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## 教宗方濟各致函 說明信徒們如何於慈悲特殊 禧年獲得大赦

**致**我可敬的弟兄  
聖座促進新福傳委員會  
主席菲西凱拉總主教：

慈悲禧年即將於12月8日來臨，值此之際，促使我全神貫注於我認為必須關注及投入的幾個要點，以使慈悲禧年成為所有信徒與天主慈悲相遇的真實時刻。我真心希望慈悲禧年能使人擁有親近天主父活生生的經驗，並親身體會祂的溫柔，進而能堅定每個人的信德，也因此活出更有效的見證。

我最先想到的，是在各教區所有的信徒及到羅馬的朝聖者，他們會體驗到慈悲禧年的恩寵。我希望慈悲禧年的大赦可以使每個人真正的經驗到天主的慈悲——天主父向我們顯示祂的面容，來與我們每個人相遇，祂接納及寬恕每一個人，將我們所犯的罪過完全拋諸腦後。為了能獲得大赦，信徒們必須作簡短的朝聖之旅，前往聖門，即各教區主教所指定的教堂或主教座堂，以及在羅馬的四座宗座聖殿，這是

信徒們的深切渴望及真切悔改的標記。同時，我也特別規定，在有開啟慈悲之門的教堂或朝聖地，或者在傳統上被認定為禧年朝聖地的教堂，也可以獲得大赦。當然，在這重要時刻，首先必須同時參與和好聖事，且以思念天主慈悲的心參與感恩聖祭。在舉行這些聖事時，必須要宣認信仰，並請為我個人祈禱，以及我心中所懷有的意向和為教會及全世界的益處祈禱。

此外，我也考慮到那些因為各種原因而無法前來聖門的人們，尤其是那些病患、老人和獨居的人，他們因為自身條件的限制，不能出門遠行。但他們若接受自己的疾病和苦楚，作為親近上主的經驗，為他們而言，會帶來極大的幫助，因為上主在祂的苦難、死亡和復活的奧蹟中，給人指出了賦予痛苦和孤獨意義的信仰途徑。面對這些考驗，要以信

德和喜樂的望德去生活，同時領聖體、參與彌撒或是團體祈禱，不論是親身參加或是透過各種管道跟方式，都可以獲得慈悲禧年大赦。我也想到坐監的人，他們失去了自由。慈悲禧年就是要給眾人獲得大赦的機會，其中也包括很多下述的人，他們是罪有應得，卻已良心發現，真心渴望重返社會，對社會有所貢獻。願他們全部都能具體地被天主父的慈悲觸動，因為天主父渴望接近最需要祂的寬恕的人。他們在監獄的小聖堂也可以獲得大赦。他們在越過牢房的門檻時，將心思意念和祈禱交託給天主父，這樣為他們而言，就代表跨越聖門；因為天主的慈悲，可以轉變人心，也可以將監獄的鐵條轉變成自由的經驗。

我曾要求教會在這慈悲禧年時刻，重新發現神哀矜與形哀矜所蘊藏的豐富意義。的確，天主慈悲的經

驗，正如耶穌基督親自教導我們的，在具體見證行動上，成為可見的。每當一位信徒親身成就以上其中之一兩個的善工，他就必能獲得慈悲禧年大赦。天父的愛不排斥任何人，因此要下定決心，靠天主的慈悲而活，為獲得完全寬恕的恩寵。這大赦是慈悲禧年的全大赦，我們要以信德、愛德和望德慶祝和善度此慈悲禧年，以結出慈悲禧年本身的果實。

另外，也可以為亡者獲得慈悲禧年大赦。我們藉著他們遺留的信德和愛德的見證與他們緊密相連。當我們在舉行感恩祭紀念他們時，我們就能在諸聖相通功的偉大奧蹟中，為他們祈禱，祈求天父慈悲的面容能將他們從各種罪過中解救出來，並且緊緊擁抱他們，迎接他們進入永恆的福樂。

今日世代最嚴重的問題之一，就是對生命的態度

有所改變。有一種非常普遍和漠不關心的心態，導致我們個人和社會麻木，無法迎接新的生命。有些人只在表面上意識到墮胎的悲劇，似乎並不瞭解此一舉動所帶來的極大危害。相反的，有許多其他人，雖然將墮胎視為一種挫敗的經驗，但卻以為別無選擇。我特別想到所有曾經墮胎過的女子。我清楚知道，有許多情境會導致她們做此決定。我也知道這是一個人生的悲劇和道德的考驗。我曾遇過這麼多的婦女，因為她們曾做出此一難以忍受和痛苦的決定，心中一直帶著這道傷疤。在她們身上曾經所發生的，的確很不公平，然而，只有明白真理，才不至令人失去希望。天主的寬恕絕對不會拒絕給悔罪的人，特別是當她懷著真誠的心，尋求領受告解聖事，為要與天父和好。為此，即使任何成文法則另有規定，我決定授權予所有

司鐸，在慈悲禧年赦免曾犯墮胎罪的婦女，讓所有告罪者，真心懺悔，尋求罪赦，能獲得寬恕。願所有的司鐸作好準備，來完成此重要任務，以真誠的話語接納，又幫助當事人省思所犯的罪過，並指出一條悔改的道路，使她獲得天父真實又慷慨的寬恕——在祂的臨在下，萬物更新。

最後，我要特別考慮一些信徒們，他們因為各種原因，選擇前往部分聖堂，參加由聖庇護十世司鐸兄弟會的司鐸所舉行的各項禮儀。本次慈悲禧年，不排斥任何人。來自不同的地區的幾位主教弟兄們，讓我知悉他們的善意和施行聖事的良好作法，儘管從牧靈的角度上，他們身處在一個並非理想的情況。我希望在不久的將來，我們可以尋得方法，和聖庇護十世司鐸兄弟會的長上，恢復完全的共融。但在此刻，為了該團體信徒的

益處，我規定在慈悲禧年期間，那些尋求聖庇護十世司鐸兄弟會的司鐸舉行和好聖事的信徒們，將有效的及合法的獲得罪過的赦免。

我將此特殊禧年的所有準備工作託付給慈悲之母，祈求她保守，並依恃她的轉求。

教宗方濟各

發自梵蒂岡

2015年9月1日

(主教團祕書處恭譯)



## 內政部表揚宗教團體 天主教會獲獎 榮耀歸於主

內政部一年一度的「宗教團體表揚大會」於9月11日上午10點在新北市府（板橋）多功能集會堂舉行。今年已邁入第39屆，受內政部表揚的有268個宗教團體，報名參加的天主教機構有：新竹教區、臺中教區、嘉義教區、高雄教區、耶穌會、聖母聖修女心會、主顧修女會及主教團祕書處。行政院政務委員蕭家淇及內政部部長陳威仁親自頒授獎牌，感謝得獎的宗教團體對社會和國民的貢獻，並給予政府高度的肯定。

頒獎典禮結束之後，各宗教團體代表被邀請到會場的大餐廳用膳。主教團祕書長陳科神父及鄭萊頤和張舜明兩位騎士——三位都是內政部宗教事務諮詢委員會的委員，被安排與部長坐桌。在用餐時，部長談笑風生，表示特別期待宗教人士能給青

年人正面的精神價值觀，並強調宗教信仰的重要——能安穩人心，因此在國家社會扮演了不取代的角色。

換而言之，主教團及得獎的教區、修會團體在「宗教團體表揚大會」所領受的獎牌，也是台灣地方教會全體的榮譽。教宗方濟各已宣布了2015年12月8日至2016年11月20日為「慈悲禧年」，並呼籲各地的天主子民要宣揚天主父的慈悲，作出具體的慈悲行動。主教團祕書處鼓勵各教區及男女修會團體，為回應教宗新福傳的呼籲，使自己隸屬的信仰團體成為「外展的教會」（《福音的喜樂》20-23），協助台灣地方教會關心弱者、窮人及邊緣人士，將105年度的慈善公益及社會教化事項呈報內政部，將內政部明年給予的榮耀歸於天主。



## 主教團聖經組秘書 帥崇義弟兄榮退

任職主教團教義委員會聖經組秘書帥崇義弟兄，於2015年6月榮退，任職時間長達23年，秘書長陳科神父代表主教團致贈獎座，以表對帥哥長期貢獻的感謝。



左：秘書長致贈帥哥獎座

下：帥哥與主教團同仁合影留念



## 聖經協會沿革及工作

### 聖經組與聖經協會組織之沿革

- 1、梵二大公會議以後，依天主的啓示教義憲章，教廷於1969年成立了「天主教世界聖經協會」，推廣聖經培育普世信友的聖言生活。
  - 2、1974年于斌樞機（中國主教團主席）核示，成立了「中華聖經協會」，推廣全國的讀經的活動（講座、研習、讀經方法等）。
  - 3、1991年主教團成立了「聖經委員會」，由主教負責帶領全國教友團體，推廣讀經活動。並正式指導「中華聖經協會」，為全國性的教友讀經組織。協助各地推廣讀經活動。
  - 4、主教團責成各教區成立「聖經協會」，負責推廣教區讀經工作。
  - 5、目前各教區均有「聖經協會」，因各地教務情況不同，讀經活動也不一樣。但大家都熱心推動讀經廣傳天主聖言。
  - 6、「中華聖經協會」非各教區「聖經協會」之上級單位、乃負責和各地的聯繫工作，以促進各「聖經協會」和其他讀經團體的互動和共融。
- <附註：主教團2007年秋季大會，決議將「聖經委員會」併入「教義委會會」，改設「聖經組」，繼續推廣全國讀經工作。>
- 7、聖經組執行主教交付有關推廣聖經的工作，協助中華聖經協會的活動，並推動各教區聖經協會的成立。

*Misericordiae Vultus*  
**BULL OF INDICTION  
 OF THE EXTRAORDINARY  
 JUBILEE OF MERCY**

**FRANCIS  
 BISHOP OF ROME  
 SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD  
 TO ALL WHO READ THIS LETTER  
 GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE**

1. Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him. The Father, "rich in mercy" (1 Eph 2:4), after having revealed his name to Moses as "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6), has never ceased to show, in various ways throughout history, his divine nature. In the "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), 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. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. Jn 14:9). Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person<sup>1</sup> reveals the mercy of God.

