

'Light for the Path' A Resource for Families in the Holy Year of Mercy



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THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

'Be merciful just as your Father is merciful' Luke 6:36

What is a Holy Year?

Holy Years have been part of the life of the Church for the last thousand years. Most recently we have had a Year of Faith, of St Paul, of the Eucharist, the Word of God, and of Consecrated Life. A celebratory 'Jubilee Year' has special resonance, and these have been declared in the life of the Church every twenty-five years. All Holy Years are rooted in the idea of *special years* found in the Old Testament, woven into the history of the People of God, telling of God's unfailing and merciful love for them in the twists and turns of their journey together. Historically the declaration of such years required the people to respond in generosity to God's love. They were expected to give from their goodness and wealth, for the care of others. For example, at the end of every three years, a tenth of all produce was distributed to refugees, widows, orphans. At the end of every seven years, all debts were to be cancelled. Every fifty years, specially designated 'Jubilee' years were celebrated. Often described as a 'Year of the Lord's favour', these included cancellation of debts, freeing all slaves, and returning land to its original owners. Jesus, in the early days of his ministry, stood up in the Synagogue in Nazareth, and read from the Prophet Isaiah,

'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'. (Luke 4:18-19)

Jesus finished at that point, without concluding the quote from Isaiah, looked up and said *'Today this scripture is being fulfilled in your hearing' (Luke 4:21).*

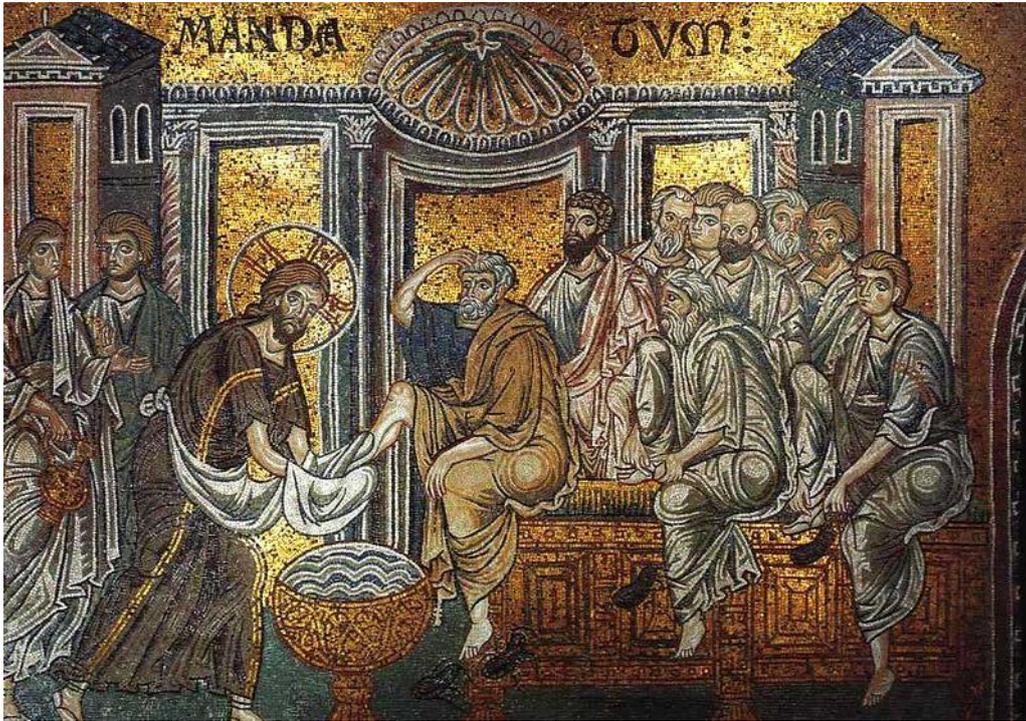
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Jesus, in himself, his life, death and resurrection, is the living message of the everlasting Jubilee of Mercy.



