

INTRODUCTION TO PRAYER RESOURCE

Pope Francis announced a Jubilee Year of Mercy beginning on December 8, 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, and ending on November 20, 2016, the Solemnity of Christ the King. The bull of induction, *Misericordiae Vultus* (the face of mercy), by which the pope made the announcement is worthy of prayerful reading. He manages to bring out the richness of divine mercy and mercy's relationship with divine justice in clear, accessible prose. The document is available on the Vatican's website:

https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html

In the bull, Pope Francis wrote, "It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy" (no. 15).

In response to the pope's desire, Catholic Charities USA will offer—at seven points during the year—a prayer service focused on one of the corporal works of mercy: feed the hungry (December 8, 2015), give drink to the thirsty (February 10, 2016), clothe the naked (March 25, 2016), shelter the homeless (May 5, 2016), visit the sick (August 15, 2016), visit the imprisoned (September 15, 2016), and bury the dead (November 20, 2016). A note on each of the seven spiritual works of mercy will be included.

The prayer services will be one way we can join the pope and the whole church in celebrating the gift of divine mercy in our lives. The hope is that our prayer will deepen our commitment to serve our brothers and sisters. If we reflect on our relationship with God, then how can we fail to see the mercy he has lavished upon us in so many ways? The fact that we have recognized divine mercy in our lives is manifested, Pope Francis says, when we are merciful like the Father.