Introduction

Welcome to this pastoral planning process, designed to help you as a parish team think through and plan for the Jubilee Year of Mercy. In his opening speech at Vatican II, Saint John XXIII acknowledged that, in the past, the Church had often acted quite severely toward those who were outside its gates or who did not follow its teachings. Then he said that today we prefer to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. Indeed, it is now Pope Francis’ hope that we will apply this medicine of mercy toward those in our parish, especially those who feel they are not loved or who have struggled to be faithful. The purpose of the Jubilee, one might say, is to help us all learn again about God’s endless mercy – but also to learn and practice our own call to be people of mercy, indeed to be a Church of Mercy.

Timing. This Jubilee begins on December 8, 2015 and runs through the Feast of Christ the King, November 20, 2016. Most parishes will plan their entire Advent in 2015 to address the theme of the Jubilee. A particular emphasis is expected during Lent 2016.

People. Parish leaders will decide who among the parishioners and leaders is right to serve on a Jubilee steering task force. This task force will have a very short life. Its job is to meet five times to work out a plan, and then to guide and assist other parish ministries to implement the Jubilee activities.

The nature of the theme of Mercy. Mercy is not a mere theological concept, as Pope Francis points out in his Bull announcing this Jubilee. Mercy is love put into action.
Action. Because of that, this planning guide leads to action steps that parishes will take. Becoming a Church of Mercy means acting as Christ in today’s world. Acting is the key word in that sentence. So this Jubilee, according to the Bull, is not only about understanding mercy more fully but also about putting it into practice.

**Principles for Pastoral Planning**

1. These people must be included:
   a) The parish priest or pastoral life coordinator. (You cannot plan without him or her. Nothing can go forward if the top leaders are not in the process.)
   b) The pastoral team, whether paid or volunteer. (This should not become the task of the clergy alone. Bring in any deacons, paid team members, and key leaders. Try to represent everyone from children, youth, and adults to older members of the parish.)
   c) The parish council and other leaders. (Invite parishioners at large who are interested in helping.)

2. Be flexible and ready to respond as new ideas emerge. Pope Francis is calling the whole Church to a new awareness and practice of mercy. It won’t be “life as we’ve always done it” in the parish.

3. Ask widely in the parish using a method that allows the outsider to have a voice. The many people who are inactive in their faith must be allowed to speak as well as the active ones. The process must include anyone who can help us become a more merciful Church.

4. Don’t rely on outside speakers with “hit and run” presentations. There is always a temptation to say, “Let’s bring in an expert.” In this process, we suggest you avoid that. The experts are the ones sitting at your table. An outside presenter may excite your crowd for one night but we are being called to a sustained excitement for the Gospel.

5. Take your time but reach a conclusion at a reasonable and designated point in time. The planning process is meant to be finished before the middle of November, 2015.

6. Do everything in the context of prayer and discernment. We will provide the prayer elements for you. When in doubt, turn your hearts to Christ.
The five meetings have these goals.

Meeting 1. We will come to understand what the Church is asking of us at the local parish level by digging into, talking about, and praying over Pope Francis’ Bull, *The Face of Mercy*. We provide an excellent summary and discussion points for you in this resource.

Meeting 2. We will learn how to speak about mercy in plain English. We’ll grapple with Catholic tradition and teaching on mercy. Share about times when other people, the church, or God has had mercy on us – or times when we have shown mercy to others.

Meeting 3. We’ll examine various practices of mercy and consider how they could be stirred into action in our parish. Understand what groups or persons are most in need of our mercy. These practices flow from Pope Francis’ Papal Bull. These practices will take place in real time in our particular setting for (1) educating for mercy at every age and stage of faith; (2) assembling for and celebrating liturgy in light of mercy; and (3) inserting practices of mercy in our pastoral care and outreach ministries.

Meeting 4. Here we get practical with our ideas. We’ll brainstorm all the possible ways we can make mercy an active part of our parish culture. We will try also to name the people within the parish who will lead this special ministry of mercy for our parish (and school if there is one).

Meeting 5. Here we will sum it up and sew it together. In the final meeting, we return briefly to *The Face of Mercy* to make sure our plans are adequate. In this meeting we’ll summarize what we’ve done, and talk about challenges, personnel, and other elements needed to succeed in the Jubilee year. This is the moment when we will finalize the plans, calendar, and budget. We’ll look at the calendar for the coming Jubilee year month by month and sketch in our plans; we’ll also consider resources we can use to help the whole parish understand and live with mercy. And finally, we must pencil up a budget for this special year of outreach and healing.

Let’s get started!
Meeting One

The Papal Bull, *The Face of Mercy*

Leader: Here is your plan for the meeting:

1. **Assemble**
   Gather in a spirit of excitement and anticipation. We are about to embark on a great journey, led by the Holy Father, in companionship with the Church throughout the world. Have refreshments ready. If the group is large, name tags are appropriate. Quiet music playing in the background as people arrive helps prevent the space from feeling morgue-like.

