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(MATTHEW 5:7)



Pastoral Letter

The Holy Year of Mercy 2015-2016

Bishop Paul Hinder, OFM Cap.
Apostolic Vicar of Southern Arabia



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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Peace be with you!

1. It touches our heart if someone looks at us with tender love when we are upset; our face returns to serenity and we may even smile. Pope Francis announced the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy with a letter entitled *Jesus Christ, the face of the Father's mercy* (Misericordiae Vultus = MV). Obviously he wants each one of us to meet with the merciful face of God in Jesus Christ. In him we are freed from the burden of sin and our own face returns to serenity as the fruit of God's grace. The Holy Year of Mercy starts with the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on 8th December 2015 and concludes with the Feast of Christ the King on 20th November 2016.

Origin and Meaning of the Jubilee Year

2. The tradition of celebrating Jubilee Years is rooted in the Old Testament where every 50th Year a kind of restart had to happen: releasing of slaves, cancellation of debts, restitution of land and property sold in times of distress (cf. Leviticus 25:8-55). In a similar way the institution of the sabbatical year (*shmita*) obliged the Israelites to let the land rest every seventh year in order to get back its original fertility and productive capacity after a time of rest (cf. Exodus 23:10-11).

3. Likewise the Jubilee Year of Mercy wants us to take a time of rest and regeneration in order to recommence our reconciliation with God and others. It will help us to get rid of old burdens which hinder us from going forward in freedom and joy. A Jubilee Year is not a year of accounts and reckoning, but rather a year of mercy, compassion and liberation. It is an opportunity to examine our personal life where old debts and hidden anger are waiting to be deleted or healed. It is a spiritual process identical to what Saint Paul is telling us in his second letter to the Corinthians:

“So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors

for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” (2 Co 5:17-20)

Opening Celebration of the Year of Mercy in our Vicariate

4. We have to break down the walls which hinder us from moving towards God and others. The “Holy Door” at Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome which Pope Francis opens on 8th December 2015 symbolizes all the doors we have to open during this coming Year of Mercy: first the doors of our hearts but also the doors of our homes and churches. Doors are made to allow people to enter. In our Vicariate I shall open solemnly the main-door of Saint Joseph’s Cathedral on the evening of the 8th December at 7 pm. It will symbolize the entrance to the “throne of grace” of which we read in the letter to the Hebrews:

“Let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.” (He 4:16)

In order to give the opportunity to a maximum number of the faithful to pass through the Holy Door I am asking each parish priest to declare one of the doors of their respective churches as the “Holy Door”. It will be the door through which we can “*confidently approach the throne of grace*”: for our personal prayer, for the sacrament of reconciliation, for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and for other occasions. Although the faithful are invited to join me on the 8th December 2015 in Abu Dhabi, most of the people will not have that opportunity. Therefore I am asking all the parish priests to celebrate on the same evening, first the opening of the Holy Door of the church, and then the Holy Eucharist of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. There may be added a special prayer in order to mark the beginning of the Year of Mercy.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation during the Year of Mercy

5. I also wish that during the whole Year of Mercy, especially during Advent 2015 and Lent 2016, additional times be arranged and announced for the sacrament of reconciliation. I also recommend penitential celebrations in common followed by individual confessions. The collaboration between the parishes and the coordination of the timetables will make it possible that on those occasions more priests are available. Priests coming for mission retreats

to our parishes are requested to focus on the Year of Mercy and to be available as confessors. In accordance with the announcement of Pope Francis I grant to all the resident and visiting priests who have my approval for pastoral work in our territory, the faculty to absolve sins usually reserved to the bishop. Thus they can really act as “Missionaries of Mercy”.

6. I like to remind my brother priests of the following words of Pope Francis:

“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.” (MV 17)

7. The sacrament of reconciliation is not a shortcut to obtain a “cheap grace”. It requires in our heart an act of real penance, which we should not confuse with the “penance” the priest is giving you before the absolution. Penance means to take a U-turn where we have gone the wrong way and to show it in acts of reparation wherever it is possible. When David had committed adultery and murder or when he organized a census of his people against God’s will, each time he honestly repented but at the same time he had to undergo a period of penance. Therefore the confession should never degenerate to a kind of “rapid bleaching” without a deeper process of re-conversion to God.