2. We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 4.

Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

3. At times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives. For this reason I have proclaimed an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy as a special time for the Church, a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective.

The Holy Year will open on 8 December 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. This liturgical feast day recalls God's action from the very beginning of the history of mankind. After the sin of Adam and Eve, God did not wish to leave humanity alone in the throes of evil. And so he turned his gaze to Mary, holy and immaculate in love (cf. Eph 1:4), choosing her to be the Mother of man's Redeemer. When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive. I will have the joy of opening the Holy Door on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. On that day, the Holy Door will become a Door of Mercy through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope.

On the following Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent, the Holy Door of the Cathedral of Rome – that is, the Basilica of Saint John Lateran – will be opened. In the following weeks, the Holy Doors of the other Papal Basilicas will be opened. On the same Sunday, I will announce that in every local church, at the cathedral – the mother church of the faithful in any particular area – or, alternatively, at the co-cathedral or another church of special significance, a Door of Mercy will be opened for the duration of the Holy Year. At the discretion of the local ordinary, a similar door may be opened at any shrine frequented by large groups of pilgrims, since visits to these holy sites are

so often grace-filled moments, as people discover a path to conversion. Every Particular Church, therefore, will be directly involved in living out this Holy Year as an extraordinary moment of grace and spiritual renewal. Thus the Jubilee will be celebrated both in Rome and in the Particular Churches as a visible sign of the Church's universal communion.

4. I have chosen the date of 8 December because of its rich meaning in the recent history of the Church. In fact, I will open the Holy Door on the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning. It was a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father's love in the world.

We recall the poignant words of Saint John XXIII when, opening the Council, he indicated the path to follow: "Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity... The Catholic Church, as she holds high the torch of Catholic truth at this Ecumenical Council, wants to show herself a loving mother to all; patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness toward her separated children"<sup>2</sup>. Blessed Paul VI spoke in a similar vein at the closing of the Council: "We prefer to point out how charity has been the principal religious feature of this Council... the old story of the Good Samaritan has been the model of the spirituality of the Council... a wave of affection and admiration flowed from the Council over the modern world of humanity. Errors

<sup>2</sup> Speech at the Final Public Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 7 December 1965.

were condemned, indeed, because charity demanded this no less than did truth, but for individuals themselves there was only admonition, respect and love. Instead of depressing diagnoses, encouraging remedies; instead of direful predictions, messages of trust issued from the Council to the present-day world. The modern world's values were not only respected but honoured, its efforts approved, its aspirations purified and blessed... Another point we must stress is this: all this rich teaching is channelled in one direction, the service of mankind, of every condition, in every weakness and need"<sup>3</sup>.

With these sentiments of gratitude for everything the Church has received, and with a sense of responsibility for the task that lies ahead, we shall cross the threshold of the Holy Door fully confident that the strength of the Risen Lord, who constantly supports us on our pilgrim way, will sustain us. May the Holy Spirit, who guides the steps of believers in cooperating with the work of salvation wrought by Christ, lead the way and support the People of God so that they may contemplate the face of mercy.<sup>4</sup>

5. The Jubilee year will close with the liturgical Solemnity of Christ the King on 20 November 2016. On that day, as we seal the Holy Door, we shall be filled, above all, with a sense of gratitude and thanksgiving to the Most Holy Trinity for having granted us an extraordinary time of grace. We will entrust the life of the Church, all humanity, and the entire cosmos to the Lordship of Christ, asking him to pour out his mercy upon us like the morning dew, so that everyone may work together to build a brighter future. How much I desire that the year to come will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God! May the balm of mercy reach everyone, both believers

<sup>3</sup> Opening Address of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, 11 October 1962, 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 16; Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 15.

and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present in our midst!

6. “It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way”.<sup>5</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas’ words show that God’s mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence. For this reason the liturgy, in one of its most ancient collects, has us pray: “O God, who reveal your power above all in your mercy and forgiveness ...”<sup>6</sup> Throughout the history of humanity, God will always be the One who is present, close, provident, holy, and merciful.

“Patient and merciful.” These words often go together in the Old Testament to describe God’s nature. His being merciful is concretely demonstrated in his many actions throughout the history of salvation where his goodness prevails over punishment and destruction. In a special way the Psalms bring to the fore the grandeur of his merciful action: “He forgives all your iniquity, he heals all your diseases, he redeems your life from the pit, he crowns you with steadfast love and mercy” (Ps 103:3-4). Another psalm, in an even more explicit way, attests to the concrete signs of his mercy: “He executes justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin” (Ps 146:7-9). Here are some other expressions of the Psalmist: “He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds... The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, he casts the wicked to the ground” (Ps 147:3, 6). In short, the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very

<sup>5</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 30. a. 4.

<sup>6</sup> XXVI Sunday in Ordinary Time. This Collect already appears in the eighth century among the euchological texts of the Gelasian Sacramentary (1198).

depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a “visceral” love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy.

“For his mercy endures forever.” This is the refrain that repeats after each verse in Psalm 136 as it narrates the history of God’s revelation. By virtue of mercy, all the events of the Old Testament are replete with profound salvific import. Mercy renders God’s history with Israel a history of salvation. To repeat continually “for his mercy endures forever,” as the psalm does, seems to break through the dimensions of space and time, inserting everything into the eternal mystery of love. It is as if to say that not only in history, but for all eternity man will always be under the merciful gaze of the Father. It is no accident that the people of Israel wanted to include this psalm – the “Great 7. Hallel,” as it is called – in its most important liturgical feast days.

Before his Passion, Jesus prayed with this psalm of mercy. Matthew attests to this in his Gospel when he says that, “when they had sung a hymn” (26:30), Jesus and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives. While he was instituting the Eucharist as an everlasting memorial of himself and his paschal sacrifice, he symbolically placed this supreme act of revelation in the light of his mercy. Within the very same context of mercy, Jesus entered upon his passion and death, conscious of the great mystery of love that he would consummate on the Cross. Knowing that Jesus himself prayed this psalm makes it even more important for us as Christians, challenging us to take up the refrain in our daily lives by praying these words of praise: “for his mercy endures forever.”

With our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze, we experience the love of the Most Holy Trinity. The mission Jesus received from the Father was that of revealing the mystery of divine love in its fullness. “God is love” ( 8.1 Jn 4:8,16), John affirms for the first and only time in all of Holy Scripture. This love has now been made visible and tangible in



Jesus' entire life. His person is nothing but love, a love given gratuitously. The relationships he forms with the people who approach him manifest something entirely unique and unrepeatable. The signs he works, especially in favour of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion.

Jesus, seeing the crowds of people who followed him, realized that they were tired and exhausted, lost and without a guide, and he felt deep compassion for them (cf. Mt 9:36). On the basis of this compassionate love he healed the sick who were presented to him (cf. Mt 14:14), and with just a few loaves of bread and fish he satisfied the enormous crowd (cf. Mt 15:37). What moved Jesus in all of these situations was nothing other than mercy, with which he read the hearts of those he encountered and responded to their deepest need. When he came upon the widow of Nain taking her son out for burial, he felt great compassion for the immense suffering of this grieving mother, and he gave back her son by raising him from the dead (cf. Lk 7:15). After freeing the demoniac in the country of the Gerasenes, Jesus entrusted him with this mission: "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" (Mk 5:19). The calling of Matthew is also presented within the context of mercy. Passing by the tax collector's booth, Jesus looked intently at Matthew. It was a look full of mercy that forgave the sins of that man, a sinner and a tax collector, whom Jesus chose – against the hesitation of the disciples – to become one of the Twelve. Saint Bede the Venerable, commenting on this Gospel passage, wrote that Jesus looked upon Matthew with merciful love and chose him: *miserando atque eligendo*.<sup>[7]</sup> This expression impressed me so much that I chose it for my episcopal motto.

9. In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and

overcome rejection with compassion and mercy. We know these parables well, three in particular: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the father with two sons (cf. Lk 15:1-32). In these parables, God is always presented as full of joy, especially when he pardons. In them we find the core of the Gospel and of our faith, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon.

From another parable, we cull an important teaching for our Christian lives. In reply to Peter's question about how many times it is necessary to forgive, Jesus says: "I do not say seven times, but seventy times seven times" (Mt 18:22). He then goes on to tell the parable of the "ruthless servant," who, called by his master to return a huge amount, begs him on his knees for mercy. His master cancels his debt. But he then meets a fellow servant who owes him a few cents and who in turn begs on his knees for mercy, but the first servant refuses his request and throws him into jail. When the master hears of the matter, he becomes infuriated and, summoning the first servant back to him, says, "Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (Mt 18:33). Jesus concludes, "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (Mt 18:35).

This parable contains a profound teaching for all of us. Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are. In short, we are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us. Pardoning offences becomes the clearest expression of merciful love, and for us Christians it is an imperative from which we cannot excuse ourselves. At times how hard it seems to forgive! And yet pardon is the instrument placed into our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart. To let go of anger, wrath, violence, and revenge are necessary conditions to living joyfully. Let us therefore heed the Apostle's exhortation: "Do not let the sun go down

on your anger” (Eph 4:26). Above all, let us listen to the words of Jesus who made mercy an ideal of life and a criterion for the credibility of our faith: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5:7): the beatitude to which we should particularly aspire in this Holy Year.