2. **Welcome**
   A designated leader should welcome everyone and call them to prayer. Pray briefly using the prayer on the next page or something similar.

3. **Content**
   Distribute copies of the summary of *The Face of Mercy*. The pedagogy for this period of study is this:
   
   → Read aloud each article of the Bull, rotating readers around your circle. If your group is large, you may wish to divide into smaller subgroups.
   
   → Pause briefly at the end of each article. If appropriate, (a) spend a little time repeating what you read in your own words or (b) use the comments and questions in the right column for discussion.
   
   → At the conclusion of the reading, have a general conversation if time allows and use the final questions in the right column for this purpose.

4. **Next meeting**
   Set the time and place for the next meeting. Close with the *Salve Regina*, as Pope Francis has requested. You will find it below.
Opening Prayer for meeting one
Begin with the †Sign of the Cross. A hymn may be sung.

Invitation to Prayer
The leader now invites all present to pause briefly and turn their hearts to Jesus. Simply invite each person to quiet the inner voice and become conscious of Jesus’ presence within and among you. Invite everyone to speak to him briefly in their own words, and to listen for how Jesus speaks. This pause may last for 3 to 5 minutes.

Community Prayer
Now pray Psalm 23 aloud, either in unison or in choral style.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me:
your rod and your staff— they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long. (NRSV)

Faith sharing
Invite each participant now to share aloud any key insights from this reading that they have gleaned. What word or phrase struck their ear? What insight or hope arose in their hearts? How does this reading connect to what’s happening in their daily lives or the life of the parish? If you go around the circle briefly sharing, this should take about 7-8 minutes.

Close now with the †Sign of the Cross and begin your work.
Salve Regina
Pray this prayer in unison as you close your meeting. Close with the †Sign of the Cross.

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy,
our life, our sweetness, and our hope.
To you we cry, the children of Eve;
to you we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this land of exile.

Turn, then, most gracious advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us;
lead us home at the end
and show us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus:
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.
Amen.

This translation is approved by the USCCB.
Meeting Two

Learning to speak about mercy in plain English

Purpose: to help the participants become aware of
- what mercy is
- how mercy is extended from God to us
- and from us to others and all the world
- our own personal history of mercy – both receiving and giving it

Leader: Here is your plan for the meeting:

1. Assemble
Gather in a spirit of excitement and anticipation. We have studied the words of Pope Francis in our last meeting and now we will learn to speak of mercy more clearly. Have refreshments ready. If the group is large, name tags are appropriate. Quiet music playing in the background as people arrive helps prevent the space from feeling morgue-like.

2. Welcome
A designated leader should welcome everyone and call them to prayer. Pray briefly using the prayer which is below or something similar.

3. Content
Follow the rubrics prepared for the leader and share the exercise which is provided.

4. Next meeting
Set the time and place for the next meeting. Close with the Salve Regina, as Pope Francis has requested. You will find it below.
Leader: Read these faith statements aloud, rotating readers around your group. Pause at the designated moments for group discussion. If your group is large, you may want to break it down into smaller subgroups.

- Mercy is the ready willingness to help anyone in time of need, especially through pardon or reconciliation. It is a habitual inclination of the will.
- This means that mercy is an attitude on our part, a way of treating others and the world around us, which comes to us automatically in situations.
- Mercy is the compassionate care for others whereby one takes on the burden of another as one’s own.
- It is an active quality of the virtue of charity, motivated by love. While mercy is often treated as a rather benign term, its power is conveyed more accurately by looking at it in a scriptural context.
- Jesus is the most eloquent witness to mercy in the New Testament. He is never vague in his proclamation of God’s mercy, and rather than just using parables or discourses, he reveals God’s mercy in his everyday relations with people from all strata of society.
- Jesus is an active agent of God’s mercy — confronting the crowd about to stone the woman taken in adultery, meeting the Samaritan woman at the well, weeping with the other mourners at the death of Lazarus, and ultimately taking up the cross laden with the sins of the world and being led to his death.
- According to Mt 25:31-46, mercy will be the quality on which the Christian will ultimately be judged. This understanding of the necessity of mercy was also developed in the early Church, particularly in the Didache¹, which went so far as to state that those who have no mercy will be condemned.
- “Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’”
- Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?”
- …And the king will answer them, “Truly, I tell you, as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”” (NRSV Mt 25:34-40)

¹ The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Didachē means “Teaching”). This is a brief early Christian treatise, dated by most scholars to the late first or early 2nd century.
Pause for discussion. Distribute the Seasons of Mercy inventory (the handout is on the next page of these notes) and ask people to take a few minutes to think through it. Then lead a large group discussion as above; invite each small group member to share (briefly) with the whole group about one major turning point in his or her spiritual journey.