This process requires personal sacrifices joined with humility and concrete actions of reparation. Only then the generous mercy of God can fully develop its strength and beauty.

8. I invite all of you to live the Year of Mercy in a spirit of openness to what God wants you to do. One of the first things we have to do is to overcome any anger that may be hidden deep in our hearts. Only then the door of compassion is open as we read in the book of Sirach:

*“Does anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the Lord?”
(Sir 28:3)*

Meditate with me two basic texts of the Bible, which may help us to understand better the meaning of the Year of Mercy during which we hope to experience what we hear in Psalm 85: *“Love and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss.”
(Ps 85:11)*

THE PRODIGAL SON

9. First I wish to remind you of one of the most beautiful pages of the whole Bible. In chapter 15 of Luke’s Gospel we find the following situation: “The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to him, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain” because Jesus was welcoming sinners and eating with them (Luke 15:1-2). The Lord replies with three parables: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost (or prodigal) son. The joy of having found the lost sheep, the lost coin and finally the lost son is in contrast with the discontent of those who consider themselves as correct and faithful (the Pharisees, the scribes, and in the parable the elder son).

The Common Problem of the two Brothers

10. What happens in the parable of the prodigal son is shocking. The younger of the two boys makes the choice to leave his father and his brother taking with him the share of his inheritance. In the context of the culture at that time this means that he considers his father as a dead person of whom he has no more any need. After squandering his heritage in a lustful and vicious life he ends up as a slave working among the pigs, something particularly detestable for a Jew. Only the deepest misery begets his decision to return to the father as a slave.

Against all expectations the father welcomes him without any reproach and re-establishes him as son with all his original rights.

11. No wonder that the elder son who had decided to remain with the father is angry. At the bottom of his heart there must have been a deep discontent. Without admitting it openly he was somehow jealous of his younger brother. Although he behaved all the time as the correct and obedient son he was not really happy. On the occasion of the return of his squandering and loose-living brother all the poison comes out of his heart:

“Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.” (Luke 15:29-30)

It is the reaction of a correct and faithful boy who deep in his heart was not happy and most probably would have liked to have done as his younger brother.

The Father reaching out to his sons

12. Let us now look at the father! The humiliation by the younger son does not change the father’s love. He continues to wait for him all the time as sorrowful parents do regarding a child who has gone astray. He has not given up his son but is awaiting him. He recognizes his lost son from a distance. And he does what no noble sheikh would ever do: he runs in his long robe towards the son and does not even let him finish his confession but simply reinstalls him as his son.

13. With the same love he tries to overcome the anger of the elder son: He leaves the house again to meet him. He listens patiently to his complaints and frustration and lets him spit out the poisonous feelings against the younger brother. At the end he simply replies: *“My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours.” (Luke 15:31)*. Why can’t you see it? And why can’t you rejoice with me? And the father concludes: *“But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.” (Luke 15:32)*

The Parable is our own story

14. The Year of Mercy is an occasion to reflect on our own life in the light of

this parable. Most of us will identify ourselves with the prodigal son, because we all feel and behave at least sometimes like the younger son. However, are we not very often rather the elder son? At times we may count the years we served God, but may not be very happy about our own faith and piety. Are we really satisfied of being with the Father? Or is there deep inside the hidden jealousy regarding those who go astray? The gospel does not tell us what the older son finally decided: whether he kept his anger or joined the celebrating community. Jesus obviously wants to challenge you and me with the figure of the elder son: Are you, are we, ready to accept the love of God not only for ourselves but for everyone who comes back to him – even the squandering son? Are we ready to enter in friendship with Jesus who loves not only me but also those with whom I may disagree?

15. To most of us it may happen that we are getting very angry looking at all the corruption and injustice, the lies and infidelities in the big world of politics and business, but also in the small world of our personal relations. Who does not revolt when we become victims of betrayal and treachery? Even God reacted in anger against his people who broke the alliance. But anger is not his last word, because God acts not only as the just, but as the God full of mercy. In contrast to God, human beings like to react more in anger against the sin of the others than in pity. Many of us, also good Catholics, often become very hard in judging those who have committed sins. We are like the Pharisees and the scribes who complained about Jesus: “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” (Luke 15:2) The Year of Mercy is an excellent chance to look with the eyes of Jesus around us and to behave accordingly.

