



'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. The six sessions in the 'Light for the Path' resource are as follows:-

Session One: The Tenderness of God's Mercy.

'His mercy extends from generation to generation' Luke 1:50

The Holy Year begins in Advent, with Mary. Using her ancient title, 'Mother of Mercy' we think about her 'Yes' to being chosen as the mother of Jesus (Luke Chapter 1). How do we say 'yes' to being who God chooses us to be? How, like Mary, are we 'bearers of mercy' ourselves? (MV1 and MV24) **Available for use from 8 December 2015**

Session Two: The Doors of mercy

'I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved' 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep' John 10:9

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? Focusing 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

'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him' Luke 15:20

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

'A Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was, and when he saw him, he took pity on him.' Luke 10:33

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

'I have compassion on these people... I do not want to send them away hungry' Mt 15: 32

Jesus receives the mission from the Father to reveal divine love is 'God - love' (1Jn 48,16) 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

'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me' Mt 25:40

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