Share a brief story from your own life about your experience of mercy and how your understanding of it has unfolded. Don’t be afraid to share about the rough times, but do not engage in inappropriate self-disclosure, the sort of thing which belongs in therapy or the sacrament of reconciliation.

- An example might be: Your father has always treated you with indifference and inattention, but you show mercy toward him in his own hour of need, even though he has not deserved it.
- Or: Your child grew up with antagonism toward you. Whatever the cause of that, you continue to offer him or her forgiveness, a hearty welcome, and an open heart.
- Or: You have a heart for the poor, and believe that you are responsible for the improvement of their lives, even though you do not know them personally.

Key sharing: Go around the circle now one more time, each person giving his or her definition of mercy based on what we have done in the first session with The Face of Mercy and also today’s work. Record these definitions on a flip chart and compare them.
The Seasons of Mercy

The purpose of this brief reflection tool is to help you focus on your own experience of giving and receiving mercy in your life so far. Please pause quietly for a few minutes to respond to the questions. Then prepare to share whatever part of this with others you are comfortable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event in my life</th>
<th>Notes I recall about it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your childhood</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who was a forgiving force in your life as a child?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• When you made mistakes or were foolish, who stepped in to affirm and support you unconditionally?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The people in your young life</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Who did you find yourself showing mercy toward?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What moments of error or mistake did you have in your life when you really needed someone to show you mercy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Did someone step forward?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Did you feel God’s mercy toward you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Church and God’s mercy</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How did the Church help you understand the unending mercy of God?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• How does your experience of Reconciliation as a sacrament help you know God’s mercy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Has the Church ever failed to show mercy?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How you responded to God’s mercy during adulthood?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How do you show mercy toward others now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Which of these corporal works of mercy do you practice?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the sick
- Visit those in prison
- Bury the dead
- Forgive those who harm you
- Be generous even when others are not generous to you
- List others:
Opening Prayer for meeting two
Begin with the †Sign of the Cross. A hymn may be sung.

Invitation to Prayer
The leader now invites all present to pause briefly and turn their hearts to Jesus. Simply invite each person to quiet the inner voice and become conscious of Jesus’ presence within and among you. Invite everyone to speak to him briefly in their own words, and to listen for how Jesus speaks. This pause may last for 3 to 5 minutes.

Community Prayer
Now pray Psalm 51:1-12 aloud, either in unison or in choral style.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; According to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment. Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me. You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. (NRSV)

Faith sharing
Invite each participant now to share aloud any key insights from this reading that they have gleaned. What word or phrase struck their ear? What insight or hope arose in their hearts? How does this reading connect to what’s happening in their daily lives or the life of the parish? If you go around the circle briefly sharing, this should take about 7-8 minutes.

Close now with the †Sign of the Cross and begin your work.
Salve Regina

Pray this prayer in unison as you close your meeting. Close with the †Sign of the Cross.

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy,
our life, our sweetness, and our hope.
To you we cry, the children of Eve;
to you we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this land of exile.

Turn, then, most gracious advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us;
lead us home at the end
and show us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus:
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.
Amen.

This translation is approved by the USCCB.
Meeting Three

The Practice of Mercy

How do we offer mercy toward others or lead others to experience the mercy of God? How do we do this first of all, in our own daily lives, and secondly, in the life of our parish?

Leader: Here is your plan for the meeting:

1. **Assemble**
   Gather in a spirit of excitement and anticipation. In our first two meetings we have studied the words and call of Pope Francis and have learned how to speak of Mercy. Now we will apply this to our own lives and begin applying it to the life of our parish. Have refreshments ready. If the group is large, name tags are appropriate. Quiet music playing in the background as people arrive helps prevent the space from feeling morgue-like.

2. **Welcome**
   A designated leader should welcome everyone and call them to prayer. Pray briefly using the prayer which is below or something similar.

3. **Content**
   Follow the rubrics prepared for the leader.

4. **Next meeting**
   Set the time and place for the next meeting. Close with the *Salve Regina*, as Pope Francis has requested. You will find it below.
Introduction

Leader: Participants should read this brief introduction aloud, rotating the bullets around the group. Make sure everyone understands these ideas before proceeding. Do what you can to prevent anyone from making long speeches or homilies during this process.