The Parable is a challenge to the Church

16. At the time when the gospel was written down, the parable was addressed to people who were already baptized and members of the Church, so his words were not only pertinent to the scribes and Pharisees of his own time. The story of the two sons addresses the problem of any Christian community, which despite its holiness is composed of sinners. The three parables in chapter 15 of Luke can be seen as a catechesis for us all. How do we deal with the sin in our midst?

17. It is important to read the stories of Jesus in the light of his whole teaching. The boundless love the Lord shows towards sinners does not justify the sin

itself. Jesus never justifies the sin, such as adultery, robbery, lying, murder, injustice and so on. What Jesus teaches and practices instead, is a new behaviour towards the sinner. The sinner is someone who has to be freed. He or she is someone who needs a powerful friend, whose first word is not condemnation, but compassion, not the arrogance of the self-righteous, but the love of the redeemer. Jesus is the one who carries the sin of us all on the cross and does not reject the sinner. Remember the first words of Jesus as he hung from the cross, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) The parables in chapter 15 of Luke's gospel show us that God is looking after the sinner who is lost. In his Son Jesus Christ he sets off to find everyone who might be a prisoner of any kind of sin. Whoever is found by Jesus and accepts his love in a personal conversion and in the sacrament of reconciliation is the reason for a feast here on earth as well as in heaven.

18. Even as sinners we remain the beloved children of God. His only purpose is to find and to bring back the lost sheep, the lost drachmas, the prodigal sons and the elder ones. We should never forget: If even human parents – especially the mothers - are able to worry about a child going his bad way and do not terminate the special tie of love, all the more God is willing and able to maintain his special relationship to every person – even the sinner! I'll just quote one of the most beautiful texts of the Bible in this regard, taken from the prophet Hosea, where God reacts exactly as a very concerned mother about the people who had turned from him:

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called Israel, the farther they went from me ... Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, who took them in my arms; but they did not know that I cared for them. I drew them with human cords, with bands of love; I fostered them like those who raise an infant to their cheeks; I bent down to feed them ... My people have their mind set on apostasy ... How could I give you up, Ephraim, or deliver you up, Israel? ... My heart is overwhelmed, my pity is stirred. I will not give vent to my blazing anger, I will not destroy Ephraim again; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One present among you; I will not come in wrath." (Hosea 11:1-9)

19. The Year of Mercy gives us the opportunity to rejoice in the boundless love of God and to rejoice with the good Shepherd who is full of joy for every lost sheep he has found. *"There is rejoicing among the angels of God over one*

repentant sinner.” Whoever in our midst is repenting for his sins and returning to the true way is a reason for feasting in heaven and on earth.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Moved by compassion

20. Reconciliation requires compassion. That leads me to another famous parable in the gospel of Luke. We find it in chapter 10 where a lawyer is asking Jesus: *“Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* Like a good teacher Jesus answers with a counter question: *“What is written in the law? How do you read it?”* He thus invites the scribe to find the solution in the Bible where the answer is clear and simple:

“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.” (Luke 10:25-27)

21. However, as a lawyer the man wants to get things more precisely and continues: *“And who is my neighbour?”* Jesus replies by telling the fascinating story of a man who “fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho” and was left half-dead in the wilderness. First, a priest passes the injured man, then a Levite, specialists in religion and therefore knowing the Bible by heart, but neither of them does anything for the wounded man although they have seen him. The best knowledge of the Bible does not guarantee the right acting in a critical situation. This opportunity is, however, taken by a passing Samaritan, in the eyes of the Jews a kind of outlaw. This man is *“moved with compassion”* and does everything in order to help the wounded and half-dead man (cf. Luke 10:33-35).

22. The lawyer had asked: *“And who is my neighbour?”* At the very end of the story Jesus inverts the question: *“Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbour to the robbers’ victim?”* This elicits the reply *“the one who treated him with mercy.”* (Luke 10:36-37) Thus the academic question “who is my neighbour” becomes a challenge to keep the eyes open and to move towards the one who is in need. Neighbourhood therefore is not simply a geographical question regarding the neighbour in the next house or the people next door. In the understanding of Jesus neighbourhood really means all those who need my help; I have to move

towards the other in order that the one who is an alien and stranger to me is getting close, can move my heart by compassion, and makes me act in love.

