



YEAR OF MERCY

(8 December 2015 – 20 November 2016)

SEMINARS AND PRAYERS NOT ENOUGH

WE NEED TO HAVE A NEW HEART

& DO WORKS OF MERCY

60 THINGS WE CAN DO THIS YEAR INDIVIDUALLY AND AS COMMUNITIES

HAVE A LOOK! MAKE A PLAN! MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

ST. CAMILLUS PROVINCE
INDIA

GUIDANCE AND ACTION PLANS

- **JESUS: SOURCE AND EXAMPLE**

Jesus showed us that God's face is one of compassion. All his 37 recorded miracles are works of compassion. He used power only to heal, never to hurt or do evil. The Christian vocation (of which religious life is just an expression) is to become more like Jesus. Mercy or Compassion is the most Christ-like trait.

- **POPE FRANCIS: GUIDE AND TEACHER**

POPE FRANCIS: The Pope's example and teaching show us how the imitation of Jesus is to be lived today. We need to learn from his life, and study his speeches and writings. We need to see how we church people, especially Camillian religious, can, like him, lead a simple life of compassion, inclusive love, care for the least, care for the planet, and his courageous stand for the weakest.

- **FIVE FOCUS AREAS**

- **PERSONAL RECONCILIATION AND CONVERSION:** We need personal conversation like St. Camillus, our founder. Only when I am aware, I myself have been forgiven much, and need mercy, will I be truly merciful. As Pope Francis told a group of prisoners, *"standing before you is a man who had received much forgiveness"*.

- **RECONCILIATION IN THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY:** We need to be a reconciled family, community, overcoming divisions, injustice, jealousies and destructive agendas.

- **CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY:** We are asked to practice these more assiduously this year. Each community and province can choose some and make plans. Areas: food, clothes, shelter, sickness, imprisonment and burial.

- **SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY:** There are many ways of doing them. Areas: teaching, counselling, retreats, recollections, correcting, consoling, patience, forgiving and praying. Practical plans need to be made, e.g., preaching retreats on Mercy, organizing healing mass, counselling service in hospitals and schools.

- **BETTER HUMAN FORMATION OF PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS:** To create compassionate, caring ministers. Otherwise, as the Pope says, we will train "little monsters" who will then be in charge of our people. It is a terrible counter witness when priests of religious are harsh or cruel, unforgiving or agents of division.

- **ACTION PLANS**

The celebration of this Jubilee Year of Mercy should not be reduced to seminars and prayer services, or having a public function with VIPs. The type of merciful love that Jesus showed and which the Pope speaks about, must be translated into concrete practices that will make a difference to our personal life, community living and our ministry- with benefits for our poor and suffering sisters and brothers.

Here are sixty things we can do with special attention this year. We suggest that religious communities discuss them and make concrete plans at least in some areas.

Please note that, while the study of the Pope's writings is important, and symbolic gestures, like walking through the Door of Mercy in designated churches, can serve as reminders, the main thing is to live a life of reconciliation and mercy. The following sixty suggestions spell out concrete areas of action. May we not reduce the celebrations of having flex boards and cut-outs of the Jubilee Logo or some talks and prayer services. As St. Jerome challenged his contemporaries in the fourth century, “What is the use of adorning the walls of the church with precious stones when Christ is dying in the poor?”.

COMMITMENTS TO MAKE THIS YEAR

We suggest reflection, planning and commitments at two levels- personal and institutional. Without a personal conversion and concrete steps that cost us, this year will make no difference. Institutional steps are needed to tackle larger issues, and do things in a systemic and lasting way, e.g., to make sure of fair wages in our houses. Here are sixty ideas. Please go through and pick up at least a few. Or choose your own, which may be still more practical. May faith, love and generosity rule our decisions- not selfishness, indifference or love of ease.

What to in the year of mercy?

- **Read**
- **Challenge yourself**
- **Decide**
- **Do**

AREA ONE

Personal conversion

1. Ask pardon from those you hurt or harmed. Follow with a good confession. If you are a priest, be available for hearing confessions.
2. Reconciliation: Forgive those who hurt you. Pray extra for them, and seek the grace to forgive.
3. Be ready to help in initiatives that benefit the poor, volunteer. Find time to help someone in need.
4. Be a healer- a loving brother or sister to those in your care and to your juniors, colleagues and employees.
5. Keep your life simple, so that you will be more willing to share resources with the really needy, rather than surround yourself with comforts and luxuries.