- Pope Francis has asked us to reflect on this using the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy as our guide.
- It’s important to begin with our own personal, daily lives. If we are not persons of mercy first, how can we lead the parish to become a Church of Mercy?
- We must be the first to be people of mercy. Once we have examined ourselves and come to terms with our own need for God’s mercy, then we can build a parish community that is more merciful.
- Mercy, as Pope Francis said in article 10 of the Bull, is the work of the Church. We do not need any further permission from him or anyone to proceed to build a Church of Mercy.
- Pope Francis speaks of this with urgency in his words.
- Not only must our parish be merciful to all, but we must be the witness to the world.
- All who look on us should see and understand God’s mercy and learn to practice it – in business, education, politics, and other spheres of human activity in the world.
- The exercise below is designed to help us reflect first, about our own lives, and second, about the life of the parish. It is designed to lead to actual practices of mercy. These practices will take place in real time in your particular setting for
  - educating for mercy at every age and stage of faith formation for children, youth, and adults
  - assembling for and celebrating liturgy as a merciful community
  - inserting practices of mercy into your pastoral care and outreach ministries including
    - welcoming people
    - offering the sick and dying special mercy
    - seeking out the inactive
    - reaching out to those who feel the church does not love them
    - a special welcome for non-Catholic spouses and parents
    - people who live near the parish church but are not in our community
    - the poor of our neighborhoods, nation, and the world
- The practice of mercy will extend to
  - The doors of the church and the parish office
The front desk and who sits there
- That clubby feeling that can emerge among those who know each other well
- The parish phones and the automatic answering systems
- The web site and Facebook page
- The accessibility of the parish priests and team members
- The way in which we welcome or deny people access to the sacraments

The Exercise

**Introduction.** To be read silently or summarized by the leader.

Mercy is always practical. It always addresses someone. It’s not a mere theory hanging in the air above your head somehow, but it is telegraphed to your hands and feet, through your eyes and smile, in your voice and manner of being present. Therefore, participants should take time to read, think, and pray through the list of folks below. Follow the instruction on the exercise. Make notes in the spaces provided and share your comments with each other when you are finished. Don’t be afraid to give yourself good grades where you deserve them.

Take about 10 minutes for this reflection, followed by a discussion for whatever amount of time you have available.

**Mercy in your daily life**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People around me</th>
<th>How well do I offer mercy to these folks?</th>
<th>Thoughts &amp; Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross out any that do not apply. Add more in the space at the bottom.</td>
<td>Give yourself a letter grade</td>
<td>Jot down a note or two for use in your group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 My parents who are growing older</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 My ex-spouse who still has a role in the life of our children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Neighbors whom I judge to be morally off base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>My child who hasn’t spoken to me in a long time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>People I just plain disagree with, especially about important things in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>People I consider just plain stupid and who always need help to get out of trouble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>People whom I judge to be lazy and on welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>My husband or wife when he or she is tired, worried, or crabby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>My kids when they’re running wild through the house and I’m at the end of my nerves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Neighbors who aren’t very polite in terms of where they park, how much noise they make, or other matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>(Circle one) Republicans Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Those who criticize me or talk badly about me to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Siblings of mine with whom I’ve had a disagreement over the years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Our “national enemies” especially those who seem most hateful to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>People from other religious groups who may not hold the same beliefs as I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After you conclude your group discussion and mercy is very much growing as a concept and reality within your own hearts, take time to measure and grade your parish. Use this chart to guide you but don’t be limited by it.

**Leader:** Take about 10 minutes for this reflection. The discussion which follows should lead to a list of your top needs to grow as a Church of Mercy. See our instruction at that point.

## Mercy in the life of your parish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish Group</th>
<th>How well do we offer mercy to these folks?</th>
<th>Thoughts &amp; Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simply adapt any wording to suit your local situation. Cross out any that do not apply.</td>
<td>Give yourself a letter grade</td>
<td>Jot down a note or two for use in your group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 People who suddenly have a crisis in their lives and don’t know where to turn</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Young folks including those whose social lives seem “out there” to older people</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Those returning to the church after being away for a while, including those who left with anger</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 The non-Catholic spouses and parents of the parish</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 The sick</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Those who are dying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7 The dead</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Those with special needs or disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The homeless who live in our town or neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Parents asking for baptism who are not otherwise active in the parish</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sinners who desire to reconcile with God through the ministry of the Church</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Couples sharing a home without the benefit of marriage</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Families presenting a child for baptism but who aren’t otherwise active in the parish</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Couples asking to be married who come to us without affiliation to our parish</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Strangers who sit in our pews for weekend Masses</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Priests and religious who have left their vows and who are now living in our parish</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Maturing adults, including those who live in assisted care facilities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Immigrants who don’t speak English very well</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>The divorced, including those who are remarried without the proper annulment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Gay and lesbian people including those who are now legally married or lifelong partners.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td>Couples making important family planning decisions, especially those using contraception.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td>Prisoners and ex-prisoners, including those serving time for heinous crimes.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td>The unemployed and people who are down on their luck financially, including those who just don’t manage their finances well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td>People taking care of elderly parents, especially those with serious illness or dementia where the demands on their time are enormous</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td>The affluent and those who focus on money, work, busyness, and possessions, but are not fulfilled</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td>Parents who struggle with being overwhelmed and overbooked</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td>Others</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Your discussion**

