, the sheepfold was a circular wall made of stones, with one entrance point? This 'gap' or doorway was secured or made safe by the shepherd, lying across the entrance. Jesus describes himself as 'the Door' and invites all to 'come through me'! Jesus has come for the purpose of being 'the door', making entry possible through him to a new way of being. Each day we have our way forward, **through the Open Door who is Jesus**, to experiencing God's love and mercy ourselves, life to the full in our relationships with one another at home, and everywhere else too.
 - Jesus says not to be afraid. **He asks us:** What you are looking for in life? Are you lost in any way? Are you hungry or thirsty, sick, imprisoned, tired or

depressed, angry or nervous? However we are feeling, Jesus reassures us that the Door is completely OPEN. He invites us to shake off our insecurities and distrust, and come through Him and be nourished, healed and set free.

- I wonder what happens when you come through this Door that is Jesus, the Good Shepherd. What do you find? How do you feel? What do you do?
- Think about it the other way round. What is like to have Jesus standing at your door, knocking? How do you open it to check who is there? Can he come in?

Step Five: We Mix it Together

We are invited to make this tender, loving kindness of God a reality in our homes. When we ourselves, the members of families, our friends and neighbours cross the threshold, the 'doorway' of our home, how do we want them to feel? How does this 'merciful love' that is kind, compassionate, liberating, forgiving, just, loyal, happen in action? Who are the people who might find it difficult to approach, knock or come in? How do we look out for them, or find them? What example does the Good Shepherd, Jesus give us? How might we follow this example?

- You might like to design and decorate a sign of welcome and blessing, perhaps using some of the prayer below, and hang it by your 'door of mercy', be it the back or front door, the living room or kitchen, or any other door of the house.

***'May this home be a place of happiness and health, of contentment, generosity and hope, a home of creativity and kindness, of mercy and forgiveness.
May those who visit us, and those who live here experience blessings and peace.'***

Step Six: What Might We Do Differently Or New This Week?

- Is there a particular person or family we can invite round or visit?
- Plan a visit to one of the Holy Doors in your diocese, as a family experience. Encourage friends and other families to go with you.

Step Seven: We Pray

Leader: Let's sit quietly for a moment and remember what we have shared.... As we think about Jesus as 'the Door', and the Doors of our homes and Cathedrals being 'doors of mercy,' we pray:

Thank you for being with us as we gather here in your name, Lord Jesus. Each day, You are the Open Door, inviting us to step through, to a new way of living, in love and respect, trust and humility, confidence and hope. May our families and homes be open places through which others can enter and experience the Father's love and mercy for them. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of Surprises! Here is another place where the word 'mercy' appears in the prayers of the Mass. In the Gloria: **'Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us'**

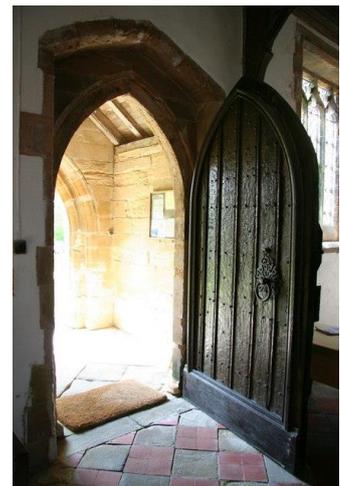
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3.



1. By Peter Ilsted www.canvaz.com/gallery/21148.htm Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

3. Open Door – www.geograph.org.uk
798005.jpg Wikimedia Commons.

Here are some pictures of 'doors'. Which one do you like and why? What might it be like to go through one of these doors?

Where are the 'Holy Doors' in our Diocese? What might it be like to go through that Holy Door? What do you expect or hope for? Who might be there for you?

What about your 'holy door' at a place where you feel 'at home'? What is it like to go through that door and be in that place? What do you expect or hope for? Who is there for you? Who would you like to invite through your door? Why? How?