“Go, and do likewise” (Luke 10:37)

23. We have many examples in the history of the saints who have followed the example of Jesus and become neighbours to the wounded. I only recall memories of saints such as Francis of Assisi who overcame his disgust of the lepers, approached and kissed them, and took care of them. Or Blessed Teresa of Calcutta who did not wait in her convent until the sick people knocked at the door but went out to the streets and became thus a loving neighbour to the dying people. Or Saint Damien De Veuster who did not distance himself from the lepers in Hawaii but lived among them and took care of them to the point that he himself was infected by leprosy and died.

24. Not everyone is born to be a Francis of Assisi, a Teresa of Calcutta or a Damien De Veuster. However, we too are called to open our eyes and hearts and to become the neighbour to someone who needs us. You may remember what Pope Francis said when on July 13, 2013 he went to Lampedusa, the Italian island close to Africa, in order to become a neighbour to the stranded refugees. He said:

“Today no one in our world feels responsible; we have lost a sense of responsibility for our brothers and sisters. We have fallen into the hypocrisy of the priest and the Levite whom Jesus described in the parable of the Good Samaritan: we see our brother half dead on the side of the road, and perhaps we say to ourselves: “poor soul...!”, and then go on our way. It’s not our responsibility, and with that we feel reassured, assuaged. The culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people, makes us live in soap bubbles which, however lovely, are insubstantial; they offer a fleeting and empty illusion which results in indifference to others; indeed, it even leads to the globalization of indifference. In this globalized world, we have fallen into globalized indifference. We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn’t affect me; it doesn’t concern me; it’s none of my business!” (Homily in Lampedusa, 8th July 2013)

25. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Jesus wants us to be affected and concerned. He wants us to make the needs and pains of the others our business! We have

such Samaritans among us: Men and women looking after the sick, visiting prisoners, assisting people living in labour camps, helping women who have been abused or enslaved. Sometimes we do not need to go far: Maybe you have to become a more loving neighbour to your own wife or husband if you have become strangers one to another. May be your own children are longing for your love and care. May be some of your colleagues would be happy if you became a true neighbour. Keep in mind the word of Jesus at the very end of the story referring to the Good Samaritan: *“Go, and do likewise!” (Luke 10:37)*

Jesus is the true Samaritan

26. At this point it is worth having a look at a deeper dimension of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus is telling the moving story not only to improve our moral behaviour. Yes, but he also wants to reveal something about himself. Already the early Church saw sinful humanity in the man *“fallen into the hands of brigands”* and in the Good Samaritan Jesus Christ, the Saviour. Thus the parable is like a colourful explanation to what is said in the first letter of John:

“In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another.” (1 Jo 4:10-11)

Jesus, the Son of God, is the Samaritan who saw us, approached us *“moved with compassion”, “bandaged our wounds” and took care of us. “He lifted (us) up on his own animal, took (us) to an inn and cared for (us).” (Luke 10:34)* That means, as we hear every year on Good Friday in the first reading: *“Yet it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured ... He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed ... But the LORD laid upon him the guilt of us all.” (Isaiah 53:4-6)* In the “inn” – that means in the Church with her sacraments – Jesus Christ provides whatever is necessary for our recovery. And when he comes back at the end of time he will make good everything.

27. Unless we keep the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in mind we won't understand the meaning of the parable of the Good Samaritan nor be able to act as Jesus did. Left on our own we act exactly like the priest and the Levite: We *“pass by on the other side”* in order not to be disturbed in our lives because as sinful human beings we are specialists in closing our eyes in front of the misery of others. We need Jesus who puts his Holy Spirit into our

hearts and makes it possible that we act like the true Samaritan: that “*moved with compassion*” we see the disastrous situation of so many people and do not “*pass by on the opposite side*”, but “*approach the victim, pour oil and wine over his wounds and bandage them.*” (Luke 10:34) It does not make any difference if the wounded is friend or enemy, compatriot or foreigner, Christian or non-Christian, nice or unpleasant. Jesus did not make the difference. We only have to open our eyes. Then the question will no more be “*Who is my neighbour?*” but “*Who is the one whose neighbour I should become and take care of?*” May be he or she is already very close.