As we can see in Sacred Scripture, mercy is a key word that indicates God’s action towards us. He 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: intentions, attitudes, and behaviours that are shown in daily living. 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.

10. Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love. The Church “has an endless desire to show mercy”. [8] Perhaps we have long since forgotten how to show and live the way of mercy. The temptation, on the one hand, to focus exclusively on justice made us forget that this is only the first, albeit necessary and indispensable step. But the Church needs to go beyond and strive for a higher and more important goal. On the other hand, sad to say, we must admit that the practice of mercy is waning in the wider culture. In some cases the word seems to have dropped out of use. However, without a witness to mercy, life becomes fruitless and sterile, as if sequestered in a barren desert. The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. Mercy is the force

that reawakens us to new life and instils in us the courage to look to the future with hope.

11. Let us not forget the great teaching offered by Saint John Paul II in his second Encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, which at the time came unexpectedly, its theme catching many by surprise. There are two passages in particular to which I would like to draw attention. First, Saint John Paul II highlighted the fact that we had forgotten the theme of mercy in today’s cultural milieu: “The present-day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and the concept of ‘mercy’ seem to cause uneasiness in man, who, thanks to the enormous development of science and technology, never before known in history, has become the master of the earth and has subdued and dominated it (cf. Gen 1:28). This dominion over the earth, sometimes understood in a one-sided and superficial way, seems to have no room for mercy... And this is why, in the situation of the Church and the world today, many individuals and groups guided by a lively sense of faith are turning, I would say almost spontaneously, to the mercy of God”.[9]

Furthermore, Saint John Paul II pushed for a more urgent proclamation and witness to mercy in the contemporary world: “It is dictated by love for man, for all that is human and which, according to the intuitions of many of our contemporaries, is threatened by an immense danger. The mystery of Christ... obliges me to proclaim mercy as God’s merciful love, revealed in that same mystery of Christ. It likewise obliges me to have recourse to that mercy and to beg for it at this difficult, critical phase of the history of the Church and of the world”.[10] This teaching is more pertinent than ever and deserves to be taken up once again in this Holy Year. Let us listen to his words once more: “The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy – the most stupendous

attribute of the Creator and of the Redeemer – and when she brings people close to the sources of the Saviour’s mercy, of which she is the trustee and dispenser”.[11]

12. The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person. The Spouse of Christ must pattern her behaviour after the Son of God who went out to everyone without exception. In the present day, as the Church is charged with the task of the new evangelization, the theme of mercy needs to be proposed again and again with new enthusiasm and renewed pastoral action. It is absolutely essential for the Church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy. Her language and her gestures must transmit mercy, so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father.

The Church’s first truth is the love of Christ. The Church makes herself a servant of this love and mediates it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of oneself. Consequently, wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident. In our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy.

13. We want to live this Jubilee Year in light of the Lord’s words: Merciful like the Father. The Evangelist reminds us of the teaching of Jesus who says, “Be merciful just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). It is a programme of life as demanding as it is rich with joy and peace. Jesus’s command is directed to anyone willing to listen to his voice (cf. Lk 6:27). In order to be capable of mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God’s mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle.

14. The practice of pilgrimage has a special place in the Holy Year, because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life. Life itself is a pilgrimage, and the human being is a viator, a pilgrim travelling along the road, making his way to the desired destination. Similarly, to reach the Holy Door in Rome or in any other place in the world, everyone, each according to his or her ability, will have to make a pilgrimage. This will be a sign that mercy is also a goal to reach and requires dedication and sacrifice. May pilgrimage be an impetus to conversion: by crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, we will find the strength to embrace God’s mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as the Father has been with us.

The Lord Jesus shows us the steps of the pilgrimage to attain our goal: “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back” (Lk 6:37-38). The Lord asks us above all not to judge and not to condemn. If anyone wishes to avoid God’s judgement, he should not make himself the judge of his brother or sister. Human beings, whenever they judge, look no farther than the surface, whereas the Father looks into the very depths of the soul. How much harm words do when they are motivated by feelings of jealousy and envy! To speak ill of others puts them in a bad light, undermines their reputation and leaves them prey to the whims of gossip. To refrain from judgement and condemnation means, in a positive sense, to know how to accept the good in every person and to spare him any suffering that might be caused by our partial judgment, our presumption to know everything about him. But this is still not sufficient to express mercy. Jesus asks us also to forgive and to give. To be instruments of mercy because it was we who first received mercy from God. To be generous with others, knowing that God showers his goodness upon us with immense generosity.

Merciful like the Father, therefore, is the “motto” of this Holy Year. In mercy, we find proof of how God loves us. He gives his entire self, always, freely, asking nothing in return. He comes to our aid whenever we call upon him. What a beautiful thing that the Church begins her daily prayer with the words, “O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me” (Ps 70:2)! The assistance we ask for is already the first step of God’s mercy toward us. He comes to assist us in our weakness. And his help consists in helping us accept his presence and closeness to us. Day after day, touched by his compassion, we also can become compassionate towards others.

15. In this Holy Year, we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes which modern society itself creates. How many uncertain and painful situations there are in the world today! How many are the wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich! During this Jubilee, the Church will be called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care. Let us not fall into humiliating indifference or a monotonous routine that prevents us from discovering what is new! Let us ward off destructive cynicism! Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!

It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And

let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God’s mercy. Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead.

We cannot escape the Lord’s words to us, and they will serve as the criteria upon which we will be judged: whether we have fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked, or spent time with the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-45). Moreover, we will be asked if we have helped others to escape the doubt that causes them to fall into despair and which is often a source of loneliness; if we have helped to overcome the ignorance in which millions of people live, especially children deprived of the necessary means to free them from the bonds of poverty; if we have been close to the lonely and afflicted; if we have forgiven those who have offended us and have rejected all forms of anger and hate that lead to violence; if we have had the kind of patience God shows, who is so patient with us; and if we have commended our brothers and sisters to the Lord in prayer. In each of these “little ones,” Christ himself is present. His flesh becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us. Let us not forget the words of Saint John of the Cross: “as we prepare to leave this life, we will be judged on the basis of love”.<sup>[12]</sup>

16. In the Gospel of Luke, we find another important element that will help us live the Jubilee with faith. Luke writes that Jesus, on the Sabbath, went back to Nazareth and, as was his custom, entered the synagogue.

They called upon him to read the Scripture and to comment on it. The passage was from the Book of Isaiah where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to those in captivity; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” ( Is 61:1-2). A “year of the Lord’s favour” or “mercy”: this is what the Lord proclaimed and this is what we wish to live now. This Holy Year will bring to the fore the richness of Jesus’ mission echoed in the words of the prophet: to bring a word and gesture of consolation to the poor, to proclaim liberty to those bound by new forms of slavery in modern society, to restore sight to those who can see no more because they are caught up in themselves, to restore dignity to all those from whom it has been robbed. The preaching of Jesus is made visible once more in the response of faith which Christians are called to offer by their witness. May the words of the Apostle accompany us: he who does acts of mercy, let him do them with cheerfulness (cf. Rom 12:8).

17. The season of Lent during this Jubilee Year should also be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God’s mercy. How many pages of Sacred Scripture are appropriate for meditation during the weeks of Lent to help us rediscover the merciful face of the Father! We can repeat the words of the prophet Micah and make them our own: You, O Lord, are a God who takes away iniquity and pardons sin, who does not hold your anger forever, but are pleased to show mercy. You, Lord, will return to us and have pity on your people. You will trample down our sins and toss them into the depths of the sea (cf. 7:18-19).

The pages of the prophet Isaiah can also be meditated upon concretely during this season of prayer, fasting, and works of charity: “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs

of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your desire with good things, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” (58:6-11).

The initiative of “24 Hours for the Lord,” to be celebrated on the Friday and Saturday preceding the Fourth Week of Lent, should be implemented in every diocese. So many people, including young people, are returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation; through this experience they are rediscovering a path back to the Lord, living a moment of intense prayer and finding meaning in their lives. Let us place the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the centre once more in such a way that it will enable people to touch the grandeur of God’s mercy with their own hands. For every penitent, it will be a source of true interior peace.

I will never tire of insisting that confessors be authentic signs of the Father’s mercy. We do not become good confessors automatically. We become good confessors when, above all, we allow ourselves to be penitents in search of his mercy. Let us never forget that to be confessors means to participate in the very mission of Jesus to be a concrete sign of the constancy of divine love that pardons and saves. We priests have received the gift of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins, and we are

responsible for this. None of us wields power over this Sacrament; rather, we are faithful servants of God's mercy through it. Every confessor must accept the faithful as the father in the parable of the prodigal son: a father who runs out to meet his son despite the fact that he has squandered away his inheritance. Confessors are called to embrace the repentant son who comes back home and to express the joy of having him back again. Let us never tire of also going out to the other son who stands outside, incapable of rejoicing, in order to explain to him that his judgement is severe and unjust and meaningless in light of the father's boundless mercy. May confessors not ask useless questions, but like the father in the parable, interrupt the speech prepared ahead of time by the prodigal son, so that confessors will learn to accept the plea for help and mercy pouring from the heart of every penitent. In short, confessors are called to be a sign of the primacy of mercy always, everywhere, and in every situation, no matter what.

