**THE WORKS OF MERCY**

Jesus Christ taught that we not only receive the mercy of God, but that we are also called to practise mercy toward others. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7). “Be merciful even as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36).

The Church sees in these words a call to action: "We attain to the merciful love of God, his mercy, to the extent that we are interiorly transformed in the spirit of that love towards our neighbour" (Pope John Paul II, *Rich in Mercy*, 14).

The Church tries to practise mercy and teaches us to be merciful in various ways.

The Corporal Works of Mercy are:

1. Feed the hungry.

2. Give drink to the thirsty.

3. Clothe the naked.

4. Shelter the homeless.

5. Comfort the imprisoned.

6. Visit the sick.

7. Bury the dead.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are:

1. Admonish sinners.

2. Instruct the uninformed.

3. Counsel the doubtful.

4. Comfort the sorrowful.

5. Be patient with those in error.

6. Forgive offences.

7. Pray for the living and the dead.

The Corporal Works of Mercy are straightforward, but the first two Spiritual Works of Mercy require a tactful approach, in the spirit of love towards our neighbour.

We need to be prudent in judging that a person is in fact a sinner or is uninformed. We should leave judgment to God. Even if it is obvious to us, a head-on confrontation may satisfy our zeal for justice but be lacking in charity. Mercy and love are inseparable. “Be patient with those in error”, and “Forgive offences” come into play right here.

Pope Francis has added a new work of mercy to the traditional Works of Mercy, namely, Concern for Creation.

In the Encyclical, *Laudato si’*, Pope Francis pointed out at the time of his election as Bishop of Rome that he took Saint Francis as a guide and inspiration. […] “I believe that Saint Francis is the example *par excellence* of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God’s creation and for the poor and outcast“.

Then the Pope refers to the illustration of God’s creation as a universal unity in St Francis’s Canticle of Brother Sun. “All creatures are connected and are dependent on one another. They all have their own dignity and they need to be attended to with care.”

Precisely one year later, Pope Francis took up this topic again in an elaborate message on the occasion of the “World Day of Prayer for Creation” on 1 September, which have been taking place for ten years in the Orthodox Church and for two years in the Catholic Church. The title “Show Mercy to our Common Home” emphasized what is important to him.

The Pope connects his encyclical *Laudato si’* with Mercy - the theme of the Holy Year. “The earth cries out. […] The worry about our common home of creation - the ’New Work of Mercy’ - is a complement to the traditional mention of the works of mercy. […] God gave us the earth to treat it in a balanced and respectful way; exploiting the earth is to sin”, the Pope states.

The Pope hoped that the Holy Year and the issue of Mercy in the light of what is happening to our common home would lead to profound interior conversion. Let us commit ourselves to taking concrete steps away from environmental degradation towards ecological conversion.