**Leader:** If your group is large, you may want to divide into smaller groups to allow more people to speak. Ask each small group to prepare a flip chart report to share with the rest. Each group (or your single group as a whole) should assign someone to take careful notes using our evaluation questions below. Try not to skip over difficult conversations. Remember that we are planning for the coming Jubilee year. We cannot reach out to every group instantly during this planning process. Look forward to the Jubilee as an opportunity to take historic steps for each of these groups. At the end of your discussion, try to summarize as a group where you have landed.
Choosing from the list in the chart above, create a list on a flip chart of the people in or near your community who are most in need of God’s mercy and our mercy. For each group, use this set of questions to evaluate how effectively you witness to the mercy of God.

**Evaluation questions for each group**

1. How do we show God’s mercy toward them now?
2. How is what we offer being *received* by them?
3. How can we extend greater mercy toward them?
4. What obstacles are in our way?
5. What steps forward can we take as a parish during the coming Jubilee year?
Opening Prayer for meeting three
Begin with the †Sign of the Cross. A hymn may be sung.

Invitation to Prayer
The leader now invites all present to pause briefly and turn their hearts to Jesus. Simply invite each person to quiet the inner voice and become conscious of Jesus’ presence within and among you. Invite everyone to speak to him briefly in their own words, and to listen for how Jesus speaks. This pause may last for 3 to 5 minutes.

Community Prayer
Now pray Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26 aloud, either in unison or in choral style.

Praise the Lord, for he is good;        The sun to rule the day,
   for his mercy endures forever;       for his mercy endures forever;
Praise the God of gods;                The moon and stars to rule the night,
   for his mercy endures forever;       for his mercy endures forever;
Praise the Lord of lords;              The Lord remembered us in our low estate,
   for his mercy endures forever;       for his mercy endures forever;
Who alone has done great wonders,      Freed us from our foes,
   for his mercy endures forever;       for his mercy endures forever;
Who skillfully made the heavens,       And gives bread to all flesh,
   for his mercy endures forever;       for his mercy endures forever;
Who spread the earth upon the waters,  Praise the God of heaven,
   for his mercy endures forever;       for his mercy endures forever.
Who made the great lights,             Praise the God of heaven,
   for his mercy endures forever;       for his mercy endures forever.

Faith sharing
Invite each participant now to share aloud any key insights from this reading that they have gleaned. What word or phrase struck their ear? What insight or hope arose in their hearts? How does this reading connect to what’s happening in their daily lives or the life of the parish? If you go around the circle briefly sharing, this should take about 7-8 minutes.

Close now with the †Sign of the Cross and begin your work.
Salve Regina
Pray this prayer in unison as you close your meeting. Close with the †Sign of the Cross.

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy,
our life, our sweetness, and our hope.
To you we cry, the children of Eve;
to you we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this land of exile.

Turn, then, most gracious advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us;
lead us home at the end
and show us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus:
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.
Amen.

This translation is approved by the USCCB.
Meeting Four

Getting Practical with our Plan for the Jubilee Year of Mercy

Leader: Here is your plan for the meeting:

1. **Assemble**
   Gather in a spirit of excitement and anticipation. This is our 4th Meeting. In the first three we have studied Pope Francis’ call to Mercy, learned how to speak of Mercy plainly, and applied mercy to our own lives. We have also talked together about who in our midst is most in need to mercy. For this meeting, have refreshments ready. If the group is large, name tags are appropriate. Quiet music playing in the background as people arrive helps prevent the space from feeling morgue-like.

2. **Welcome**
   A designated leader should welcome everyone and call them to prayer. Pray briefly using the prayer which is below or something similar.

3. **Content**
   Follow the rubrics provided for the leader. In this meeting, the group will brainstorm and discuss possible ways the parish can practice mercy more fully. The partial list of ideas we have provided should serve only as a starting point for your work.

4. **Next meeting**
   Set the time and place for the next meeting. Close with the *Salve Regina*, as Pope Francis has requested. You will find it below.
Leader: After the prayer, ask everyone to identify one idea from last week that seems especially important to him or her. At the conclusion of the sharing, use a black or white board and write each key idea on it. Then invite participants to brainstorm ways this idea might become reality in the parish. Ask participants to add their own ideas as they think of them. Every idea should be welcome, no matter how outrageous it sounds at the beginning. This entire exercise should take about an hour or ninety minutes.

Brainstorm Ideas.
Here is a list of potential events and activities to get you started thinking about how you can put mercy into action. Work as a large group or break into smaller groups and discuss how each of these ideas – and the ones you will add – can become part or more a part of your parish life.