Christ washes the apostles' feet (Monreale). Image by Sibeaster (own work) [Public Domain] via Wikimedia Commons

Pope Francis Announces a Holy Year of Mercy (*Misericordiae Vultus*)

“Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us” MV 2

From the very earliest days of his papacy Francis has spoken of ‘mercy’ as central to following Jesus Christ. ‘Mercy’ is not simply part of God’s love that we should understand as an abstract idea’, but is the way Jesus asks us to follow him, something very real and active, to be lived out every day: *‘be merciful just as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:36)*. In his announcement of the Jubilee Holy Year, the Pope quotes Pope John XXIII’s speech on the opening of the Second Vatican Council, urging the Church to *‘use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up the arms of severity,’* offering the image of the Good Samaritan. The Pope has chosen to begin the Year of Mercy on 8th December, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, and significantly, the fiftieth

anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council. The year will close on 20th November 2016, on the Solemnity of Christ the King.

The Latin title of the Pope's announcement of the Holy Year of Mercy is '*Misericordiae Vultus*, or simply the 'Face of Mercy', referring directly to Jesus, showing us the merciful face of God. In this document, Pope Francis points us to many stories from Scripture that require us to renew our commitment to following Jesus, who is the living and visible sign of God's mercy, and to be sorry for ways in which are not truly living up to what we believe. We can go deeper in our understanding of what 'mercy' is, and what living mercifully means, by opening ourselves to the Word of God in Scripture, listening deeply, and connecting these stories to our own lives and relationships; allowing the meeting with Jesus through the Word, to change the way we see with eyes of mercy and respond to life in a more merciful way.

Holy Doors

'The Holy Door will become a Door of Mercy' through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instils hope' MV3



The Year of Mercy will begin when Pope Francis opens the great Holy Door in St Peter's Basilica in Rome. The door is only opened in these special years, and entering through them is a moment full of grace. Pope Francis has asked every diocesan bishop across the world to have 'Holy Doors', in their Cathedrals and other designated churches and shrines. We enter by the Holy Door consciously saying:

'Here I am, I am coming into your presence, Lord. I am sorry for the ways in which I have hurt those I love, and in so doing hurt you. I need your love and mercy. Thank you for your great love and acceptance of me.'

Around the Dioceses

During this Holy Year there will be local diocesan, national and international activities, including pilgrimage and reconciliation opportunities. Look out for ways in which you can engage with these. It is hoped there will be people available to support anyone entering by a Holy Door. Perhaps there will be 'pathways' through the Cathedrals or designated churches: a welcome, with people to pray and to listen, and invitation to special 'stations' for guided prayer experiences, or contemplation on God's love and mercy. Simply come! All are invited, all are welcome, to receive mercy and special blessing in this way.



Eugene Delacroix [Public Domain] in Tate Gallery via Wikimedia Commons

An Opportunity to Explore What 'Mercy' Mean in Our Families

God shows us his mercy – and it is like a father or a mother's love for their child. Mercy flows from a heart-stretching, tender, compassionate love that knows no limits. Pope Francis describes it as a 'wellspring' or well from which everyone can draw joy and peace, and the spring of mercy will never run dry, no matter how many people draw from it. Every time anyone is in need, he or she can approach.

How does this happen in our family life?

As families we live a 'true' life when we in our turn live this love-beyond-words-mercy, sourced in God's rich and unfailing mercy, shown to us in Jesus. As baptised people, we are literally 'soaked' in the mercy of God. Mercy is God's very nature, shared with us through Jesus, and we are given the power and the challenge from our baptism, to be 'merciful like the Father' - and as Jesus says, to have seen him is to have seen the Father. Our homes are places where our family members and all those who come can draw from our family 'well' of love, joy, peace, comfort, forgiveness, faithfulness, and 'togetherness.'

What Might Be Our 'Door of Mercy' at Home?

As a good start, we might sit down and talk about 'mercy' and what it means to be merciful in our lives, amongst family, friends, neighbours and strangers? Which are the 'doors' at home that could become our 'doorway of mercy' where anyone, family or friend or stranger, comes in and feels loved, accepted, comforted, healed? Might it be the front door? Or the back door? The kitchen or living room door?' Any other door? You decide. If it's the front door, you could make a simple 'Welcome' sign that lets people entering know that they are blessed as they come in and go out of our home, hoping they will experience it as a place of 'mercy', welcome and acceptance, joy and peace.

'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.'

