



DIocese OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

LENT 2016
JUBILEE OF MERCY

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The Holy Father has sent us all a Message for this Lent of the Jubilee of Mercy. I want to call your attention to it and urge you to read it. It is beautiful, concrete and opens up to us rich and inspiring ways to make this Lent a deep and wonderful journey of faith as we seek God's merciful love and receive it during the forty days that we travel together to celebrate the Sacred Triduum of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord and Savior.

In his letter, Pope Francis says: *Let's not waste the season of Lent!* He goes on to call *Mary, the perfect icon of the Church which evangelizes and is evangelized by the Holy Spirit*. We too, who make up the Church, must imitate Mary and open ourselves to the Spirit as she did at the Annunciation. Led by the Spirit this Lent we can become ourselves evangelizers of God's mercy by our words and our actions.

Pope Francis commends to us the time honored Corporal and Spiritual "Works of Mercy". He says, *God's mercy transforms our hearts to become merciful, inspiring us to love of neighbor*. Take one a day or use them to do an act of kindness. Corporal: feed the hungry; give drink to the thirsty; clothe the naked; welcome the stranger; care for the sick; visit the prisoners; bury the dead. The Spiritual: convert the sinner; instruct the ignorant; counsel the doubtful; comfort the sorrowful; bear wrongs patiently; forgive injuries; pray for the living and the dead.

For me the most beautiful part of his message is when he speaks of God's merciful love for His Chosen People and the faithfulness of His love as a covenant that, despite all the sins of God's people, He will always be faithful, always forgives, and will never cease to love us. The Pope takes that and invites us to see God's compassion for us His people as a model and an inspiration of marriage between a man and a woman and the love that brings children into the world as part of a family. God's unceasing, faithful love (Hebrew: *hesed*) *culminates in the Incarnation of His Son as the bridegroom who does everything to win over His bride, the Church*. He even dies for her!

And He does that for us now and always. Make this Lent a time when you open yourselves up to that love, experience that love through the reconciling and healing sacrament of Penance; let this love heal your hearts and renew your faith and your commitment to your spouse, your children, your parents, all the members of your family, your neighbors, your friends, all from whom you may be alienated. God offers that love to you. You who accept His love then must be givers of that love to others.

May God's words of love and reconciliation dwell in our hearts this Lent of Mercy and may God bless our Church here on Long Island and make us instruments of His merciful love to others.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Bishop of Rockville Centre