† Ways to welcome folks
  o for weekend liturgies
  o to the parish
  o returning to parish life after an absence
  o people who feel we do not love them
  o non-Catholic spouses and parents
† Ways to reach out to people living near the parish church
  o homeless
  o poor and hungry
  o isolated or ill adults
  o trouble makers in the neighborhood
  o unemployed
† The Jubilee calendar set by planners in Rome calls for special occasions of Jubilee celebration for various specific groups in the church. Reading through that calendar, we should plan for each of those groups.
† Schedule times and methods for the sacrament of Reconciliation
  o to help those who struggle to come forward for it
  o especially for children after their First Reconciliation
† Schedule parish-based retreats on mercy during the Jubilee
  o for youth
  o for adult leaders
  o for anyone who wants to explore mercy more deeply
† Schedule special Lenten activities as Pope Francis has requested, to help people pray as a Church of Mercy
  o plan for the Stations of the Cross as a time to meditate on the mercy of Christ for us while we are still sinners
o pray the Divine Mercy novena in the parish church from Easter to Divine Mercy Sunday
o schedule other Lenten activities
  ♦ visits to soup kitchens for those who have never been there
  ♦ times of prayer or adoration to which you also invite neighborhood homeless, newcomers, or others
† Schedule a Lenten parish retreat or mission on Mercy
  o Invite non-Catholic spouses and parents to attend
  o Make this event a key part of early Lent
  o Invite nearby congregations of other Christians as guests
† Teach about the corporal and spiritual works of mercy to the children of the parish
  o make the parents the chief teachers of this
  o provide them with tools to succeed
† Teach about indulgences during the Jubilee year, helping people understand them anew in light of *The Face of Mercy.*
† Create a plan for the Youth Ministry program to learn about and make active the works of mercy.
† Teach the whole parish about mercy
  o Schedule a series of bulletin inserts
  o Use the Facebook page
† Schedule small group meetings throughout the year to bring parishioners together to work with programs leading to a deeper application of mercy
  o See the accompanying list of resources for more detail
† Work with your pastoral care volunteers and team to help everyone involved become more merciful as they encounter the sick, dying, needy, and vulnerable in their ministry.
† Designate a doorway within the parish through which people will be welcomed into parish life
  o offering them the indulgence of a merciful God
  o when will this doorway be open
  o how Pope Francis’ Missionaries of Mercy can play a role
† Preaching for the Jubilee Year
  o identify people in the community known for their mercy and invite them to speak during liturgies
  o help regular homilists to read the texts of Scripture through the lens of mercy
  o extend the Sunday readings into the life of the whole parish through a special set of Jubilee Year questions of the week
† The Journey Home
  o create events that will help people return to a more regular participation in the life of the parish
  o train active parishioners to reach out to inactive ones to invite & welcome them
  o remove impediments and obstacles from people’s pathways
† A Project for the Poor
  o both local and international poor
  o if you already are in one, plan to expand it in the parish
  o if you are not in one, now is the time

Leader: At the conclusion of your discussion, ask everyone present to identify the three ideas from this list that seemed most important to him or her. Tell participants that the three they choose today are changeable. Tomorrow morning, when they wake up having slept on this, other things may emerge in their prayer and thought as important. Place a mark by each key idea that is named so that, at the end, top ideas will emerge.
Opening Prayer for meeting four
Begin with the †Sign of the Cross. A hymn may be sung.

Invitation to Prayer
The leader now invites all present to pause briefly and turn their hearts to Jesus. Simply invite each person to quiet the inner voice and become conscious of Jesus’ presence within and among you. Invite everyone to speak to him briefly in their own words, and to listen for how Jesus speaks. This pause may last for 3 to 5 minutes.

Community Prayer
Now pray Psalm 25:1-10 in unison or in choral style.

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.
Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.
Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness’ sake, O Lord!
Good and upright is the Lord;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.
All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees. (NRSV)

Faith sharing
Invite each participant now to share aloud any key insights from this reading that they have gleaned. What word or phrase struck their ear? What insight or hope arose in their hearts? How does this reading connect to what’s happening in their daily lives or the life of the parish? If you go around the circle briefly sharing, this should take about 7-8 minutes.

Close now with the †Sign of the Cross and begin your work.
**Salve Regina**

*Pray this prayer in unison as you close your meeting. Close with the †Sign of the Cross.*

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy,  
our life, our sweetness, and our hope.  
To you we cry, the children of Eve;  
to you we send up our sighs,  
mourning and weeping in this land of exile.

Turn, then, most gracious advocate,  
your eyes of mercy toward us;  
lead us home at the end  
and show us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus:  
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.  
Amen.

*This translation is approved by the USCCB.*
Meeting Five

Get out the calendars and make your plans firm

Leader: Here is your plan for the meeting:

1. **Assemble**
   Gather in a spirit of excitement and anticipation. This is our final meeting. We have spent time praying and talking about how God’s mercy can be on our lips and extended by the work of our hands to the people most in need of that mercy. In this meeting, we will make the plan for the Jubilee Year. Have refreshments ready. If the group is large, name tags are appropriate. Quiet music playing in the background as people arrive helps prevent the space from feeling morgue-like.