18. During Lent of this Holy Year, I intend to send out Missionaries of Mercy. They will be a sign of the Church's maternal solicitude for the People of God, enabling them to enter the profound richness of this mystery so fundamental to the faith. There will be priests to whom I will grant the authority to pardon even those sins reserved to the Holy See, so that the breadth of their mandate as confessors will be even clearer. They will be, above all, living signs of the Father's readiness to welcome those in search of his pardon. They will be missionaries of mercy because they will be facilitators of a truly human encounter, a source of liberation, rich with responsibility for overcoming obstacles and taking up the new life of Baptism again. They will be led in their mission by the words of the Apostle: "For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all" (Rom 11:32). Everyone, in fact, without exception, is called to embrace the call to mercy. May these Missionaries live this call with the assurance that they can fix their eyes on Jesus, "the merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God" (Heb 2:17).

I ask my brother Bishops to invite and welcome these Missionaries so that they can be, above all, persuasive preachers of mercy. May individual dioceses organize "missions to the people" in such a way that these Missionaries may be heralds of joy and forgiveness. Bishops are asked to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with their people so that the time of grace made possible by the Jubilee year makes it possible for many of God's sons and daughters to take up once again the journey to the Father's house. May pastors, especially during the liturgical season of Lent, be diligent in calling back the faithful "to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace" (Heb 4:16).

19. May the message of mercy reach everyone, and may no one be indifferent to the call to experience mercy. I direct this invitation to conversion even more fervently to those whose behaviour distances them from the grace of God. I particularly have in mind men and women belonging to criminal organizations of any kind. For their own good, I beg them to change their lives. I ask them this in the name of the Son of God who, though rejecting sin, never rejected the sinner. Do not fall into the terrible trap of thinking that life depends on money and that, in comparison with money, anything else is devoid of value or dignity. This is nothing but an illusion! We cannot take money with us into the life beyond. Money does not bring us happiness. Violence inflicted for the sake of amassing riches soaked in blood makes one neither powerful nor immortal. Everyone, sooner or later, will be subject to God's judgment, from which no one can escape.

The same invitation is extended to those who either perpetrate or participate in corruption. This festering wound is a grave sin that cries out to heaven for vengeance, because it threatens the very foundations of personal and social life. Corruption prevents us from looking to the future with hope, because its tyrannical greed shatters the plans of the weak and tramples upon the poorest of the poor. It is an evil that embeds itself into

the actions of everyday life and spreads, causing great public scandal. Corruption is a sinful hardening of the heart that replaces God with the illusion that money is a form of power. It is a work of darkness, fed by suspicion and intrigue. *Corruptio optimi pessima*, saint Gregory the Great said with good reason, affirming that no one can think himself immune from this temptation. If we want to drive it out from personal and social life, we need prudence, vigilance, loyalty, transparency, together with the courage to denounce any wrongdoing. If it is not combated openly, sooner or later everyone will become an accomplice to it, and it will end up destroying our very existence.

This is the opportune moment to change our lives! This is the time to allow our hearts to be touched! When faced with evil deeds, even in the face of serious crimes, it is the time to listen to the cry of innocent people who are deprived of their property, their dignity, their feelings, and even their very lives. To stick to the way of evil will only leave one deluded and sad. True life is something entirely different. God never tires of reaching out to us. He is always ready to listen, as I am too, along with my brother bishops and priests. All one needs to do is to accept the invitation to conversion and submit oneself to justice during this special time of mercy offered by the Church.

20. It would not be out of place at this point to recall the relationship between justice and mercy. These are not two contradictory realities, but two dimensions of a single reality that unfolds progressively until it culminates in the fullness of love. Justice is a fundamental concept for civil society, which is meant to be governed by the rule of law. Justice is also understood as that which is rightly due to each individual. In the Bible, there are many references to divine justice and to God as “judge”. In these passages, justice is understood as the full observance of the Law and the behaviour of every good Israelite in conformity with God’s commandments. Such a vision, however, has not infrequently led to

legalism by distorting the original meaning of justice and obscuring its profound value. To overcome this legalistic perspective, we need to recall that in Sacred Scripture, justice is conceived essentially as the faithful abandonment of oneself to God’s will.

For his part, Jesus speaks several times of the importance of faith over and above the observance of the law. It is in this sense that we must understand his words when, reclining at table with Matthew and other tax collectors and sinners, he says to the Pharisees raising objections to him, “Go and learn the meaning of ‘I desire mercy not sacrifice’. I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mt 9:13). Faced with a vision of justice as the mere observance of the law that judges people simply by dividing them into two groups – the just and sinners – Jesus is bent on revealing the great gift of mercy that searches out sinners and offers them pardon and salvation. One can see why, on the basis of such a liberating vision of mercy as a source of new life, Jesus was rejected by the Pharisees and the other teachers of the law. In an attempt to remain faithful to the law, they merely placed burdens on the shoulders of others and undermined the Father’s mercy. The appeal to a faithful observance of the law must not prevent attention from being given to matters that touch upon the dignity of the person.

The appeal Jesus makes to the text from the book of the prophet Hosea – “I desire love and not sacrifice” (6:6) – is important in this regard. Jesus affirms that, from that time onward, the rule of life for his disciples must place mercy at the centre, as Jesus himself demonstrated by sharing meals with sinners. Mercy, once again, is revealed as a fundamental aspect of Jesus’ mission. This is truly challenging to his hearers, who would draw the line at a formal respect for the law. Jesus, on the other hand, goes beyond the law; the company he keeps with those the law considers sinners makes us realize the depth of his mercy.

The Apostle Paul makes a similar journey. Prior to meeting Jesus on the

road to Damascus, he dedicated his life to pursuing the justice of the law with zeal (cf. Phil 3:6). His conversion to Christ led him to turn that vision upside down, to the point that he would write to the Galatians: “We have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified” (2:16).

Paul’s understanding of justice changes radically. He now places faith first, not justice. Salvation comes not through the observance of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, who in his death and resurrection brings salvation together with a mercy that justifies. God’s justice now becomes the liberating force for those oppressed by slavery to sin and its consequences. God’s justice is his mercy (cf. Ps 51:11-16).

Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God’s way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe. The experience of the prophet Hosea can help us see the way in which mercy surpasses justice. The era in which the prophet lived was one of the most dramatic in the history of the Jewish people. The kingdom was tottering on the edge of destruction; the people had not remained faithful to the covenant; they had wandered from God and lost the faith of their forefathers. According to human logic, it seems reasonable for God to think of rejecting an unfaithful people; they had not observed their pact with God and therefore deserved just punishment: in other words, exile. The prophet’s words attest to this: 21. “They shall not return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me” (Hos 11:5). And yet, after this invocation of justice, the prophet radically changes his speech and reveals the true face of God: “How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! How can I make you like Admah! How can I treat you like Zeboiim! My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy

Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy” (11:8-9). Saint Augustine, almost as if he were commenting on these words of the prophet, says: “It is easier for God to hold back anger than mercy”.<sup>[13]</sup> And so it is. God’s anger lasts but a moment, his mercy forever.

If God limited himself to only justice, he would cease to be God, and would instead be like human beings who ask merely that the law be respected. But mere justice is not enough. Experience shows that an appeal to justice alone will result in its destruction. This is why God goes beyond justice with his mercy and forgiveness. Yet this does not mean that justice should be devalued or rendered superfluous. On the contrary: anyone who makes a mistake must pay the price. However, this is just the beginning of conversion, not its end, because one begins to feel the tenderness and mercy of God. God does not deny justice. He rather envelopes it and surpasses it with an even greater event in which we experience love as the foundation of true justice. We must pay close attention to what Saint Paul says if we want to avoid making the same mistake for which he reproaches the Jews of his time: “For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified” (Rom 10:3-4). God’s justice is his mercy given to everyone as a grace that flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus the Cross of Christ is God’s judgement on all of us and on the whole world, because through it he offers us the certitude of love and new life.

A Jubilee also entails the granting of 22. indulgences. This practice will acquire an even more important meaning in the Holy Year of Mercy. God’s forgiveness knows no bounds. In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God makes even more evident his love and its power to destroy all human sin. Reconciliation with God is made possible through the paschal



mystery and the mediation of the Church. Thus God is always ready to forgive, and he never tires of forgiving in ways that are continually new and surprising. Nevertheless, all of us know well the experience of sin. We know that we are called to perfection (cf. Mt 5:48), yet we feel the heavy burden of sin. Though we feel the transforming power of grace, we also feel the effects of sin typical of our fallen state. Despite being forgiven, the conflicting consequences of our sins remain. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God forgives our sins, which he truly blots out; and yet sin leaves a negative effect on the way we think and act. But the mercy of God is stronger even than this. It becomes indulgence on the part of the Father who, through the Bride of Christ, his Church, reaches the pardoned sinner and frees him from every residue left by the consequences of sin, enabling him to act with charity, to grow in love rather than to fall back into sin.

The Church lives within the communion of the saints. In the Eucharist, this communion, which is a gift from God, becomes a spiritual union binding us to the saints and blessed ones whose number is beyond counting (cf. Rev 7:4). Their holiness comes to the aid of our weakness in a way that enables the Church, with her maternal prayers and her way of life, to fortify the weakness of some with the strength of others. Hence, to live the indulgence of the Holy Year means to approach the Father's mercy with the certainty that his forgiveness extends to the entire life of the believer. To gain an indulgence is to experience the holiness of the Church, who bestows upon all the fruits of Christ's redemption, so that God's love and forgiveness may extend everywhere. Let us live this Jubilee intensely, begging the Father to forgive our sins and to bathe us in his merciful "indulgence."

