

Homily: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent: Cycle C: 2015; Zep 3: 14-18; Is 12: 2-3, 4. 5-6; Phil 4: 4-7; Lk 3:  
10-18

“The Jubilee of Divine Mercy”

1. **We have begun the special jubilee year of Divine Mercy in the Church:** which began on December 8<sup>th</sup> and will go to the Solemnity of Christ the King next November 20, 2016. It is meant to be a special year of graces for all the faithful, to turn to the Lord in a deeper way asking for His forgiveness and mercy and bringing that into our daily life in how we treat one another. To practice the corporeal and spiritual works of mercy - as Pope Francis says in his letter instituting this special year: *“Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead”* (paragraph 15). It is also a special year to try to reach out to those who have fallen away from the practice of the Catholic faith, which both the priest and laity have an important role to play in this regard. You can reach fallen away people I can’t reach, and I ask you to put them in touch with me or whoever their local priest is to help them especially if they need to look at a marriage situation or just to make a good Confession of their sins in the Sacrament after many years away. This year of Mercy which Pope Francis initiated is meant to help prepare the people of the world for Christ’s second coming whenever that occurs- which may be soon considering how the world is going! St. John Paul II said back in 1976 before he became Pope that the world is entering into the final battle between good and evil. And as St. Faustina said in her Diary of Divine Mercy, now is the time of Divine Mercy before Jesus returns for the final judgment in Divine Justice. Now is the time to turn to Jesus’s Divine Mercy in total trust and abandonment, for our good and the good of the whole world. As we say to God in the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, which I encourage you to say every day during this Year of Mercy, *for the sake of His sorrowful Passion have mercy on us and on the whole world.*

2. Pope Francis puts it so poignantly in the Bull, or letter, of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Divine Mercy (please read the whole document), “***Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy.*** *These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him. The Father, "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4), after having revealed his name to Moses as "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6), has never ceased to show, in various ways throughout history, his divine nature. In the "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), when everything had been arranged according to his plan of salvation, he sent his only Son into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to reveal his love for us in a definitive way. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. Jn 14:9). Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God. We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to a hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness” (paragraphs 2-3).*
  
3. **As Pope Francis says in this letter, the Lord is calling us to have a real conversion in our life as St. John the Baptist is saying in the Gospel today as well:** to go from being a Catholic who goes to Mass on Sunday but then lives the rest of the week the way we like, to having a true change of heart, making our Catholic faith the way of our life, each and every moment of each day, influencing our choices in life, how we think, what we say and do - being totally concerned about what God thinks of us as opposed to other people and the human respect that naturally influences our daily choices. The essential help in all this is **the Sacrament of Reconciliation** which we have the opportunity to receive always, but especially during the holy season of Advent. Pope Francis has a beautiful section on this in relation to priests as Confessors in his letter introducing this Year of Divine Mercy, “*I will never tire of insisting that confessors be authentic signs of the Father's mercy. We do not become good confessors automatically. We become good*

*confessors when, above all, we allow ourselves to be penitents in search of his mercy. Let us never forget that to be confessors means to participate in the very mission of Jesus to be a concrete sign of the constancy of divine love that pardons and saves. We priests have received the gift of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins, and we are responsible for this. None of us wields power over this Sacrament; rather, we are faithful servants of God's mercy through it. Every confessor must accept the faithful as the father in the parable of the prodigal son: a father who runs out to meet his son despite the fact that he has squandered away his inheritance. Confessors are called to embrace the repentant son who comes back home and to express the joy of having him back again. Let us never tire of also going out to the other son who stands outside, incapable of rejoicing, in order to explain to him that his judgment is severe and unjust and meaningless in light of the father's boundless mercy. May confessors not ask useless questions, but like the father in the parable, interrupt the speech prepared ahead of time by the prodigal son, so that confessors will learn to accept the plea for help and mercy gushing from the heart of every penitent. In short, confessors are called to be a sign of the primacy of mercy always, everywhere, and in every situation, no matter what" (paragraph 17). Take advantage of this gift of God during the Year of Mercy, especially if you have been away from the Sacrament for a long time, I am here to help as your pastor. If you don't feel comfortable coming to the Penance service on Wednesday because it has been so long, call me and make an appointment and we will have a nice chat and give you a clean slate with God. Remember every time we make a good Confession in the Sacrament it is a like a 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptism where all our sins are wiped away and our soul is made clean and pure like a little baby after they receive their baptism. **Why would we pass up that opportunity because of pride, or fear, or shame or whatever? The priest is God's instrument of mercy and the door of the Confessional is the entrance to it- don't pass it up!** Remember the reason we go to Confession as Catholics is that we need to admit and confess our sins because of God's justice and holiness, but then His mercy He takes our sins and casts them away giving us a new beginning in grace. And as we heard in the second reading: it will bring *a joy and a peace and a hope* that the world cannot understand or take away because it comes from God directly: when you make a good Confession and receive His healing and grace and mercy which is a truly a foretaste of eternal life. God bless you.*