2. **Welcome**
   A designated leader should welcome everyone and call them to prayer. Pray briefly using the prayer which is below or something similar.

3. **Content**
   It will be handy to have the parish calendar, individual calendars, and the Lectionary on hand for this meeting. We begin with a review of the planning process up to this point and then talk through the parish calendar for Year C, 2015-2016, the Jubilee Year.

4. **Next meeting**
   The next meeting will be for a smaller group of people who have taken part in this process. Their task will be to draw together all the notes and ideas, and to firm up dates in the calendars, to identify the leaders for each “mercy initiative” and to make sure the budget is in place to support these initiatives. Their work should be done in close collaboration with the parish priest, and after it is approved, it should be published for the entire parish.
Mystagogical Exercise
Leader: Review the work of the past four meetings. Share about the blessings and the challenges you have been given during this planning process. Use our review notes here or create your own to lead the group through a mystagogical exercise. Pause in each week’s notes to allow people to respond to the questions.

In the first week we dug into and examined *The Face of Mercy* in order to understand more fully what the Church is asking of us through the words of Pope Francis. Thinking back, how has his leadership shaped your planning? What elements of his Papal Bull are most striking to you now? (Return to review it if necessary.)

In the second week we defined mercy in plain English and worked through an exercise to help us speak about it clearly. In your own words now, repeat again how you define mercy.

In the third week we discussed mercy as we have experienced it given to us and as we have offered it to others in our own lives and in the life of the parish. What are the insights that you gleaned from that exercise? What groups or persons who are in need of mercy tug at your heart and linger in your consciousness? What hopes for the parish do you have regarding the Jubilee? What are your dreams?

In the last meeting, our fourth, we explored actual practices of mercy that we might undertake as a parish. These are specific steps that we add to our current parish culture to respond to Pope Francis’ call for the Jubilee Year. Of all the various ideas that were discussed, which ones struck you as most important for the life of the parish? Which ones struck you as less than really essential?

This week we will finalize our plan and look at it in light of the calendar for the Jubilee year. This is our final meeting but not the end of our work. We want to take the best ideas from this process and see how they fit into our calendar, see who can lead them, and see what their cost might be. Use the numbered rows in the calendar below for ease of discussion in your group. Add these to your existing parish calendar and write up a plan.