Living out 'Works of Mercy' in Body, Mind and Spirit

'Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man' MV 2

The Year of Mercy is a call from the Pope to look at our lives, listen and very practically respond to the call to live out the Gospel demands to be 'merciful as the Father'

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to feed the hungry,• to give drink to those who are thirsty• to give clothes to the naked• to welcome to the stranger• to heal the sick• to visit those in prison• to bury the dead in sure and certain hope	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to be there for one another when there is doubt• to teach/overcome ignorance that keeps people in poverty (education)• to be close to and comfort people suffering loneliness and loss• to forgive those who offend us• to reject anger and violence, and be patient with everyone who speaks or acts against us• to pray for people, living and the dead.
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Coming directly from scripture, our church tradition calls these *actions* the '**corporal and spiritual works of mercy**'. These *works* go together - we don't divide them into either/or - and the sign or *test* that mercy is being lived in every possibly situation can simply be: '*See how they love one another!*' We will be judged by our love! '*When did we see you?*' we ask. '*When you did this for the least of my little ones, you did it for me*' says Jesus Christ the King (see Mt 25:37-40). Each session will enable conversation to connect with the 'works of mercy' as we experience them in family and wider life.

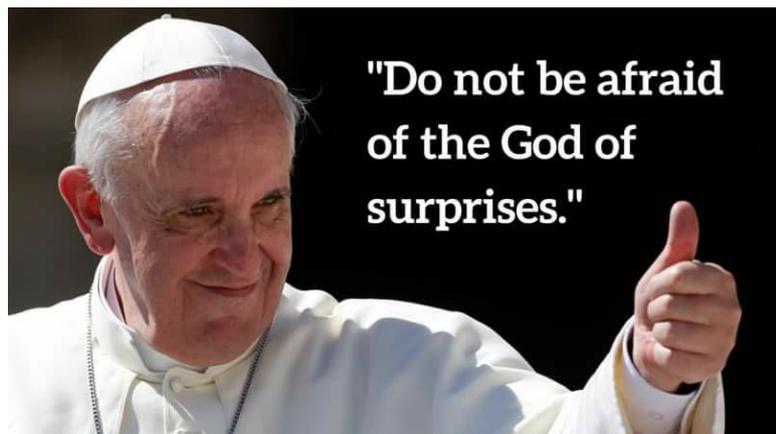
What difference does the 'year of mercy' make to our lives in families and parish?

'May the message of mercy reach everyone and may no-one be indifferent to the call to experience mercy' MV19

Through nurturing awareness of a merciful lifestyle, families share in the Church's mission of bringing God's reign of mercy to the world. Families are 'salt and light' for one another and in the life of the parish, and the parish is a source of blessing for families too. It's mutual! We can welcome and celebrate this fact. As Pope Francis describes it, mercy is the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever, in spite of the things we get wrong and the ways we hurt one another. At best, families can show the way. God is full of tenderness and compassion, and his mercy, is always greater than any 'turning away' from him has been. The invitation is to seek out the lost and bring them home, or if we have been 'lost' to come home and allow God to surprise us!

We pray for a continuing openness to the mercy of God at work in us, blessing us to go out and live mercifully as God's agents of mercy.

'May the message of mercy reach everyone, and may no-one be indifferent to the call to experience mercy' (MV 19)



'Let us ask God to surprise us!' says Pope Francis (MV 25)



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

INTRODUCTION

*"The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible, that is he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. **This is the path which the merciful love of Christians must also travel**" Pope Francis, MV 9.*

What is the purpose of the 'Light for the Path' resource?

'Light for the Path' is a resource to help families actively engage in the Holy Year of Mercy, beginning at home. Following on from the Synods on family life, Pope Francis has asked for everyone to enter into this special time for the Church, first of all by reflecting deeply on what 'mercy' means, made living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth (MV1). Nazareth was the home of Jesus as a child, and for all those years before he began his public ministry. Being 'at home' is important. Pope St John Paul II describes family life as the natural environment that God has chosen for growing in love and responsibility, developing our potential as human persons, and mercy lies at the heart of this. He continues:

*'(Growth) happens where there is care and love for little ones, the sick, the old; where there is mutual service every day; where **there is sharing of goods, of joys and sorrows**'*

Following this initial reflection on 'mercy', each session will then take us deeper into what following Jesus, the 'face of mercy', means in very practical day-to-day life. To be 'merciful like the Father' is a way of life, central to

following Jesus. It is both a call and a challenge to actively live out this way of 'tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and service' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2222), beginning with those closest to us, in our 'households'. The session material will help us both to reflect and to act!