6. Organ Donation: There is a terrible shortage of volunteers. Are you ready to donate organs (eyes, kidneys, heart valves, skin) after death? And to donate blood when there is need?
7. Avoid habits that cause pain and division: Gossip, bigotry, exclusion of those who differ from you. Pope to religious on February 2: *“Those who gossip destroy, like a bomb,”* “And if, in this Year of Mercy, each one of you could avoid becoming a terrorist of gossip, it would be a success for the Church, a great success of holiness”.
8. Volunteer, or at least have the readiness, for ministries among the poor and in poorer settings.
9. When people want to give you gifts (e.g., on birthdays, Jubilees, etc.), ask things for the poor or for the mission, rather than personal gifts for yourself.
10. Take an interest in some concrete poor persons (e.g., domestic workers, poorer students, neighbours, etc.); be respectful, kind and warm towards them.

AREA TWO

COMMUNITY RECONCILIATION & CONVERSION

1. Study Pope Francis’ writings on mercy- at least *Misericordiae Vultus*. The name of God is Mercy, his Talk to Major Superiors, and Fr. Antonio Spadaro’s Interview with Pope Francis. Discuss them in community. Get copies for community members.
2. Reconciliation: Heal and overcome divisions, if any, in your house, province, parish, diocese. Never promote divisions based on language, caste, tribe, etc. Never write or encourage anonymous letters denigrating anyone.
3. Arrange at least one meaningful penitential rite and reconciliation service in every community.
4. Treat employees with love and respect. Check their working conditions, salary, health condition, etc.
5. Condone the debts of your employees up to a certain amount. Or offer to pay off their outstanding debts.
6. Admit their children in your schools, with fee concession.
7. Mission, not money: make sure your religious order is not simply running some institutions like a business, concerned more about profit than about service, but really doing it with a Gospel- based spirit of love and service.
8. Set up new works, train your members and run your institution preferably for and among the poor rather than the well- to –do. Or at least, give more admissions to poorer

students and patients.

9. Can those who interact with you every day see you as poor and for the poor, or more as well-off and for those with money? (The Pope challenges the church to be “poor, and for the poor”). Mother Theresa used to say: “There is much talk about the poor, but very little with the poor”.
10. Focus your penance on how to help the poor with what you sacrifice and save.

AREA THREE

CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

1. We can insist with our community and family members to celebrate events like profession, ordination, jubilees, etc.- by helping the poor (e.g., scholarships, medical help, etc.), rather than getting personal gifts.
2. **Make the need and practice of organ donation known.** Encourage members to pledge their organs after death. There is tremendous need for this in India. One dead person's organs and tissues can give life or sight or health to eight others. Be an active member in [Life Beats- Organ Donation Movement](#)
3. **Encourage Life-Drops-blood donation movement.** Every community can be linked to a blood bank or hospital.
4. Visit the homes of our poorer students, [visit the families of the seminarians](#) and thus get to know their difficulties.
5. We can [share our vehicles with poorer neighbours who need to go to the hospital](#) or other urgent errands.
6. [CTF-India plans to provide 5 lakh mosquito nets in areas affected by malaria](#) (e.g., Odisha). Cost per net and transport: Rs. 300. How many nets will we sponsor?
7. Many families affected by the flood in Chennai need help to repair houses, buy essential household things, etc. [CTF along with Caritas is trying to provide Rs. 15000 per family.](#) [CTF along with the CADIS is planning to build 25 houses for the poor people.](#) How many families will we help?
8. There is a Task Force set up by a religious order ready to move quickly to help in case of natural disasters. [CTF along with the Lay Camillian Family decided to help the poor people suffering from this severe drought and water scarcity by distributing hundreds of caps, water bottles and packets of food, particularly to the migrants in the cities of Hyderabad.](#) Are you willing to help financially?
9. Is our religious order serious about serving the poor and the excluded (the “peripheries”

the Holy Father speaks about)? Examples: A well to do school adopting a poor rural school; allotting more personnel to work for the poor; handing over administration to capital lay persons, so as to be free for direct ministry.