There is an aspect of mercy that goes beyond the confines of the Church. It relates us to Judaism and Islam, both of which consider mercy to be one of God's most important attributes. Israel was the first to receive this

revelation which continues in history as the source of an inexhaustible richness meant to be shared with all mankind. As we have seen, the pages of the Old Testament are steeped in mercy, because they narrate the works that the Lord performed in favour of his people at the most trying moments of their history. Among the privileged names that Islam attributes to the Creator are "Merciful and Kind". This invocation is often on the lips of faithful Muslims who feel themselves accompanied and sustained by mercy in their daily weakness. They too believe that no one can place a limit on divine mercy because its doors are always open. 23.

I trust that this Jubilee year celebrating the mercy of God will foster an encounter with these religions and with other noble religious traditions; may it open us to even more fervent dialogue so that we might know and understand one another better; may it eliminate every form of closed-mindedness and disrespect, and drive out every form of violence and discrimination.

My thoughts now turn to the Mother of Mercy. May the sweetness of her countenance watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God's tenderness. No one has penetrated the profound mystery of the incarnation like Mary. Her entire life was patterned after the presence of mercy made flesh. The Mother of the Crucified and Risen One has entered the sanctuary of divine mercy because she participated intimately in the mystery of His love. 24.

Chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God, Mary, from the outset, was prepared by the love of God to be the Ark of the Covenant between God and man. She treasured divine mercy in her heart in perfect harmony with her Son Jesus. Her hymn of praise, sung at the threshold of the home of Elizabeth, was dedicated to the mercy of God which extends from "generation to generation" (Lk 1:50). We too were included in those prophetic words of the Virgin Mary. This will be a source of comfort and strength to us as we cross the threshold of the Holy Year to experience the

fruits of divine mercy.

At the foot of the Cross, Mary, together with John, the disciple of love, witnessed the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus. This supreme expression of mercy towards those who crucified him show us the point to which the mercy of God can reach. Mary attests that the mercy of the Son of God knows no bounds and extends to everyone, without exception. Let us address her in the words of the *Salve Regina*, a prayer ever ancient and ever new, so that she may never tire of turning her merciful eyes upon us, and make us worthy to contemplate the face of mercy, her Son Jesus.

Our prayer also extends to the saints and blessed ones who made divine mercy their mission in life. I think especially of the great apostle of mercy, Saint Faustina Kowalska. May she, who was called to enter the depths of divine mercy, intercede for us and obtain for us the grace of living and walking always according to the mercy of God and with an unwavering trust in his love.

I present, therefore, this Extraordinary Jubilee Year dedicated to living out in our daily lives the mercy which the Father constantly extends to all of us. In this Jubilee Year, let us allow God to surprise us. He never tires of casting open the doors of his heart and of repeating that he loves us and wants to share his love with us. The Church feels the urgent need to proclaim God's mercy. Her life is authentic and credible only when she becomes a convincing herald of mercy. She knows that her primary task, especially at a moment full of great hopes and signs of contradiction, is to introduce everyone to the great mystery of God's mercy by contemplating the face of Christ. The Church is called above all to be a credible witness to mercy, professing it and living it as the core of the revelation of Jesus Christ. From the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God, the great river of mercy wells up and overflows unceasingly. It is a spring that will never run dry, no matter how many people draw from it. Every time someone is in need, he or she can approach it, because the

mercy of God never ends. The profundity of the mystery surrounding it is as inexhaustible as the richness which springs up from it. 25.

In this Jubilee Year, may the Church echo the word of God that resounds strong and clear as a message and a sign of pardon, strength, aid, and love. May she never tire of extending mercy, and be ever patient in offering compassion and comfort. May the Church become the voice of every man and woman, and repeat confidently without end: "Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old" (Ps 25:6).

*Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 11 April, the Vigil of the Second Sunday of Easter, or the Sunday of Divine Mercy, in the year of our Lord 2015, the third of my Pontificate.*

## FRANCISCUS

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[7]Cf. Homily 22: CCL, 122, 149-151.

[8]Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24.

[9]No. 2.

[10]Saint John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, 15.

[11]Ibid., 13.

[12] *Words of Light and Love*, 57.

[13] *Homilies on the Psalms*, 76, 11.

## LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS ACCORDING TO WHICH AN INDULGENCE IS GRANTED TO THE FAITHFUL ON THE OCCASION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

With the approach of the *Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy* I would like to focus on several points which I believe require attention to enable the celebration of the Holy Year to be for all believers a true moment of encounter with the mercy of God. It is indeed my wish that the Jubilee be a living experience of the closeness of the Father, whose tenderness is almost tangible, so that the faith of every believer may be strengthened and thus testimony to it be ever more effective.

My thought first of all goes to all the faithful who, whether in individual Dioceses or as pilgrims to Rome, will experience the grace of the Jubilee. I wish that the Jubilee Indulgence may reach each one as a genuine experience of God's mercy, which comes to meet each person in the Face of the Father who welcomes and forgives, forgetting completely the sin committed. To experience and obtain the Indulgence, the faithful are called to make a brief pilgrimage to the Holy Door, open in every Cathedral or in the churches designated by the Diocesan Bishop, and in the four Papal Basilicas in Rome, as a sign of the deep desire for true conversion. Likewise, I dispose that the Indulgence may be obtained in the Shrines in which the Door of Mercy is open and in the churches which traditionally are identified as Jubilee Churches. It is important that this moment be linked, first and foremost, to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with a reflection on mercy. It will be necessary to accompany these celebrations with the profession of faith and with prayer for me and for the intentions that I bear in my heart for the good of the Church and of the entire world.



Additionally, I am thinking of those for whom, for various reasons, it will be impossible to enter the Holy Door, particularly the sick and people who are elderly and alone, often confined to the home. For them it will be of great help to live their sickness and suffering as an experience of closeness to the Lord who in the mystery of his Passion, death and Resurrection indicates the royal road which gives meaning to pain and loneliness. Living with faith and joyful hope this moment of trial, receiving communion or attending Holy Mass and community prayer, even through the various means of communication, will be for them the means of obtaining the Jubilee Indulgence. My thoughts also turn to those incarcerated, whose freedom is limited. The Jubilee Year has always constituted an opportunity for great amnesty, which is intended to include the many people who, despite deserving punishment, have become conscious of the injustice they worked and sincerely wish to re-enter society and make their honest contribution to it. May they all be touched in a tangible way by the mercy of the Father who wants to be close to those who have the greatest need of his forgiveness. They may obtain

the Indulgence in the chapels of the prisons. May the gesture of directing their thought and prayer to the Father each time they cross the threshold of their cell signify for them their passage through the Holy Door, because the mercy of God is able to transform hearts, and is also able to transform bars into an experience of freedom.

I have asked the Church in this Jubilee Year to rediscover the richness encompassed by the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The experience of mercy, indeed, becomes visible in the witness of concrete signs as Jesus himself taught us. Each time that one of the faithful personally performs one or more of these actions, he or she shall surely obtain the Jubilee Indulgence. Hence the commitment to live by mercy so as to obtain the grace of complete and exhaustive forgiveness by the power of the love of the Father who excludes no one. The Jubilee Indulgence is thus full, the fruit of the very event which is to be celebrated and experienced with faith, hope and charity.

Furthermore, the Jubilee Indulgence can also be obtained for the deceased. We are bound to them by the witness of faith and charity that they have left us. Thus, as we remember them in the Eucharistic celebration, thus we can, in the great mystery of the Communion of Saints, pray for them, that the merciful Face of the Father free them of every remnant of fault and strongly embrace them in the unending beatitude.

One of the serious problems of our time is clearly the changed relationship with respect to life. A widespread and insensitive mentality has led to the loss of the proper personal and social sensitivity to welcome new life. The tragedy of abortion is experienced by some with a superficial awareness, as if not realizing the extreme harm that such an act entails. Many others, on the other hand, although experiencing this moment as a defeat, believe they have no other option. I think in particular of all the women who have resorted to abortion. I am well aware of the pressure

that has led them to this decision. I know that it is an existential and moral ordeal. I have met so many women who bear in their heart the scar of this agonizing and painful decision. What has happened is profoundly unjust; yet only understanding the truth of it can enable one not to lose hope. The forgiveness of God cannot be denied to one who has repented, especially when that person approaches the Sacrament of Confession with a sincere heart in order to obtain reconciliation with the Father. For this reason too, I have decided, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, to concede to all priests for the Jubilee Year the discretion to absolve of the sin of abortion those who have procured it and who, with contrite heart, seek forgiveness for it. May priests fulfill this great task by expressing words of genuine welcome combined with a reflection that explains the gravity of the sin committed, besides indicating a path of authentic conversion by which to obtain the true and generous forgiveness of the Father who renews all with his presence.

A final consideration concerns those faithful who for various reasons choose to attend churches officiated by priests of the Fraternity of St Pius X. This Jubilee Year of Mercy excludes no one. From various quarters, several Brother Bishops have told me of their good faith and sacramental practice, combined however with an uneasy situation from the pastoral standpoint. I trust that in the near future solutions may be found to recover full communion with the priests and superiors of the Fraternity. In the meantime, motivated by the need to respond to the good of these faithful, through my own disposition, I establish that those who during the Holy Year of Mercy approach these priests of the Fraternity of St Pius X to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation shall validly and licitly receive the absolution of their sins.

Trusting in the intercession of the Mother of Mercy, I entrust the preparations for this Extraordinary Jubilee Year to her protection.