Who is the resource for?

The Holy Year begins on 8th December 2015 (the Feast of the Immaculate Conception), and concludes on 20th December 2016, (the Feast of Christ the King). The 'Light for the Path' resource consists of six sessions for use over this time period, linked to the seasons of the Church year. **Each session is built around a scripture text referred to by Pope Francis in his announcement of the Holy Year of Mercy. The 'Light for the Path' Resource is designed for use by any combination of 'family people',** in any size 'small group', '*Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am with them*' (Mt 18:20) i.e. parent and child, or some parents together, or grandparent and grandchild, or adult aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, cousins. Decide on the best time. If using with children, before or after school, evening or weekend? With adults, day-time, evening or weekend? Sessions take place in a relaxed and informal way in homes. Alternatively, it may be used with a catechist and group of family people in the parish or school setting.

Food for Thought

The six given sessions in the 'Light for the Path' Resource are not by any means exhaustive, and can be seen as a catalyst to encourage further conversations and merciful action. You might like to make your own 'Year of Mercy' reflective conversations, for use in some family time. Any Gospel story, and especially the Sunday Gospel, could be the source of your reflection on mercy, perhaps using the same process as offered in this resource – if you find it helpful. For adult groups, any sentence or paragraph from the papal document on mercy would make for a good discussion. In the Resources Section of our dedicated Year of Mercy Page you will find a link to the Pope's document *Misericordiae Vultus*, and the Scripture passages referenced in it.



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

RESOURCE GUIDE

'God does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete. The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible, that is he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. This is the path which the merciful love of Christians must also travel. As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other. MV 9

The 'Light for the Path' Resource Sessions

The 'Light for the Path' resource consists of six reflection sessions. At the heart of each session is a scripture passage, taken from one of the scripture texts referred to by Pope Francis in his announcement of the Holy Year of Mercy (*Misericordiae Vultus* or 'The Face of Mercy'). The sessions are designed for use in groups of 'family people' (everyone is welcome – parents, grandparents, children, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, cousins) either in their homes, perhaps with other family or friends, or in the parish. Session One begins with an Advent reflection on Mary, the Mother of Mercy. Sessions Two to Five follow bi-monthly over the first six-months of 2016, concluding with Session Six for use in the autumn of 2016, before the Year of Mercy closes on the Feast of Christ the King. The 'Light for the Path' Resource seeks to support your family, or the group you are gathered with, explore the whole idea of 'mercy' as God's constant loving kindness in action: experienced in the scriptures, and in our own lives. Through the Gospels, we meet Jesus, and somehow, without our knowing 'how', God speaks into our lives, guiding, challenging or encouraging,

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and we find God's ways of mercy coming alive in our ways, our relationships, and our actions. To be a Christian and to follow Christ is to live a life of mercy.

Sessions for Adults and for Adults with Children

Each session has a choice of two downloadable guides, one for a group of adults only, and the other for use by an adult with children. The adult 'Light for the Path' session guide contains the 7-step process, including the full scripture text, and a picture of that story to aid reflection. The adult-with-child 'Light for the Path' guide has simplified steps, including a child-friendly version of the Scripture, a picture of the story, some 'wondering' questions, ideas for being 'merciful' at home and a quote from Pope Francis. There are also some 'Tips' for using the 'Light for the Path' resource with children, giving a step-by-step guide for the parent or other adult to use, helping both the adults and children to engage. The 'prayer' moment is also in child-friendly language.

A Simple Way of Praying with the Scripture Together

For the 'We listen' step of the process you may like to use a good children's or Good News Bible, or for the very young, a children's story book version.

However, for easy reference, each 'Light for the Path' session guide has the scripture text in full. Through this simple way of praying with the scripture, anyone of any age can go deeper in their relationship with God, moving from 'head' and 'history' and '2000 years ago,' across time and space, to the present moment, and God speaking into 'my heart' and finding God in 'my story'. We are not praying *on* the Word of God, or *about* the Word of God, but we are meeting Jesus *through* the word – like an 'encounter' or 'presence'. He is present with us through his living, active Word, in a 'heart burning' moment. You will find a simple 'Lectio Divina: How to Guide' as part of the 'Light for the Path' Resource.

