

Acting as a People of Mercy

Dear Friends,

“Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy.” So began Pope Francis’ announcement of the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. We began this time in the Church on December 8, 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

How can our families participate in the Year of Mercy? The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) offers a pattern of mercy that all of us can emulate.

In the story, a traveler is beaten and left for dead on the side of the road. Two people from his community pass, but they do not help. Then, a Samaritan—the enemy—sees his plight. The Samaritan takes the wounded person to an inn and pays for his care.

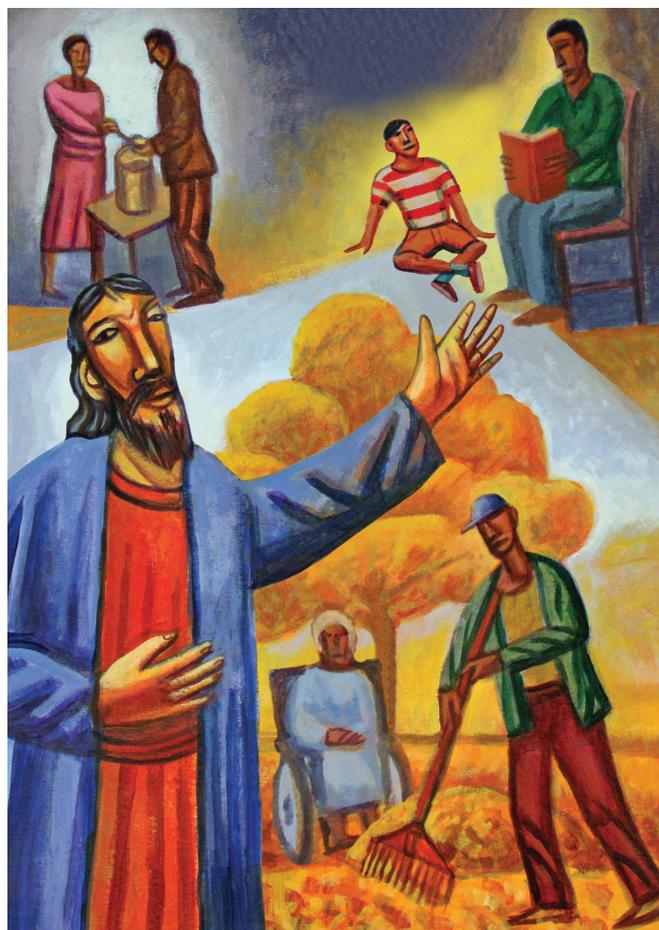
What does the pattern of this parable reveal about being people of mercy?

At a family dinner ask, “Who are the people we don’t see?”

First, like the Samaritan, we must see the one who is in need of mercy in a way that allows the degree of the individual’s need to stir our hearts. Not long ago, I passed a young woman at an exit ramp of a local highway. She held a sign asking for money for diapers and other necessities. While part of me was skeptical (how did I know she wouldn’t use the money for drugs or alcohol?), I gave her some cash on the chance that her need was real. Perhaps you, like me, see people who are in need but find yourself hesitating to get involved.

Second, we have to let ourselves feel something about the person’s predicament. The Samaritan “was moved with compassion at the sight.” His focus was on the person in need. To be compassionate is to “feel with,” an essential step in mercy. Often, people around us are struggling. We may find ourselves tired of trying to understand their problems or grief.

Finally, to be people of mercy, we must respond. The Samaritan goes to the battered man, cares for his wounds, and takes him to a place of safety. The Samaritan uses his resources to make a difference. How are we involved as



Families can decide as a unit how to be open to and meet the needs of individuals.

a family in works of justice and care in our community? Are we part of any ministry our parish offers? In what ways are we of service to others?

At a family dinner ask, “Who are the people we don’t see? How could we take action on behalf of those in need?”

The prophet Micah said it so well, thousands of years ago: “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

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