*From the Vatican, 1 September 2015* **Francis**

## CHINESE REGIONAL BISHOPS' CONFERENCE MINUTES OF THE SPRING 2015 PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Date: April 7-10, 2015 (Tuesday-Friday)
- Venue: CRBC Secretariat Administrative Bldg. (39 An Ju St., Taan District, Taipei 10672)
- Chairman: Most Rev. John Hung, SVD
- Participants: Most Rev. Peter Liu, Most Rev. Bosco Lin, Most Rev. Philip Huang, Most Rev. John Baptist Lee, Most Rev. Thomas Chung, Most Rev. Martin Su, Most Rev. John Tseng
- Guests: Msgr. Paul Russell
- Secretary: Fr. Otfried Chan

### Opening Prayer

#### Address by Msgr. Paul Russell

Msgr. Paul Russell gave his Easter greetings to the bishops and reminded them that as successors to the apostles, their primary task is to bear witness to the risen Christ: the resurrected Jesus who is alive and present in our midst and has become the Savior of all men. The bishops proclaim Easter as truth and goodness, not only in faith, but also as something beautiful – the beauty of our faith is manifested through the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist (see “The Joy of the Gospel” 167). Therefore, the apostolic ministry and the art of celebrating the liturgy (*ars celebrandi*) are closely related and are of great importance (see *Sacramentum Caritatis* 29, 30). Thus, the bishops must ensure that the liturgical celebrations, in

particular the Mass, are done according to the principles and laws of the Church documents “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” and “General Instruction of the Roman Missal.”

The liturgy is fundamental to evangelization. The proper and beautiful celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, especially the Holy Mass, is one of the most effective ways to bring people to an encounter with the resurrected Jesus. Msgr. Russell took the opportunity to give two books to each bishop as gifts: “How Not To Say Mass” and “Ceremonial of Bishops.”

The liturgy, especially a celebration of the Eucharist, is a form of worship to God and is primarily directed to God. The Mass is not a human invention but a gift from God. Therefore, nobody can change anything in the liturgy on his own authority. It is to be received and lived out in one’s daily life. Those who attend Mass, if they participate with humility, should respect the rites of specified liturgical celebrations (e.g. the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday, the Rite of Election on the first Sunday of Lent, baptism on Easter vigil, only commemorate the holy death of Christ on Good Friday and not hold any funeral Mass). Each sacrament is unique and has its own significance (e.g. separate the celebration of the Wedding Mass from the Funeral Mass), the meaning of the Collect of the Mass, the rubrics for the celebrant, the selection of appropriate songs etc. In this way, the Mass can properly and correctly express the message of faith. It becomes a powerful witness for the Church community.

Large liturgical celebrations of the local Church, such as Eucharistic celebrations during the 150th Anniversary of Evangelization in Taiwan, the Closing Ceremony of the Year of Faith, the National Eucharistic Congress, the Pontifical Ministry of His Holiness Pope Francis etc., all were very well celebrated and beautiful. However, the Sunday Masses and the way other Sacraments are celebrated in the parishes need to be reformed in some areas (see *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 14).

Msgr. Paul Russell highlighted the need to improve the following six points:

### 1. Liturgical translations

The CRBC has already translated into Chinese some basic liturgical books and liturgical documents, but the translations of some liturgical books are only partial completed: (Calendarium Romanum; Lectionarium pro missis de B.M.V.; Ordo Professionis Religiosae). Other liturgical books must still be translated (Caeremoniale Episcoporum; Graduale Simplex; Ordo Coronandi Imaginem B.M.V.; Directorium de Pietate Populare et Liturgia; Ordo Benedictionis Abatis et Abatisae).

### 2. Sacred music and sacred art

Protestant and Catholic theologies have differences, thus protestant songs cannot be sung during Eucharistic celebrations. In many churches – including some cathedrals – the design of the liturgical space is inadequate. To make up for the shortage of manpower in dioceses, the CRBC may share resources by forming a national committee for liturgical space design.

### 3. Liturgical formation

The seminarians in the Taiwan Catholic Regional Seminary follow a good liturgical program at Fu Jen Faculty of Theology of St. Robert Bellarmine and are able to put into practice their knowledge in liturgy. However, they still need a priest who specializes in liturgy to stay with them when they are in their respective dioceses. This is not only to deepen their liturgical life experiences but also to be able to promote good liturgies in the parishes in the future. Every diocese should have a liturgical commission (see Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 45), but at present there are only five dioceses with a liturgical commission. Because Taiwan is not a Christian country, there is a greater need for each diocese to have some individuals formed in liturgy to avoid conflict between the

practice of the universal Church and the practices of Chinese culture and folk religion.

### 4. Baptism

During the catechumenate, the catechumen should have adequate preparation in his/her knowledge of the faith (Church teachings) before being able to receive the Sacrament of Baptism. The person cannot be hastened. The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) gives the adult catechumen a complete way to have a deeply rooted faith life.

### 5. Funeral liturgy

The Eastern culture has its own dates and manner of worship, but it should not be a reason to conflict with the liturgy of the universal Church. Since ancient times, the Church does not celebrate the Funeral Mass during the last three days of the Holy Week (Triduum). This is also a way of witnessing to the faith, giving priority to the liturgical celebrations in commemoration of Jesus Christ: good liturgy will only purify, not destroy the cultural tradition of the people. In general, during the Funeral Mass and memorial services, make sure that there are no superstitious motives for the worship, and no non-Catholic religious objects beside the deceased person's picture.

### 6. The homily

In one part of the “Joy of the Gospel”, Pope Francis shared how to prepare a homily. In an annual meeting with priests, he also talked to them about *ars celebrandi* and the importance of the homily during Mass. The homily is not to re-read the content of the Gospel, nor is it an eloquent performance, but it should lead the participants to enter into the mystery of faith, to know God, to worship God (see *Homiletic Directory*). Preparation of the Sunday homily is one of the most important weekly tasks for all Bishops and priests.

**Topics discussed:****Proposition A: The CRBC Secretariat****A.1: Audit of the 2014 Annual Report and the 2014 Work Report**

## Explanation:

Refer to the “2014 Final Accounts for Income and Expenditures” and “2014 Work Report” for discussion. After approval, present them to the Ministry of the Interior.

**Resolution:** Approved.

**A.2: The CRBC Secretariat management organization**

## Explanation:

The Secretaries of the various diocesan Commissions have asked if the Commissions are under the supervision of the CRBC Secretariat or directly under the Bishop in-charge of the Commission. For example:

1. Administration Management: Vacancies and leaves, evaluation, salaries, bonuses, labor and health insurance, budget, appropriation, rental of conference rooms etc.
2. Personnel Management: Execution of work by each Commission.

Should the above-mentioned functions be under the coordination, supervision and management of the Secretary General or directly under the Bishop in-charge of the Commission?

**Resolution:** The Secretary General directly manages the administrative unit, and supervises the Commissions. If necessary, he coordinates with the Bishop in-charge of the Commission.

**A.3: Guidelines for inviting foreign speakers to give talks in the dioceses**

## Explanation:

The 2014 CRBC Autumn Plenary Assembly Proposal F of the Secretariat was: “Establish guidelines for the invitation of foreign speakers to the local Church in Taiwan.” The resolution states: “The Secretariat will be responsible for writing a CRBC draft version of the ‘Speaker Certification Requirement’ for foreign lecturers in the local Church. It will be discussed during the 2015 Spring Plenary Assembly.”

**Resolution:** The Secretariat already wrote the guidelines for the invitation of foreign speakers to the local Church in Taiwan and sent it to the dioceses as reference.

**A.4: The Ministry of the Interior wrote a letter requesting religious groups to establish a sexual abuse complaints’ process and give training courses on prevention of sexual assaults**

## Explanation:

Read official document from the Ministry of the Interior (see Attachment 1). The CRBC is a member of the “Christian Communities Coalition for Human Rights” (CCCHR). Request the CCCHR to give informative sessions to the dioceses (see Attachment 2).

**Resolution:** Most Rev. John Baptist Lee will form a support team of seven persons.

**Proposition B: The Commission for Sacred Liturgy****B.1: Establish a School for Sacred Music**

## Explanation:

1. The School for Sacred Music is a school that will train, educate and form talented Catholic individuals in the Church and for service to the Church. The most basic training for Sacred Music concerns musical skills because this includes a series of long-term training techniques

coupled with the knowledge of the Church and training in liturgy. Only then can one acquire the competence to serve professionally in the liturgy whether in playing the piano, singing and conducting, and even making compositions and other related skills.

2. Because of the impact of modern technology and the development of internet, the Church for Chinese speaking people is not only limited to Taiwan. Vatican II's Promotion of the Liturgy facilitated the unity among Chinese speaking faithful from Taiwan, Mainland China, Singapore, Malaysia, Macau, Hong Kong and even those from the U.S.A., Canada, and Australia etc. They share their resources and they look forward to having a School for Sacred Music for the Chinese. They desire to be trained, to grow, to be developed in Church music and to be able to promote it. With its good achievements, it will be a better way for Sacred Music to contribute to evangelization.

3. The establishment of the School of Sacred Music can become an international platform that can connect with Sacred Music Departments in Europe and the United States thereby promoting international exchanges, the hiring of short-term contractual teachers, student exchanges, joint Sacred Music camps etc. This will promote the understanding and cooperation of the Catholic Church as an international family.

Means:

1. Venue of the School for Sacred Music: Kuang Jen Catholic High School, Panchiao, New Taipei City (preliminary discussions with the school have already taken place).

2. Create an official Sacred Music Section: Junior High School for three years and Senior High School for three years.

**Participants:** Catholics, Junior High School and Senior High School students willing to study Catholic Sacred Music

**Examinations and Admissions:** Collaboration with Kuang Jen Catholic High School Music Classes. The yearly quota of enrollment for Catholic Sacred Music Section prescribed by the Ministry of Education is 3-5 Junior High School students and 3-5 Senior High School students. Catholics can freely register or candidates can be recommended by the Church. They must have the basic musical ability and discipline.