How Long Does Each Session Take?

Each session can be adapted to the time you have available, whether that is ten minutes or an hour. Choose your session time to fit your family life and

demands. It should be an enjoyable experience and a chance for some peaceful time-out and conversation together. **Ideally, allow 45 minutes for a session to cover all the steps.** However, if you do not have that amount of time, you can adapt and condense the session omitting certain steps. The session notes in the table below will help you structure this conversation.

A Shorter Conversation

If you only have a little time just do 'we listen' and 'we respond' steps. Allow 10-15 minutes quiet time, listening to the Scripture, using the 'Lectio Divina: How To Guide' and ask the 'I wonder' questions allowing the children/group members to respond. That simple 2-step process in itself is enough 'food for thought' or 'light for the path', and you will find your 10 or 15 minutes will give everyone something to wonder about. The experience does flow into daily life, and often changes the way you see things, or the children see things, and how you respond differently to people and situations, being more aware and more 'merciful'.

How are the sessions structured?

'May the message of mercy reach everyone, and may no-one be indifferent to the call to experience mercy' (MV 19)

The resource consists of 6 user-friendly sessions (adults alone, or adults with children) for use at different points during the Holy Year. The family or group choose the best time for them. Ideally, allow 40-60minutes for a session. However, if you do not have that amount of time, it can be adapted and condensed, making choices which steps to omit. The most important section is Step 3, 'We listen' which can be a stand-alone step. See below:

Step One: We gather

Ideally, the session takes place in warm and comfortable space. The 'leader' welcomes, 'it is good to be here together'. In the resource material, a short introduction to the topic is given. The leader may read this, or part of it, depending on the age/ability of the group. 'Today *is about.....*'

Step Two: We look at our experience

Having heard the brief introduction, everyone has a chance to share their first thoughts on this topic, in the family, and in our Catholic tradition. Notes are given on the tradition. The leader shares these.

Step Three: We listen to the Word of God in Scripture as 'Light for the Path'

In each session, there is an opportunity to reflect on the Word of God in Scripture as 'light for the path' (*Psalms 118 (119) v105*), either through a dip into the Old Testament, Psalms, or New Testament letters, but most particularly, through the Gospels, encountering Christ in word and action. 'We listen' is the most important element in each session, and if you are short of time, you may wish to just do this Step Three, using the simple 'How To' Guide. The resource provides a simple way of reflecting with scripture, most commonly known as 'lectio divina', for use at this point in the session. This has been adapted into a very accessible form. From experience, this method works with all ages and abilities. For the very young, this is an opportunity to 'play' with the story characters and tell the story in both verbal and non-verbal ways.

Step Four: We respond

An invitation to all, to 'wonder' what participants have seen and heard. We respond to the question 'What does this story tell us about our family and what is important to us?'

Step Five: We mix it together and make sense

This section brings together life experience, in the light of scripture and church teaching, with a reference to Pope Francis' document for the Year of Mercy, in plain English. We identify and describe practical 'Works of Mercy' as we experience them at home and more widely.

Step Six: We plan to do something new or different this week

The final section of each session encourages the families/groups to respond to the question, 'What difference does this make?' Or 'What might we do differently this week?' This is the challenge of connecting living 'mercy' in our

family lives, as a real participation in the life of the parish and wider community, sharing in the Church's mission to bring God's mercy to the world.

Step Seven: We pray

The session concludes with a simple prayer or Blessing in the group/ family. With grateful hearts, we pray for a continuing openness to the mercy of God at work in us, blessing us to live mercifully each day, as the face, hands and feet of Christ in our homes and work places, and our communities.

God of Surprises

In each section of the resource, you will find a 'God of surprises' text box. Into the melting pot, we add reference to where we experience 'mercy' **in the prayers and action of the Mass**. Each session will make reference to one of these 'moments' in the Mass, helping families to make connections between life at home and the worship of the Church. This is both an affirmation and a challenge to living out the 'mercy' that we pray and believe. We bring our 'mercy-full,' self-giving lives to Sunday Mass, offering all our blessedness and brokenness, and ask God to continue to pour out grace and mercy on us, empowering us to live it in the week to come.