Before the conclusion of this meeting, choose a working group of two to three members to write up this plan and prepare it to be shared with the whole parish. Don’t be afraid to call on parishioners who have marketing skills to help you get the word out on this.
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dec 8</td>
<td>The Jubilee year begins today, a Tuesday. But Advent of course, begins on Nov 29. Will we plan to make the first ten days of Advent a preparatory period for the Jubilee? What is the plan for inviting people to experience the mercy of God through Reconciliation during Advent, being careful not to reduce the idea of mercy to that sacrament?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nov 29 and Dec 6</td>
<td>The first two homilies of Advent will fall before the official beginning of the Jubilee. Do you want to use them to prepare your parish for the year ahead? Should there be a special reflection group of parishioners or team members to help shape homilies during this entire year?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dec 8</td>
<td>Pope Francis will open the Holy Door of St Peter’s Basilica today. How will we catechize about this? What is the significance of opening that door, or of people making pilgrimage to walk through it?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Dec 13</td>
<td>On the 3rd Sunday of Advent, the Holy Father will open the Holy Door at St John Lateran Church in Rome. Doors in Cathedral Churches throughout the world will likewise be opened on this day. Is there a door we can develop in this parish to reflect the actions of the Holy Father? How can we help folks know about the Holy Door at the diocesan cathedral or other local church? This may be a moment when we can help explain the meaning of indulgences.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Dec 24-25</td>
<td>How will we use the Feast of Christmas to show special mercy to the people of our parish? To those who only worship with us infrequently? To non-Catholic spouses and parents? Should we prepare our active parishioners to speak about their own faith and invite inactive members of their neighborhood or family to experience the mercy of God and the church?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Jan 1</td>
<td>Jan 1 is on Friday. On this day the Holy Door will be opened at the Basilica of St Mary Major. It is World Day for Peace. How will we catechize about this somewhat forgotten Feast day?</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Note that Ash Wednesday is extremely early in 2016, on Feb 10. There are only about 45 days between the Feast of Epiphany and Ash Wednesday. Long range planning for Lent should be done in 2015.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Jubilee for clergy, religious, and laity who work in shrines and parishes.</td>
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<td>Jan 19</td>
<td>(Through the year, various special jubilees will be held like this one. As you read through these notes, think about how we can plan to observe these here in this parish.)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Jan 25</td>
<td>Feast of St Paul. The Holy Door at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls in Rome will be opened. Lots of Holy Doors are being opened!</td>
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<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>Jubilee for consecrated life. How have members of religious orders touched our parish or our lives? How can we observe the Jubilee in celebration of them?</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>Ash Wednesday. The Missionaries of Mercy will be sent from St Peter’s in Rome to the whole world. Watch for word from the diocesan office about this.</td>
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<td>What is our plan to kick off Lent as a special Jubilee Year observance? Take time to discuss this plan in detail, including any reconciliation, outreach, retreat, or welcoming practices you might initiate.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Mar 4-5</td>
<td>24 Hours for the Lord – a penitential liturgy in St Peter’s. How will we as a parish observe this call to penitence? Take time to discuss this plan in detail.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Mar 27</td>
<td>Easter Sunday. As on Christmas, how will we welcome people to our liturgies and make this a time of true mercy for them?</td>
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Traditionally, the novena for divine mercy is prayed on
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<td>the nine days ending on Divine Mercy Sunday. What do we plan to do with that?</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Apr 3</td>
<td>Divine Mercy Sunday – Jubilee for those devoted to the spirituality of Divine Mercy. What is our plan for this weekend?</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Apr 24</td>
<td>Jubilee for children ages 13-16, to profess faith and construct a culture of mercy. How will we extend the Jubilee to the children of our parish?</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>May 29</td>
<td>The Body &amp; Blood of Christ (in the U.S.) Corpus Christi in Italy and much of the world. Jubilee for deacons. Our plan?</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Jun 3</td>
<td>Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Jubilee for priests throughout the world. How can we honor and celebrate the priests who serve in this parish? How can we help our parishioners to experience the powerful love that flows from God’s heart?</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Jun 12</td>
<td>11th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Jubilee for persons with illness or disabilities. Our plan?</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Jul 26 to Jul 31</td>
<td>World Youth Day in Poland. Jubilee for youth throughout the world. What is our plan?</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Sep 4</td>
<td>Memorial of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. Jubilee for workers and volunteers of mercy throughout the world. This includes the pastoral care and outreach workers in our parish. What is our plan?</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Sep 25</td>
<td>Jubilee for Catechists throughout the world. What is our plan for our paid teachers and volunteer catechists? How do we recognize the catechetical role that parents are called to play? See our special resource on this topic which is part of this planning kit.</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Oct 8-9</td>
<td>Marian Jubilee. Is this a chance to catechize about Mary and the role she plays in the life of the Church? October is a month traditionally set aside for special Marian devotions.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Nov 6</td>
<td>Jubilee for prisoners. How will we catechize about the</td>
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<td>place of prisoners in the Good News?</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Nov 13</td>
<td>Closing of the Holy Doors in Rome and in the churches around the world.</td>
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<td>How will you bring this Jubilee to a close in your parish? Do you want</td>
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<td>to hold a special event in mid-November to close this year but help</td>
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<td>everyone to continue to live as a Church of Mercy?</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Nov 20</td>
<td>Feast of Christ the King and closing of the Holy Door at St Peter’s in</td>
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<td>Rome. Conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy.</td>
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Opening Prayer for meeting five
Begin with the †Sign of the Cross. A hymn may be sung.

Invitation to Prayer
The leader now invites all present to pause briefly and turn their hearts to Jesus. Simply invite each person to quiet the inner voice and become conscious of Jesus’ presence within and among you. Invite everyone to speak to him briefly in their own words, and to listen for how Jesus speaks. This pause may last for 3 to 5 minutes.

Community Prayer
Now pray Sirach 2:1-11 in unison or in choral style.

All you that fear the Lord, trust him, and you will certainly be rewarded.

All you that fear the Lord, look forward to his blessings of mercy and eternal happiness.

Think back to the ancient generations and consider this: has the Lord ever disappointed anyone who put his hope in him? Has the Lord ever abandoned anyone who held him in constant reverence? Has the Lord ever ignored anyone who prayed to him?

The Lord is kind and merciful; he forgives our sins and keeps us safe in time of trouble.

(Good News translation)

Faith sharing
Invite each participant now to share aloud any key insights from this reading that they have gleaned. What word or phrase struck their ear? What insight or hope arose in their hearts? How does this reading connect to what’s happening in their daily lives or the life of the parish? If you go around the circle briefly sharing, this should take about 7-8 minutes.

Close now with the †Sign of the Cross and begin your work.
Salve Regina
Pray this prayer in unison as you close your meeting. Close with the †Sign of the Cross.

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy,
our life, our sweetness, and our hope.
To you we cry, the children of Eve;
to you we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this land of exile.

Turn, then, most gracious advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us;
lead us home at the end
and show us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus:
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.
Amen.

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