**Music Program:** In addition to music theory classes and music classes, they must major in keyboard instruments (organ, piano), vocal music, conducting, and choral courses. The Sacred Music teacher and music teacher will be the same, unless the Church recommends somebody else.

**General Discipline:** The Music classes are the same. If there is a need, there can be other language classes aside from the English classes: basic Latin pronunciation and definition, Italian, German, French, and languages of native communities. Teachers follow the school assignment and additional courses recommended by the Church.

**Faith Education and Liturgical Services:** Participate in school Masses, Vespers (school boarders), religious counseling classes, and serve in school religious activities. Skills will be acquired through service.

**Management of Everyday Life:** There is also a need to learn Church life while learning at the school. Therefore, there is a need for someone to give special care to all the students and boarders outside their classes: their prayer life, participation in liturgy and in extracurricular activities.

**Further Studies:** The same entrance examination for Junior and Senior High School students. For further studies, one can apply at the national music department, or prepare to apply at an international Church music department with the help of the Church (Sacred Music Section).

**Tuition:** The same computation as the tuition of Kuang Jen Catholic High School Music students. If school grants are necessary, the school and the Church will both apply for student grants.



3. Sacred Music Department: three years (continue the resources of Kuang Jen Catholic High School and its cooperation with the European and American Institutes of Sacred Music)

**Participants:** Catholics, above 18 years old, willing to learn Catholic Sacred Music.

**Examinations and Admission:** Parish priests or diocesan priests can recommend a lay person, or religious communities can recommend men and women members. Those who apply must have basic musical skills. Students may come from Taiwan or from abroad.

**Music Program:** Those who have completed attendance of the three-year course will be given a diploma recognized by the Church. Teachers will be selected by the Church (Sacred Music Section).

**General Discipline:** Includes liturgy, theology courses etc. It can collaborate with Fu Jen Faculty of Theology of St. Robert Bellarmine offering it as an elective course. Language elective courses can be offered at the same time by the Sacred Music Section.

**Faith Education and Liturgical Services:** Students can be assigned to parishes that need services (lacking in resources), especially those parishes in the remote areas in Taipei. They can assist and participate in their liturgical celebrations and activities just like in their own parishes in general.

**Management of Everyday Life:** For non-Taiwanese students or those who need a long term stay, one can consider the rooms at Kuang Jen Catholic High School. Consideration needs to be given for the accommodations and living space of foreign students.

**Further Studies:** To develop talent among Church individuals and promote future music teachers in the Church. If, after graduation, the student wants to pursue further studies, the Church (Sacred Music Section)

can assist the student to contact and apply abroad for opportunities to study Church music.

**Tuition:** It will depend on the number of hours the student studies and the condition after adjustment. The person needs to pay one's own expenses.

#### 4. Equipment

##### a. General equipment

Piano rooms, ordinary classrooms and music rooms etc. The equipment will be provided by Kuang Jen Catholic High School Music Classes.

##### b. Additional equipment

- Pipe organ (1)
- Organs for practice (3-4)
- Accommodations, activity space and facilities for non-Taiwanese students

##### c. Human resources

- Department Supervisor (1 person)
- Student Supervisors (2 people)
- Language teachers
- Additional teachers to teach organ, Gregorian chant, and studies in Chinese liturgical songs

#### 5. Funds

**Expenditures:** Kuang Jen Catholic High School will give information after its consultation and assessment of the expenses of all hardware equipment, accommodation, teachers and personnel etc.

**Income:**

a. Seek sponsorship and donations from benefactors for large equipment (e.g. organ)

b. School fees

c. Open a “Sacred Music Formation Funds” account and invite benefactors to sponsor(regularly or occasionally).

#### 6. Future goals of the School for Sacred Music

a. We will discuss a way for collaboration with the Vatican Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music and the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, Austria, Church Music Department etc., and the Church music departments of other European countries to create a sister school relationship, investigate opportunities for student and teacher exchanges, and continue to learn Catholic Sacred Music. Communication with various music departments has already started.

b. Aim towards having professional Church music equipment, teachers and standard music. Apply to have a Church Sacred Music Certificate of Qualification.

Resolution: Postponed. The Commission for Sacred Liturgy will invite Catholic music professors to form a team to study and evaluate the proposal.

#### Proposition C: The Commission for Aborigine Apostolate

##### C.1: Formation of leaders for the aboriginal clergy

Explanation:

1. Select the best in the group of seminarians and start to plan an in-depth formation.

2. On-the-job ongoing formation of aboriginal priests.

3. The source of funds can be from fundraising.

Resolution: Postponed.

##### C.2: How to respond to the future “Aboriginal Self-Government” and the status of CRBC Commission for Aborigine Apostolate

Explanation:

In accordance with the “Provisional Regulations of the Aboriginal Self-Government” approved by the Executive Yuan on December 18, 2014

Means:

1. CRBC will form a special committee to study and deliberate the situation.

Resolution: Create a special committee to study and deliberate. Results of the deliberations will be given during the Autumn Plenary Assembly.

#### Proposition D: Commission for Evangelization and Section for Family joint proposal

##### D.1: Encourage all the parish councils (pastoral commissions) to form a Section for Family in order to effectively promote any pastoral work of evangelization relevant to family.

Explanation:

1. At present all the diocesan Commissions for Family (Sections for Family) are trying their best to do the pastoral work of evangelization relevant to the family and the achievements of these efforts are increasingly significant.

2. However, the promotion done by the diocesan Commissions for Family (Sections for Family) is limited in sphere. They cannot penetrate the parishes, which is a pity.

3. Recently, during the meetings of the diocesan Commissions for Family

(Sections for Family), they discovered that in some dioceses there are already Family Evangelization Sections formed by the parish councils in the parishes, which are seeing greater results with regard to the promotion of family pastoral evangelization.

4. As a follow-up to the work of pastoral evangelization on family by the different Commissions for Family (Sections for Family), the bishops are requested to approve that each parish council (pastoral commission) form a Section for Family to more effectively promote the work of pastoral evangelization.

Resolution:

Approved, and request the National Council of the Lay Apostolate to implement it in each diocese. Request the CRBC Commission for Evangelization Section for Family to provide a feasible program and present the result during the Spring Plenary Assembly next year.

**Proposition E: Commission for Evangelization Section for Family**

**E.1: Request for approval to translate into Chinese: “A Pro-Life Pastoral Handbook”**

Explanation:

1. The Commission for Evangelization Section for Family organized two “Pro-Life Sessions” for the clergy and for lay persons from September 16-21, 2014. The Commission is now holding pre-formation events for the upcoming “20th Asia-Pacific Congress on Faith, Life and Family” to be held from November 27-29, 2015.

2. After the “Pro-Life Session”, one of the speakers, Dr. Brian Clowes, gave to the attending staff members a handbook called: “A Pro-Life Pastoral Handbook.” He is the Director of Education and Research at Human Life International (HLI). The handbook addresses many sensitive issues on pastoral care and offers many feasible recommendations. For

example: AIDS patients and the problem of using a condom during sex, abortion, same-sex unions, etc.

3. It is said that the handbook has already been translated by the Church in Korea and copies have been sent to the parish priests of all parishes. This handbook is really useful to those doing pastoral work, and the results are considerably good. If this handbook can be translated into Chinese, it will not only be helpful to all the dioceses but also to all Chinese speaking Churches around the world.

4. Dr. Brian Clowes has currently agreed to grant the copyright to the Church in Taiwan to have the handbook translated into Chinese. The CRBC is requested to approve its translation and publication.

5. A discussion on the source of funds for the costs of the project is also needed.

Resolution: Agreed. The Commission for Evangelization Section for Family will look for a translator.

**E.2: Request to elect a Catholic representative for the “Taiwan Religious Groups Alliance for the Family”**

Explanation:

1. The work of the Catholic Church through its participation in the “Taiwan Religious Groups Alliance for the Family” (Pro-Family Alliance) (護家盟) is gradually being given greater importance by the society. A government agency is inviting a representative from the Pro-Family Alliance (護家盟) to serve as a consultant to the issues mentioned above.

2. The work of this Alliance is currently directed towards the creation of a formal organization and to register it in a government agency. When that time comes, there will be a need for the major religious groups to send a representative, who will then be registered by this Alliance as its representatives.

3. Since the importance of the Catholic Church in this Alliance has gradually increased, it is necessary that there is a representative available at its registration to become one of the representatives of this Alliance.

Means: Request the bishops to send a suitable person as the Catholic representative to this Alliance.

Resolution: Commission for Evangelization Section for Family: Ning Yong Hsing (甯永鑫), Mrs. Zhang Hua Wan (張華婉), Mrs. Cheng Lai Yi (鄭萊頤)

**E.3: Request to appoint a bishop to lead the group that will attend the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, USA, from September 22-27, 2015.**

Explanation:

1. The World Meeting of Families is held every three years. This year it will be held in Philadelphia, U.S.A., from September 22-27. It has been confirmed that Pope Francis will attend this event.

2. At present, three couples from difference dioceses have generously responded to this mission, and another two couples are considering participation in the event.

3. The bishops are requested to recommend one bishop to lead the participants in this event. After the candidate is confirmed, please immediately inform Mrs. Hsin Pin Chao, the secretary of the Section for Family. If registration is completed on April 30th, the person is entitled to an early bird discount and the fee is only US\$ 325. (Registration fee starting May 1st will be US\$375, and those who register in September will be US\$ 400.)

4. The CRBC Commission for Evangelization Section for Family has a budget of NT\$ 200,000 each year, and this year it has accumulated NT\$ 600,000. These monies can be used to subsidize the participants of this

event. Please discuss the method of giving a subsidy to the participants.