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SESSION STRUCTURE

Outline of each 'Light for the Path' Session: Guide for 45-minutes

Step	Time in minutes
1. We gather: creating the welcoming space, followed by brief introduction/background to the session	2 minutes
2. We look: At our experience, first thoughts on this topic in our Catholic tradition, and in our family	10 minutes
3. We listen to the Word of God: (<i>If you are new to this way of praying with scripture, you may find the 'Lectio Divina: How To Guide' useful</i>) This is a time of gentle exploration of the Scripture speaking to all ages and abilities, in verbal and non-verbal ways: Read/tell story from scripture, meeting Jesus, present, showing the way of mercy.	10 minutes
4. We respond: Invitation to 'wonder': What does this story tell us about our family and what is important to us?	10 minutes
5. We mix it together and make sense: reference to Pope Francis' document on mercy, in plain English	5 minutes
6. We plan to do something new or different this week: In the light of what we have shared, is there anything we would like to do this week in our family?	5 minutes
7. We pray: the session concludes with a simple prayer or Blessing in the group/ family. NOTE: God of Surprises: in each sessions, a reference to 'mercy' in the celebration of the Mass	2 minutes



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

SIX SESSION OUTLINES

'Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path' (Psalm 118 (119) v 106

Session Outlines for Adults and for Adults with Children

Each session has a choice of two downloadable guides, one for a group of adults only, and the other for use by an adult with children. The adult 'Light for the Path' guide can be printed out as an A4 or A5 folded leaflet, and contains the 7-step process, including the full scripture text, and a picture of that story to aid reflection. The adult-with-child 'Light for the Path' guide is a one page A4 guide, with simplified steps, including a child-friendly version of the Scripture, a picture of the story, some 'wondering' questions, ideas for being 'merciful' at home, and a quote from Pope Francis. On the reverse of the child-adult page, are some 'Tips' for using the 'Light for the Path' resource with children, giving a step-by-step guide for the parent or other adult to use, helping both the adults and children to engage. The 'prayer' moment is also in child-friendly language.

Session One: The tenderness of God's Mercy

'In the fullness of time, when everything had been arranged according to his plan of salvation, he sent his only Son into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to reveal his love for us in a definitive way.' MV1

The Holy Year of Mercy begins in Advent, with Mary. We are thinking of her in Nazareth, hearing the Angel's greeting, 'The Lord is with you', a troubling and yet awesome encounter. Using her ancient title, 'Mother of Mercy' we wonder about Mary's 'Yes' to being chosen as the mother of Jesus (Luke Chapter 1). She then hurries to visit her cousin Elizabeth, also pregnant as an older woman, for 'nothing is impossible for God'. These strong and courageous women meet and share their stories. Together we wonder how in our turn we say 'yes' to being who God chooses us to be, in our families. How are we called to be like Mary, bringing Jesus, the 'face of mercy', to others, at home, and to all those we meet? Mary is named at the beginning and the end of the Pope's document on mercy, and we consider how her whole life is a full participation in the mystery of God's love. She sings a wonderful song of the mercy of God extending from generation to generation – a great river of mercy welling up and overflowing. It will never run dry, no matter how many people come to draw from it. Every time we are in need, we can approach. Practically how can we live out this merciful love that Mary sings of and knows so intimately in her heart? (MV1 and MV24) **Available for use from 8 December 2015**

Session Two: The doors of mercy at home

'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me.' Revelation 3:20

Pope Francis has asked for each diocese to have a 'Holy Door' in the cathedral and in other designated churches and shrines. We consider which are the 'holy doors of mercy' in our homes: when and how do we welcome, accept, listen, nourish, and forgive one another at home? Who needs our mercy in these ways? Focussing on Christ, the Good Shepherd, the Gate, and the Door, how might our family 'doors' connect with the parish? **Available for use in January/February 2016**

Session Three: The lost Son, A Parable of Mercy

'For this son of mine was lost and is found! ' And they began to celebrate' Luke 15:24

