



ARCHBISHOP'S PENTECOST LETTER TO YOUTH 2016
Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

Be
merciful, as
your heavenly
Father is
merciful

Resource
for Youth Groups

Every year, Archbishop Denis Hart writes a letter to young people, which is released for Pentecost Sunday. The Pentecost letter is inspired by the Archbishop's annual conversation with student leaders and reflects on the hopes, concerns and questions expressed by young people at this gathering.

This year's Pentecost Letter is an invitation for young people to learn more about 'mercy' and to discover ways in which we can be merciful. It is called 'Be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful (Luke 6:36) and is based on the theme for the Extraordinary Year of Mercy that Pope Francis has declared for the whole Church from 8 December 2016 - 20 November 2016.

This reflection resource offers ideas to help young people in your ministry engage with the themes of the 2016 Pentecost Letter, but does not require young people to have access to the letter or to have read it. It contains links to four videos which may be used to promote discussion and for reflection.

Additional copies of the 2016 Pentecost Letter and the four accompanying videos can be downloaded from www.cam.org.au/youthletter or www.cam.org.au/youth/resources. Printed copies of the letter may be requested from the Archdiocesan Office for Youth. A classroom resource for schools is also available online which you may consider adapting for your youth group. We would appreciate any feedback you have about the resource to improve it in the future.

Be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful

In a large group setting read aloud Luke 6:27-36 as an opening prayer. This reading provides the context for Jesus' command to us to "Be merciful, as your heavenly father is merciful".

Pope Francis selected "Merciful like the Father" as the motto for this Extraordinary Year of Mercy. He wanted us to adopt it as a program of life, but what is mercy? How do we put mercy into practice?

As a group brainstorm words associated with mercy. Ask the young people to define mercy in their own words.

→ Watch the video 'What is mercy?'

“At times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives. For this reason I have proclaimed an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy as a special time for the Church, a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective.”

Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*

Receiving mercy

In the 2016 Pentecost Letter, Archbishop Hart talks about the importance of receiving mercy from others in order to know how to show mercy. What does mercy look like in real life? Has there been a time in my life when I have received mercy from someone else?

Invite young people to share examples of when they have shown mercy to others or when others have shown mercy to them. If possible, one of the leaders could go first and share an example of their own.

“If we have never received mercy, or if we don't think that we need mercy, then we won't be able to show mercy to others.”

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In particular Archbishop Hart points to the mercy of Jesus which we receive through the Sacrament of Confession as vital in helping us to show mercy to others. He reflects that Pope Francis is a man of great mercy because "he himself has come to Jesus as a sinner, and Jesus has looked upon him with mercy".

→ Watch the video 'Claire's Mercy story'

Claire share's about her experience of receiving God's mercy through the sacrament of Reconciliation. What is the relationship between humility and mercy?

Invite the young people to think of people they think exemplify mercy. What is it about these people that make them merciful?

Being merciful

Archbishop Hart points out that to be merciful; we can't just have nice thoughts. We are called to act! In this year of mercy, Pope Francis' has called the Church to pay particular attention to the 'works of mercy'.

Hand out a list of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy and ask the young people to think of ideas that they can do for each work of mercy. (For ideas see the "Other helpful resources" section below for some websites which list 50+ ideas.)

Connecting to the source of mercy

→ [Watch video 'Jeff's Mercy story'](#)

Archbishop Hart in his letter tells us that the way to be merciful, to be like our heavenly Father, is to be connected to God directly through the Holy Spirit. Archbishop Hart speaks of an analogy of God's mercy as water. We can "try to be like a bucket to catch as much mercy from God as we can and then carry it to others. The only trouble is that we are all flawed and cracked and often the mercy runs out of us like a water from a broken bucket before we get a chance to share it with others. The other option is to be like a hose; to be connected directly to the God, the source of mercy. As a hose is connected to a tap, allowing water to flow through it, so when the Holy Spirit connects us to God, his mercy flows through us, and we become merciful to others."

“By getting to know God better we are able to reflect his mercy in the world.”

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Archbishop Hart suggests the following ways to connect the hose to the tap: the Sacraments (especially Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation and the Eucharist) and through hearing and meditating on his Word in the scriptures. In the video Jeff talks about how that he felt called to bring mercy to others through the Sacraments and through his call to become a priest. The letter suggests that by spending time with God we can connect with Him. What ways can you think of to spend time with God?

In small groups invite young people to discuss their response to these questions:

- **Thinking about the analogy of the broken bucket and the hose, have you ever experienced a time when you have 'run out of water'.**
- **The letter suggests that by spending time with God we can connect with Him. How can you make time regularly to spend with God?**
- **What are the things that stand in the way of me spending time with God?**
- **Can anyone share any tips that help them make time for God?**

Reflection

Conclude with a time of reflection and prayer. Invite young people to take a minute in silence to think of one action they may commit to allow the Holy Spirit to connect them to the source, God.

→ [Watch the Mercy Reflection video](#)

Prayer of St Maria Faustina Kowalska

This prayer can be printed and given out to each participant (see below for the link to the PDF):

Let us pray together;
Help me, O Lord, ...

that my eyes may be merciful, so that I will never be suspicious or judge by appearances, but always look for what is beautiful in my neighbours' souls and be of help to them; ...

that my ears may be merciful, so that I will be attentive to my neighbours' needs, and not indifferent to their pains and complaints; ...

that my tongue may be merciful, so that I will never speak badly of others, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all; ...

that my hands may be merciful and full of good deeds; ...

that my feet may be merciful, so that I will hasten to help my neighbour, despite my own fatigue and weariness; ...

that my heart may be merciful, so that I myself will share in all the sufferings of my neighbour."

Amen

(Extract from Divine Mercy in My Soul, Diary of St Maria Faustina Kowalska, 163).

Other ideas if you have time...

A few ideas to further explore the themes of the Archbishop's 2016 Pentecost letter include:

- There are hundreds of Saints who were great models to us of the Mercy of God. Encourage the young people to think of a Saint they know of who show's mercy and why. Alternately you can pick some Saints who are great models of mercy to teach the young people about.
- Have the young people find examples in the news where our society has shown/ not shown mercy.
- Ask the young people to create a video reflection to encourage our society to have greater mercy.

Other helpful resources

- Exploring Mercy: Ideas for how youth groups can unpack the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. Can be downloaded from www.cam.org.au/youth/Resources/Online-Resources
- Misericordiae Vultus (The Face of Mercy), The Papal Bull announcing the extraordinary jubilee year of mercy which explains the reasons for this jubilee, and its theme: "Be merciful, just as your father is merciful." www.im.va/content/gdm/
- Ideas on ways to show mercy: There are several lists of ideas on how to live mercy. See the following: <http://lifeteen.com/blog/51-creative-ways-to-show-mercy-this-year/> or <http://aleteia.org/2016/12/07/54-ways-to-be-merciful-during-the-jubilee-year-of-mercy/> or <http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/50-corporal-works-of-mercy.html>.
- Printable copy of the Prayer of Saint Faustina and the Official Year of Mercy Prayer: www.cam.org.au/Portals/60/Resources/Prayer%20of%20St%20Faustina.pdf