10. **Prison ministry:** Ready to visit prisoners or find advocates for poor prisoners?
11. **Mid-day Meal:** For the poorest students in school or college. How many will we help?
12. **Day care for the aged:** Whose sons/ daughters are at work during the day? How many elderly parents can our community look after during the day?
13. **Anti-human traffic network: Human trafficking,** especially of women and children, has become the second most profitable business worldwide. And a very cruel one. Willing to save and help victims?
14. **Anti- drug addiction:** The problem is very huge in some areas, e.g., Punjab. Ready to help victims with counselling and treatment?
15. **Home-based palliative care for terminally ill patients:** Many cannot afford hospitals or private hospices. Ready to visit and do services for such patients in their homes?
16. **Medical camps:** Some schools arrange this, and are ready to arrange it for others, too. How about our institutions?
17. **Provide shelter and training centre for dropouts and street children:** India has more dropouts than those who complete high school. All our cities and towns have thousands of street children. One centre in Andhra (among many run by a particular religious order) has saved and rehabilitated around 24000 boys and girls. Ready to engage in this ministry? Ready to send your younger religious for this?
18. Include in our pastoral plans care of those affected by AIDS and their children, or support those who care for them.
19. Migrants and refugees: more of us need to work for these two groups. There are 223 million refugees in the world. India has many refugees, both internal and external.
20. **Advocacy for justice, human rights, refuges, migrants, excluded groups,** etc. Entering government service to work for the rights of people. Use of social media to highlight the needs of the poor and to provide services.

AREA FOUR

SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

1. Evening school for poor children: Every school can do this, will our school take this up? A number of schools open their buildings and premises in the evening, and provide teachers, to coach poor children from the neighbourhood. Will your school do this?

2. Be available to listen to people with problems- staff members, parents, pupils, neighbours.
3. Coaching for poorer and weaker students.
4. Offering to teach catechism in parishes or schools, and doing it creatively, in an interesting way.
5. Retreats for teachers and senior students.
6. Making someone available for counselling and spiritual direction and vocational discernment.
7. Praying with and for persons who are sick or troubled.
8. Use a mobile app to make availability of confessors and counsellors known, city wise.
9. Make the Pope's teachings (e.g. On ecology, justice, care for the poor, putting people above profit, etc.) Known to our students, lay collaborators, parishioners, etc.
10. Fraternal, loving and direct correction (not gossip or slander) of people involved in bad habits, or who make others' lives difficult, through addictions, cruelty, harshness and moodiness.

AREA FIVE

FORMATION (INITIAL ONGOING TO A LIFE OF MERCY)

1. Train formees in loving ways so that they will grow up into loving healers. "Formation is a work of art, not a police action. We must form their hearts. Otherwise we are creating little monsters. And these little monsters sold the people of God". (Pope Francis)
2. Make sure that the atmosphere of formation houses is simple, joyful and loving, not fear- filled or divisive or cut off from people.
3. Expose formees to the situation of the poor, the exploited, leprosy patients, patients in hospitals, prisoners, child labours, etc.
4. Visit your neighbours who are poor, sick or alone – or need help with cleaning, bathing, shopping, getting to the hospital, etc.
5. Train ourselves, our formees and lay staff in the protection of minors, avoiding all forms of abuse (physical, verbal, emotional or sexual), and helping victims. Have a policy and system in place for the protection of minors. This is a must today, and a legal requirement.

6. Make sure that superiors and seniors set an example of a simple life close to the poor. The younger ones will follow (If poverty and accountability are demanded from the young, but not practiced by “those on top”. Cynicism will result)
7. Laudato SI’: Study it. Be ecologically responsible. Do we care for the poor, for the earth, and for future generations? Is our life simple or wasteful? Avoid luxuries and keep our life simple. Use public transport more than private vehicles. “The emptier a person’s heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume”. (Laudato Si)
8. Use liturgical seasons like Lent to help the poor through our sacrifices.
9. There are big differences among religious in living standards and closeness to the poor. Those living a cosier life can learn from those committed to a simpler life.
10. Start each new day deciding to do at least three acts of love that day. At night check what loving and compassionate deeds you did that day. This is the only lasting thing you carry with you for eternity.

IT IS NOT SIMPLY ABOUT SEMINARS,
FLEX BOARDS, A LOGO AND A PRAYER.

We need to BE compassionate, offer pardon, receive pardon, and express our faith in Jesus through concrete and much-needed corporal and spiritual WORKS of mercy.

What will I DO this year?

What will WE (community, province, parish, religious order, and diocese) DO?

How will the poor and suffering see in us the merciful face of Jesus?

Want a model? This is how a dying cancer patient described a nun caring for the sick: “When sister enters a room, she lights it up! “May our compassion and mercy LIGHT up many lives.

Happy, loving, active Year of Mercy!

Fr. Baby Ellickal MI

Provincial