



Prot.No. MPL 57/15/4 (ENG)

28/11/2015

Pastoral Letter

Dear Rev Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and my dear Children in Jesus Christ,

As you may be aware, The Holy Father Pope Francis announced the Year of Mercy, from the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, 8 December 2015 to the Solemnity of Christ the King, 20 Nov 2016. The 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council also falls on 8 December 2015.

The Gospel message “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (cf. Lk 6:36) is taken as the theme of this upcoming Year of Mercy. The Pope wishes this message to be a basic plan for our life.

As we receive Mercy from our heavenly Father, we need to be effective witnesses of Mercy. This is the aim of the celebration of the Year of Mercy. Mercy is not just the act of God alone, but also a criterion that determines us as children of God. Mercy is the core of Christian life. It is also the cornerstone of life of the church. Wherever the church is, God's mercy needs to be witnessed and overflowed. Let us also realize that Love is the first truth and its foundation is the practice of Mercy.

The Holy Father has proposed some practical things to undertake in this Year of Mercy.

1. Make pilgrimages to Holy places during the observation of this occasion. Mercy, sacrifice, dedication / surrender, prayerful preparation, grace and fasting are necessary for pilgrimage.
2. Do not judge anyone. Try to practice the Gospel message from Luke 6:37-38 in our personal life. “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.”

3. Practice 14 Acts of Mercy - spiritual & corporal
 - a. Corporal
 - i. Feed the hungry
 - ii. Give drink to the thirsty
 - iii. Clothe the naked
 - iv. Shelter the Homeless
 - v. Visit the sick
 - vi. Visit the imprisoned
 - vii. Bury the dead
 - b. Spiritual
 - i. Counsel the doubtful
 - ii. Instruct the ignorant
 - iii. Admonish the sinner
 - iv. Comfort the sorrowful
 - v. Forgive injuries
 - vi. Bear wrongs patiently
 - vii. Pray for the living and the dead
4. Solemnly receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation with thorough preparation during the coming season of the Great Fast.
5. Prayerfully visit the Church designated in the Diocese for the Year of Mercy and receive plenary indulgences.

Taking inspiration from the Holy Father, we will inaugurate the Year of Mercy in our Eparchy on Sunday, 13 December. I request that all our communities officially commence the observation of the Year of Mercy from the same day. Let us recite Psalm 136 after Holy *Qurbana* that day, in thanksgiving for God's mercy to begin the Year of Mercy, and with appropriate ceremony. You may prayerfully visit the Chapel at Mickleham to receive the plenary indulgence, announced by the Holy Father.

Below are suggestions for personal devotions and good deeds, which could be practiced each month during the Year of Mercy:

December: As part of gifting a "dress for baby Jesus" plan, inviting all to donate generously to clothe the poor. During the liturgical season of the Annunciation, children are encouraged as act of penance to set money aside. This can be collected on Christmas Day, and can be an encouragement for all. During Christmas *Qurbana*, collect the amount and send it to the Eparchial office. The Eparchy will forward the money collected as our Christmas gift to the "Little Servants of the Divine Providence" of Kunnamthanam.

January: 26th is India's republic day of India. It is also "Australia Day". This is a special occasion to pray for our Motherland and this country, which received us.

February: 11th is the day of the sick, which is also the feast of our Lady of Lourdes. Let us pray and offer *Qurbana* for those who are sick and visit sick people to console them.

March: The liturgical season of the Great Fast falls in this month. Let us commemorate this season with its original Lenten spirit of fasting, penance and penitential rites. Taking inspiration from Holy Father, let us spend "24 hours for the Lord" during the dates 4 & 5 March in prayer. Attend the yearly parish retreat and receive the sacrament of reconciliation for the remission of sins, and celebrate Christ's Resurrection feast with a spirit of expectant faith.

April: Let us celebrate the first Sunday after Easter (Sunday of Divine Mercy) as a special day of Mercy. Seek the intercession of St Faustina and St John Paul II. A great effort to form Youth Apostolate in every community of our Diocese is required especially this month of April. I cordially invite all young people in our community to come forward and take initiative to foster the growth of the church.

May: is the month we especially pray to Mother Mary. I invite you to pray and offer Holy *Qurbana* for the intention of pregnant women, and those married women who don't have children. Also, pray for babies whose lives are terminated by abortion. Let us promote the value of human life amongst our friends and community. In the month of May, another proposal is the celebration in the family unites which could promote values of the sacredness, sanctity and importance of Christian family life. I invite you all to organize it in the parishes.

June: is the month of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Blessing of our homes and renewal of the dedication to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is an opportunity for experiencing God's mercy in our life.

July: Let us become benevolent children of St Thomas the Apostle, our Father in faith, by celebrating *Dukrana thirunal* on 3 July as the *Sabha Dhinam*(Church's day). Let us personalize the proclamation of faith "My Lord My God". This will also be an occasion for us to learn and take inspiration from and imitate the saints and the blessed of our Church by studying their life histories. Let us encourage our children for this as well. Collections from 3 July are for the Major Archiepiscopal Curia of the Syro-Malabar Church, and the amounts shall be forwarded to the diocesan office. The feast of St Anna and St Joachim is on 16 July, which could be celebrated as Grandparents day, reminding children to pray for them. Let us pray also for the success of World Youth Day at Krakow, Poland, (26-31 July) and the delegates who attend from our diocese.

August: 4th is the feast day of St. John Maria Vianney, who is the Patron of priests. Let us pray for the bishops, priests and seminarians of our church. I invite you to sponsor

seminarians for our Eparchy. Let us also pray earnestly for more vocations from our communities.

September: Let us offer a helpful hand to the poor and be enthusiastically involved in charitable activities, while celebrating the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14 September). Preparing a soup kitchen for the poor in collaboration with associations like St Vincent De Paul Society would be a good idea. I invite you all to participate in the *Kripabhishekam* Convention scheduled for 23-25 September in Sydney as part of the celebrations of the second anniversary of the Eparchy.

October: Let us pray Rosary with devotion in every prayer wards and homes seeking the intercession of God's mother. In addition, I invite you to pray also the Divine Mercy chaplet.

November: We pray for the departed souls of our faithful. Let us make use of this month for the reading, study, and propagation of the Bible.

We shall conclude the Year of Mercy in appropriate manner in every community on the Feast of Christ the King, 20 November 2016.

I invite you to attentively read and implement the instructions and guidelines sent for the observation of Year of Mercy

Dear brothers and sisters, 2015 is passing by. In preparation for Christmas, once again the season of Annunciation & Nativity has commenced. In keeping with a tradition of our forefathers, I remind you that it would be good to abstain from meat on Fridays.

Let us spiritually prepare ourselves to receive baby Jesus. Let us also pray for peace in the world, in the New Year.

Wishing you all a Happy and Blessed Christmas.

Your Loving Father in Jesus,



+ Bosco Puthur

Bishop of the Eparchy of St Thomas the Apostle of Melbourne of the Syro-Malabar
Given from the Eparchial Curia, Mickleham, Melbourne, on 28 November 2015.

N.B: This pastoral letter is to be read out during the Sunday Holy Qurbana on 6 December.