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God's Mercy Runs to Meet Us: Pastoral Letter

Cardinal O'Malley

"Our repentance often walks along slowly, but God's mercy runs to meet us," Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley of Boston says in a new pastoral letter for the Year of Mercy. In the letter dated April 3, Divine Mercy Sunday, the cardinal says, "When we see with the eyes of mercy, we open the doors of our hearts. We can no longer be indifferent and focused only on our own challenges. We open doors and serve others who desire to encounter God's mercy." He says that during the year Catholics are called "to overcome any indifference toward the poor and suffering, to recognize the needs of those around us, and to practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy." Cardinal O'Malley

"The Year of Mercy involves gratefully embracing God's mercy in our lives and then sharing it with others."

suggests seven actions Catholics can undertake during the year: read about God's mercy, go to confession, grant mercy to people who have hurt you, bring others to receive God's mercy, make a pilgrimage to a holy door, perform each of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy at least once, and recite the Jubilee of Mercy prayer. He said it is important "that we reflect on how God's mercy is one of the most attractive attributes of the church. When we are able to communicate a spirit of outreach, hospitality and mercy, we hope that people who currently feel alienated might become instead attracted to our parish communities and trust that they will be welcomed." The cardinal's pastoral follows.

Introduction: Merciful Like the Father

Jesus is the face of the Father's mercy and love. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus taught that God's ways toward sinners and the "lost" were different from the harsh ways of the Pharisees and other leaders at the time. Jesus' acts of compassion and his teachings of the Father's mercy are the "beating heart of the Gospel."¹

At the beginning of his 15th chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke, the evangelist writes that the Pharisees are complaining that Jesus is a friend of sinners and is eating with them. Jesus responds to their gripes by sharing three stories — the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and then the lost (or prodigal) son. When what was lost is found, Jesus tells us that God and all of heaven rejoices.²

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