



A PRAYER SERVICE  
FOR THE YEAR OF MERCY

**OPENING SONG** *There's a Wideness in God's Mercy* (sheet music attached)

**GREETING**

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** As we continue to celebrate the Jubilee Year of Mercy, our community joins the global church in remembering the wideness of God's infinite mercy. And so let us pray...

*God of Mercy,  
We are Church, carrying on the mission of your Son Jesus  
Christ, the face of your infinite mercy. Gather us into your arms  
and send us out to the world, sharing the Good News through  
our words and actions. We pray that the spiritual and corporal  
works of mercy we perform may become the visible  
manifestation of your love for the world.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**Leader:** Please be seated as we listen to God's word.

*(OR PEOPLE MAY REMAIN STANDING FOR THE GOSPEL.)*

**READING** *Matthew 12:21–35*

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew:

Then Peter approaching asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount.

"Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of

that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart."

The Gospel of the Lord.

## REFLECTION

*(A prepared reflection may be offered at this point or the following reflection may be used.)*

Every day Catholics around the world pray the Lord's Prayer at Mass, yet it's easy to pass over the words, missing the depth of mercy contained within. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Some translations use the word *debt* – "Forgive us our debts." In our gospel reading today Jesus uses this word to describe sin. Sin is a kind of debt against others. It robs others of dignity, worth, and love. And so Jesus gives a parable using this image to explain the power of mercy and forgiveness. When the servant pleads mercy to his master to whom he owes money, the master is moved with compassion and forgives him the debt. When the servant failed to show the same compassion to his own servant, he essentially is rejecting the pity his master showed to him—and he suffers the consequences. By refusing mercy, we reject God.

This Year of Mercy is an extraordinary jubilee year. Normally a jubilee occurs every 25 or 50 years and is rooted in Jewish practice. For Jews the year was marked by reconciling family members, setting slaves free, and forgiving debts. What spiritual debts do we need to forgive? Has someone sinned against us? Have we failed to forgive ourselves? "Forgive offences willingly" is one of the seven spiritual works of mercy, in addition to seven corporal

works of mercy. It is one of the specific ways the Lord is asking us to dole out God's mercy into the world. And God also calls us to care for one another in our bodily or corporal needs, too. St James says what good is faith without works? What good are our words to someone who is starving or without shelter? We need to provide basic necessities to those in great need – this is showing our neighbours the dignity they deserve. Love shows itself more in deeds than in words, St Ignatius said.

As this jubilee year continues let us ponder this question: How generous are we with mercy? — As the master in today's gospel reading reminds us, the mercy given to us is intertwined with the mercy we give others. We can't fully understand the depths of God's mercy and forgiveness if we ourselves haven't had the experience of sharing that same mercy to others.

## PETITIONS

*(May be offered by separate community members or a lector.)*

**Leader:** Having reflected on God's call to mercy, let us [stand and] bring our prayers and petitions before God.

Our response is: *God of Mercy, hear our prayer.*

**For the global Church,** that during this jubilee year, all her members may be filled with the desire to show mercy to the most vulnerable among us. We pray to the Lord.

*(God of Mercy, hear our prayer.)*

**For the civic leaders of our country,** that the Holy Spirit may inspire them as they seek to create laws and policies that serve those in need of mercy and liberate people from oppression. We pray to the Lord.

*(God of Mercy, hear our prayer.)*

**For those in our community who are suffering** from physical and mental illness, that they may experience the healing and merciful love of God through their neighbours. We pray to the Lord.

*(God of Mercy, hear our prayer.)*

**For those hurt from past sin,** that as God forgives us our trespasses we may forgive those who trespass against us—and that we may also find

courage to forgive ourselves. We pray to the Lord.  
(*God of Mercy, hear our prayer.*)

**For those in our world** who find it hard to live Christ's call to mercy, that God may soften their hearts and help them to love their enemies. We pray to the Lord.  
(*God of Mercy, hear our prayer.*)

**Leader:** Loving God, hear our prayers, have mercy on us, and give us the grace to share that mercy with our neighbours. We lift these requests to you as we pray the prayer you taught us...

**All:** Our Father...

## CONCLUSION

**Leader:** Before we conclude, let us reflect on these words of Pope Francis:

"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 the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness." [REFLECTIVE PAUSE]

**Leader:** Let us conclude by praying together a prayer for the Year of Mercy:

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,  
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.  
You are the visible face of the invisible Father,  
of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and  
mercy:  
let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and  
glorified.  
Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,  
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,  
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to

the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.

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## Prayer for the Year of Mercy

[Adapted from Pope Francis' Prayer for the Year of Mercy]

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you have taught us to be merciful like  
the heavenly Father,  
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.  
You are the visible face of the invisible Father,  
of the God who manifests his power above all  
by forgiveness and mercy:  
let the Church be your visible face in the world,  
its Lord risen and glorified.  
Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us  
with its anointing,  
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of  
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to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives  
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through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy;  
you who live and reign with the Father and the  
Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.



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***"In this Jubilee Year,  
let us allow God to surprise us."***  
– Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, 25

# There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

Tune: BEACH SPRING

Frederick W Faber (1814-1863)

Chords: F, C, F, Dm, Bb, C, Bb, F, C, F, Dm, Bb, C, Bb, F, Dm, Bb, C, Bb, F

1 There's a wide - ness in God's mer - cy, Like the  
 2 There's a wel - come for the sinn - er, and more  
 3 For the love of God is broad - er than the

1 wide - ness of the sea. There's a kind - ness in God's  
 2 graces for the good. There is mer - cy with the  
 3 measures of the mind. And the heart of the E -

1 jus - tice, which is more than lib - er -  
 2 Sav - iour, there is heal - ing in his  
 3 ter - nal is most won - der - ful - ly

1 ty. There is no place where earth's sorr - ows are more  
 2 blood. There is plenti - ful re - demp - tion, in the  
 3 kind. If our love were but more faith - ful, we would

1 felt than up in hea - ven. There is no place where earth's  
 2 blood that has been shed. There is joy for all the  
 3 glad - ly trust - God's Word, and our lives re - flect thanks -

1 fail - ings have such kind - ly judge - ment given.  
 2 mem - bers in the sor - rows of the Head.  
 3 giv - ing for the good - ness of our Lord.

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## GREETING

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

Opening Prayer:

*God of Mercy,  
 We are Church, carrying on the mission of your Son  
 Jesus Christ, the face of your infinite mercy. Gather us  
 into your arms and send us out to the world, sharing  
 the Good News through our words and actions. We  
 pray that the spiritual and corporal works of mercy we  
 perform may become the visible manifestation of your  
 love for the world.*

*We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

READING *Matthew 12:21–35*

## REFLECTION

## PETITIONS

Our response is: *God of Mercy, hear our prayer.*

## CONCLUSION

*Pope Francis on Mercy: [MISERICORDIAE VULTUS, 2]*

*“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 the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.”*



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Prayer for the Year of Mercy:

*[ADAPTED FROM POPE FRANCIS' PRAYER FOR THE YEAR OF MERCY]*

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,  
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.  
You are the visible face of the invisible Father,  
of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy:  
let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.  
Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,  
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,  
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the  
poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the  
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Dm Bb C Bb

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Dm Bb C Bb F

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 3 giv - ing for the good - ness of our Lord.

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