



Misericordiae Vultus: **The Face of Mercy**

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Pope Francis reformed the canonical process for the declaration of the nullity of marriage with effect from 8th December 2015 substituting entirely the previous processes in the Code of Canon Law (CIC) and Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) through two Apostolic Letters *Motu proprio - Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus* and *Mitis et misericors Iesus* respectively . The act of simplifying the process by the Holy Father is a positive sign to reduce the burden of prolonged waiting by many couples. This could also help to reduce the civil divorces among the Catholics with possible reparation or nullity of marriages. This is a concrete form of mercy.

As Pope Francis says, “the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality through which he reveals his love as that of a father or mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child... The Church’s credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love.” And Pope Francis himself is an epitome of mercy in action.

“Aperite mihi Porta Iustitiae, Open to me the gates of justice” – with these words, Pope Francis has opened the Jubilee Door at St. Peter’s Basilica Rome. On the day of the Solemnity of the

Immaculate Conception, 08 December 2015, the Jubilee of Mercy has commenced with the opening of the Holy Jubilee Door and will conclude on 20 November 2016 with the Solemnity of the Christ the King. To the audience of 50,000 people and to the people of the world, the Pope wants to convey a simple message that human beings have precedence over Sabbath. The whole mystery of Christian faith can be thus summed up in a single word “Mercy,” as presented in the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, titled “Misericordiae Vultus” translated in English “The Face of Mercy.”

Quoting Thomas Aquinas, Pope Francis wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium* (36), “Mercy is the greatest of all the virtues, since all others revolve around it and, more than this, it makes up for their deficiencies.” Vulnerable people are looking forward to compassion, mercy and inclusion in the Church rather than condemnation and exclusion. No one can be excluded from the mercy of God and the Church should be the house that welcomes all and refuses no one. Its doors should remain wide open.

Justice binds
wounds without
curing. Justice
without mercy
will be blind, dry
and non-

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relational. But justice with mercy can heal the wounds and lead to permanent peace. When justice and mercy join together forgiveness is automatically born. The more you forgive the more you are capable of showing love. The practice of mercy is an act of love that goes beyond justice. If God were to be only just and not merciful, then everyone would go to hell. But then, God is merciful.

One of the greatest persons on earth who walked the path of mercy is Jesus himself. Mother Mary – a person full of grace – had the privilege to bring that person of mercy into the world. It is naturally logical that a sinless person be born through a sinless person. In his eternal plan, God created her immaculate already at her miraculous conception in the womb of her mother, Saint Anne, free from original sin by virtue of the foreseen merits of her son Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was officially defined by Pope Pius IX in 1854. Not only her immaculate conception, but her whole life depicts of an exemplary life. Generations after generations are now telling the story of the courageous and obedient woman Mary who cooperated fully in the mission of God. We are in the mission of telling this story to our generations.

On 7 December 2015, while greeting the pilgrims present in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis asked in the wake of the Climate Conference in Paris, “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” He added further, “For the good of our common home, for all of us and for the future generations, every effort should be directed toward mitigating the impact of climate change and, at the same time, curbing poverty and enabling human dignity to flourish”. He urged those present to pray that the Holy Spirit “enlighten all those who are called to make such important decisions ..guided ..by the criterion of the greater good of the human family.”

We may similarly ask ourselves, “What kind of tradition and what kind of values and principles do we want to leave to those who come after us?” “For the good of our common home of love, for all of us and for the future generations, every effort should be taken to remove the spirit that divides us and promote the spirit that binds us.”

It is not just about telling a story to others, but sharing the story in our own lives. Let the story of Immaculate Mary take root in us. Let the story of mercy be daily acts of our lives. If Jesus is the face of mercy, we need to become walking faces of mercy. In the world surrounded by sin of murder, rape, abortion, theft, lies, fights and terrorism, we need to become models like Jesus and mediators like Mary to be bearers of good-news to the victims and become bad-news to the wrongdoers, and be merciful to both as our Heavenly Father is merciful. 🌹

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- "Be so without being presumptuous, imposing "our truths," but rather be guided by the humble yet joyful certainty of those who have been found, touched, and transformed by the Truth who is Christ, ever to be proclaimed (see Luke 24:13" — Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*
 - "Only a faithful and intense relationship with God makes it possible to get out of our own closedness and proclaim the Gospel with parrhesia. Without prayer our acts are empty and our proclamation has no soul; it is not inspired by the Spirit." — Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*
 - "Today I ask you in the name of Christ and the Church, never tire of being merciful." — Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*