

Providence Reflections

One day while in elementary school, our teacher told us to periodically look out a window and just gaze as far as we could see, not looking for or at anything in particular. It was the gazing that was important. That memory came back to me as I read Pope Francis' prayer for the Year of Mercy. The prayer begins:

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved. Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; ... made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief. ... You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.

Pope Francis embodies this prayer, living out his motto of “Mercy and Choosing.” In his diverse travels, we have witnessed the Holy Father engaging those he encounters with a loving gaze and peaceful smile, speaking of acceptance, understanding and genuine care—truly hallmarks of mercy. His words echo his gaze as he speaks gently to those in the grip of poverty and despair, and more forcefully, as

he speaks the truth to power—ever the advocate for the voiceless. In the most desperate situations, Pope Francis' selfless example calls forth life for all on his path.

In our Vision Statement, the Sisters of Divine Providence speak of being “compelled to make God's Providence visible through justice and compassion.” In this spirit and in tune with Pope Francis, we have chosen to commit ourselves to:

Strive for right relationships with all; Live and promote every form of non-violence; Courageously risk being marginalized; Generously share even in the midst of scarcity.

Challenged by these commitments and through our ministries of education, healthcare, social work, with outreach to the homeless and refugees, we endeavor to make God's Providence and Mercy visible, especially to those most in need. We thank you, our friends and donors, who help us in this effort. Let us continue together to lovingly gaze on God's people, so that this “Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace leading us forward with renewed enthusiasm.”

—Sister Claudia Ward, CDP

MERCIFUL LIKE THE FATHER



PRAYER FOR THE YEAR OF MERCY

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved. Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief. Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: “If you knew the gift of God!”

You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified. You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy, you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.

—Pope Francis