There are several parables devoted to mercy, and in these Jesus shows the nature of God as a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy. (MV 9 and MV17) In Lent we will explore the story of the lost son, the prodigal father, and the elder brother, and what they show us about the Father's mercy? How can we live this at home? (MV17) **Available for use in March 2016**

Session Four: The action of Mercy

'Which of these three do you think was a neighbour...? 'The one who had mercy on him'. Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise' Luke 10:36-37

Pope Francis says that mercy is a key word in scripture, showing God's action towards us. God's limitless and overwhelming mercy is the foundation of our life as 'Church', people of God. (MV9 & 10) Through the eyes of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) how is God's mercy a radical way of being in our families, and how does this translate into our parish communities? **Available for use from Easter 2016**

Session Five: The gaze of mercy:

'Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd? Luke 15:33

Jesus receives the mission from the Father to reveal what divine love is - for 'God is love' (1Jn 4:8, 16). The signs he works, for the poor, sinners, marginalised people, the sick and suffering, are all meant to teach mercy (MV8) In this session, we look at the merciful gaze of Jesus on the tired and exhausted crowd, and we ask how who needs our compassion today, and how can we respond? (Matthew 15:32-37) **Available for use in summer 2016**

Session Six: The Kingdom of Mercy

'When did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?' Mt 25:37

The Year of Mercy closes at the end of November, on the Feast of Christ the King. In this session, which could be held at any time in the last couple of months of this Holy Year, we look at the merciful kingship of Christ, and how he calls us to live mercifully. The lens for our reflection is found at the end of Matthew's gospel, 'When did we see you Lord' 'When you did this to one of the least of my little ones, you did it to me' Matthew 25:31-19) (MV5, MV 15) **Available for use from September 2016 October to 20th November, Feast of Christ the King, when the Holy Year concludes.**

To download the 'Light for the Path' Session Guides and for additional information and resources please visit catholicfamily.org.uk or email Caroline Dollard MFL Project Office Catechesis Development Worker at caroline.dollard@cbcew.org.uk



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How to Guide: Lectio Divina

'Through this simple way of praying with scripture, anyone of any age can go deeper in their relationships with God, moving from 'head' and 'history' and 2000 years ago, across time and space, to the present moment, and God speaking into 'my heart' and finding God present in 'my story'

A simple way of praying with the Scripture together

'We listen' is the most important section of each 'Light for the Path' Session. Here is a **simple 7-step way of praying with the Scripture together**, commonly known by its Latin name '*lectio divina*' (literally, 'reading with God' or 'divine reading'). Through this way of praying, we meet Jesus, present, speaking with us.

The leader helps the process using the guide below

Either use a good children's or Good News Bible, or for the very young, versions of the story that encourage play with the characters, e.g. Godlyplay, Bible Society. To make it easy, we have printed the text in both the adults' and children's Session Handouts.

1. **Get Ready:** at the start of the 'We listen' section, invite a moment of silence. Leader says '**God is with us, and we are with God. Let's listen to God's voice**'. *The Holy Spirit is at work in each person, whatever age.*

2. **Listening with God:** begin to read slowly, and listen carefully – like walking slowly through a garden and noticing things. God is with us in the experience.
3. **After the first reading of the story:** allow a little quiet, and then ask the children/group to go back to the first thing that caught their attention – a word, a picture, a short sentence.... Ask them to stay with that word or phrase or picture, repeating it, or looking at it in their imagination.
4. **Each person shares the ‘word’ or picture that struck them:** the leader invites sharing. No discussion or comments. Just say ‘thank you’ and move on to the next person.
5. **When everyone has shared first time:** read the ‘story’ again, slowly. Again, invite each person to go back to the word or picture that they liked. “Stick with it for a minute or two. This is God speaking to you”.
6. **I wonder:** begin to ask the wondering questions, e.g. “ I wonder.... what it’s like to be in this story?” “What is it saying about our/your family?” Children and young people love to discover the truth for themselves by thinking deeply about it. Encourage questions but don’t always try to answer them.
7. **We respond:** at the end of your ‘We listen’ time, in the last few minutes, you might like to do something creative: play with the story if it’s little ones, or drawing/acting out, helping the children to tell the story themselves and deepen their response. Older ones could lead this with younger ones.