Resolution: Archbishop Peter Liu will be the group leader and will discuss the method of granting a subsidy to the participants.

**Proposition F: The Chinese Catholic Federation for the Bible Apostolate (Commission for Doctrine of the Faith and Catechetical Instruction)**

Rationale:

1) Plan to promote Bible sharing activities among indigenous people in each diocese.

2) Plan to promote “Lectio Divina”

3) Plan to promote learning activities related to the Word of the Lord.

Explanation:

1. The United Chinese Bible Association together with all the dioceses in Taiwan organized the 10th World Chinese Biblical Congress in January 2015. After the congress, the assembly chose the following themes: “They pour new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved”; responding to the sign of times to “Bear witness to the Word of God through a new evangelization”; sharing with others the beauty of the Word of God. Guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, make the Word of God the center, promote bible reading, and study diligently the bible to enter into the mind of God; bring the Word of God into one’s community, become promoters of the Word of God, put it into practice, and be its living witnesses.

2. During the Council meeting of the United Chinese Catholic Biblical Association on March 15th, a consensus was reached that they will jointly promote the above proposals so that the Word of God will be spread among the people.

Resolution: Agreed. Encourage the Catholic Biblical Association of each

diocese to join the National Bible Study and Research Seminar to improve the quality of bible study and increase the number of participants.

**Proposition G: The Commission for Clergy and the Taiwan Catholic Regional Seminary**

**G.1: The term of office of priests on the Formation Team of the Seminary has come to an end.**

Explanation:

The term of the current Formation Team of the Seminary will soon expire (2015.07.31).

It is proposed that the new team join a three-day training course in Rome in June 2015.

Resolution: (temporarily cannot be disclosed)

Rector: Fr. Joseph Thang Long Tran (陳盛龍神父) (Taipei Archdiocese)

Vice-Rector:

Director of Student Affairs: Fr. Paul Baumann (鮑立仁神父)

Dean of General Affairs: Fr. Baltoromeus Lu (盧成珉神父) (Hsinchu Diocese)

Dean of Studies: Fr. John Su (蘇豐勝神父) (Chiayi Diocese)

Spiritual Director: Fr. Augustine Tsang, SJ (曾慶導神父) (will stay 3 more years)

**G.2: Adjustment of the salaries of the staff**

I. Subject: According to the previous past arrangements in the Taiwan Catholic Regional Seminary (TCRS), the salary of the staff can be raised based on the length of service, work performance etc.

II. Explanation:

1. Pursuant to the past regulation (School Year 2007, 4th TCRS Affairs Meeting; School Year 2010, 4th TCRS Affairs Meeting) and based on the actual situation of salary adjustment of the staff in TCRS, the last raise was four years ago in July 2011.

2. A year ago the economic environment in Taiwan was not ideal, so after the relocation of TCRS and the difficulties encountered in transferring the personnel, no salary raises were given according to the past regulation.

3. The decision of the Ministry of Labor: Beginning from July 1, 2015, the basic monthly salary of NT\$ 19,273 will be raised to NT\$ 20,008, an increase of NT\$ 735 or about 3.81% (if based on NT\$ 17,880 of 2011, the increase is 10.64%). The society, public opinion, and companies are all engaged in related discussions.

4. Since the TCRS is a training service unit and a non-profit institution, and since the number of staff members is maintained at a certain number and there is no significant increase in the workload, it seems that it is not suitable to exactly follow the ratio regulated by the government.

5. Although the administrative matters of TCRS are often in accordance with the information provided by Fu Jen Faculty of Theology of St. Robert Bellarmine, the difference between the two is in the overall development and professional workload. Thus, it is inappropriate that the salary increase be based on the same norms.

6. Also, before and after the relocation of the TCRS, 2 senior staff members worked hard and did their best to do related work.

7. The cook has worked in the seminary for less than two years, and, in reality, there is only one staff member, but he still manages to meet the needs of the seminary.

8. Although there are still many areas in need of work, in view of the hard work and morale of the whole staff, the administrative team of the

Seminary recommends: the increase in salary can be based on the number of years since the last salary increase (until the present), and adjust salaries based on a percentage of increase, and taking into consideration the current economic environment, work performance, and special reasons for increase/decrease.

9. The adjustment can be based on the years of service, Taiwan environment, work done during the TCRS transfer etc.

10. Hopefully this adjustment in salaries will not cause a great burden to the bishops of dioceses and superiors of religious communities.

### III. Means:

1 Janitor – to have 3.5% (4-1 + 0.5) increase in salary. The TCRS gives a monthly increase of NT\$ 1,085 (NT\$ 485 increase in salary, NT\$ 600 increase in living allowance).

2. 1 Secretary/Accountant – to have 3.5% (4-1 + 0.5) increase in salary. The TCRS gives a monthly increase of NT\$ 1,114 (NT\$ 514 increase in salary, NT\$ 600 in living allowance).

3. 1 Cook – to have 1% (1.92-0.92+0) increase in salary. The TCRS gives a monthly increase of NT\$ 600 (no increase in salary, NT\$ 600 increase in living allowance).

4. After the estimated salary increase, the monthly expenses of TCRS will increase by NT\$ 2,799, a yearly increase of NT\$ 35,987. (At present, the monthly expenses for personnel is NT\$ 100,753, and NT\$ 1,296,037 for the whole school year).

5. According to the resolution of the CRBC Plenary Assembly, this will be implemented during the new fiscal year (August 1, 2015).

Resolution: Approved.

### G.3: Hosting an international meeting of “The Federation of Asian

### Bishops’ Conferences - Office of Theological Concerns” in Taipei, 2016.

Explanation:

1. The FABC-OTC organizes their annual May meetings in different places. Because of limited financial resources, since the beginning of 2015 they have been looking for a place to hold their meeting, a place where they can save money as the primary goal.

2. Taiwan is a member of the FABC-OTC. Fr. Augustine Chang, SJ, was a member for eight years (2 terms of 4 years). 10 years have already passed since the FABC-OTC has been invited to come to Taiwan.

3. During these past three years, Fr. Joseph Tran Long succeeded Fr. Augustine Chang, whose membership had come to its end.

4. More importantly, beginning this year, Most Rev. John Baptist Lee has also become a member, and he is the President of the Commission for the Clergy of the Chinese Regional Bishops’ Conference. Therefore, there are sufficient reasons to invite the FABC-OTC to come to Taiwan.

5. The participants expected are 15 persons: 1 Cardinal, 5 Bishops, 9 Priests

Means:

1. Venue: Taiwan Catholic Regional Seminary (58 Santai Road, Xinzhuang, New Taipei City )

2. The meeting, meals, and accommodation will all be at the TCRS, which will also shoulder all the expenses.

3. All foreign guests will arrive a day before and leave a day after the meeting, and the TCRS will take care of their transportation to and from the airport.

Resolution: Approved.

Proposition H: Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation and the Commission for Promoting Christian Unity

H.1: Promote the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” (JDDJ). The Lutheran Church and the Catholic Church plan to have a joint statement related to the doctrine on righteousness / justice.

Explanation:

On May 2014, the Catholic Church in Hong Kong, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Methodist Council, jointly signed and acknowledged the translated text of the “JDDJ”.

If the CRBC will approve the translation, this Commission will organize and facilitate a “National Seminar for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation, and for Promoting Christian Unity” on May 8, 2015. Fr. Paulin Batairwa, SX, will introduce the translated text of “JDDJ” and will discuss with diocesan representatives how to implement it.

This Commission will acquire a number of the “JDDJ” copies in Chinese from the Catholic Church in Hong Kong and will organize a forum with the representatives of the Lutheran Church and Methodist Council at Fu Jen Catholic University on May 16, 2015.

Resolution: Approved to organize a forum. Fr. Paulin Batairwa will convene a small team to study the JDDJ translated text and present a report to the CRBC.

Proposal I: Kuangchi

**VARIA:**

1. Supplementary budget for the 2015 National Council of Churches of Taiwan (NCCT) Friendship Athletic Day

Rationale:

Every year, the NCCT organizes a Friendship Athletic Day and the

Catholic Church is the host this year. The estimated cost is about NT\$ 200,000.00. Therefore, the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue would like to apply for a 2015 supplemental budget.

Resolution: Approved.

**Meetings:**

1. Bishops and Men and Women Religious Superiors Joint Meeting

Date: May 27, 2015 (Monday) 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Venue: 5F Conference Room, Central Building, 2 Chungshan North Road, Section 1, Taipei

2. Talks of Most Rev. Savio Hon Tai-Fai, S.D.B.: “The Joy of the Gospel”

Venue: Bishop’s Curia, Archdiocese of Taipei

Participants: bishops, priests, seminarians, religious sisters, and representatives of the laity

**May 31 (Sunday)**

10:00 – 12:00 National Council of the Lay Apostolate (Conference Room)

14:00 – 15:00 First Talk on “The Joy of the Gospel” (Youlun Bldg. 友倫樓)

15:00 – 15:20 Break

15:20 – 16:20 Second Talk on “The Joy of the Gospel” (Youlun Bldg. 友倫樓)

16:20 – 17:30 Mass (This Mass is arranged especially for those who come from far places. They might not have attended Mass before coming.)

3. 2015 Autumn Standing Committee Meeting

Date: November 11, 2015 (Wednesday) 10:00 am

Venue: 4F CRBC Secretariat Administrative Building (39 An Ju Street, Taipei)

4. 2015 Autumn Plenary Assembly

Date: November 23-27, 2015 (Monday - Friday)

Venue: 4F CRBC Secretariat Administrative Building (39 An Ju Street, Taipei)

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