THE YEAR OF MERCY – A CHANCE OF RENEWAL

28. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I invite you to take the Year of Mercy as a unique opportunity of discovering in a new way the mercy of God, of renewing the sense of compassion, and of undertaking real steps of reconciliation with God and with others. The Holy Father wants us to renew that spirit of openness, which marked the Vatican Council II as he reminds us in the Bull announcing officially the Year of Mercy:

“The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning. It was a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father’s love in the world.” (MV 4)

Accept forgiveness and offer forgiveness

29. It is the purpose of the Year of Mercy to rediscover the love of the Father revealed in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. During the coming year each one of us may become aware that he or she not only needs mercy and reconciliation but that there are situations where we have to offer mercy and reconciliation: husband and wife, parents and children, priests and lay people, competing groups within the parishes, colleagues at the place of work, family members back in the home country, people of other cultures we have difficulties to get

along with, and many other situations. Let's take the courage to move! In this context I wish to refer to a famous text in the writings of Saint Francis of Assisi. He addresses a provincial minister who had to deal with difficult brothers. We can adapt the advice of Saint Francis to our own life situation when we have to deal with people who make difficulties and behave in a sinful manner:

“May there be no friar in the world, who has sinned, as much as it is possible to sin, that, after having seen your eyes, does not go away without your forgiveness, if he asks for it; and if he did not ask for forgiveness, you ask him if he wants to be forgiven. And if afterwards he should sin a thousand times before your eyes, love him more than me for this, so that you are able to attract him to the Lord, and always have mercy for such brothers.” (Francis of Assisi, Letter to a Minister)

No mercy without prayer

30. In the collect of the XXIV Sunday in Ordinary Time the Church prays:

“O God, who manifest your almighty power above all by pardoning and showing mercy, bestow, we pray, your grace abundantly upon us and make those hastening to attain your promises, heirs of the treasures of heaven.”

It will be a spiritually fruitful exercise during the Year of Mercy to recite some short prayer or invocations referring to mercy. We can silently pray them wherever we are and whatever we are doing. Take for example the prayer at the beginning of the Mass:

Kyrie eleison – Christe Eleison – Kyrie eleison (Lord have mercy – Christ have mercy – Lord have mercy).

Or adapt the cry of blind Bartimaeus and say:

“Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me!” (cf. Mk 10:47)

31. Why not learn by heart some longer prayers or texts of mercy? For example Psalm 103 in which we pray:

“Merciful and gracious is the LORD, slow to anger, abounding in mercy. He will not always accuse, and nurses no lasting anger; he has not dealt with us as our sins merit, nor requited us as our wrongs deserve. For as the heavens tower over the earth, so his mercy towers over those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us. As a father has compassion on his

children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him. For he knows how we are formed, remembers that we are dust.” (Ps 103:8-14)

There are many other pearls in the Psalms and other books of the Bible. Pick them out and store them in your memory and heart. Thus we may pray with Saint Paul:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God. For as Christ’s sufferings overflow to us, so through Christ does our encouragement also overflow.” (2 Co 1:3-5)

Such a prayer leads us beyond our own sorrows and helps us to keep in mind those who are passing through suffering and trials.

Indulgence – An outpouring from the merciful heart of the Church

32. The indulgence during the Year of Mercy shows us that we are living in the communion of the Church where we have responsibility for one another. We not only ask the indulgence for ourselves but also invoke it for the others that we all may be able to proceed towards the heavenly goal. I wish to quote the words of Pope Francis:

The Church lives within the communion of the saints. In the Eucharist, this communion, which is a gift from God, becomes a spiritual union binding us to the saints and blessed ones whose number is beyond counting (cf. Rev 7:9). Their holiness comes to the aid of our weakness in a way that enables the Church, with her maternal prayers and her way of life, to fortify the weakness of some with the strength of others. Hence, to live the indulgence of the Holy Year means to approach the Father’s mercy with the certainty that his forgiveness extends to the entire life of the believer. To gain an indulgence is to experience the holiness of the Church, who bestows upon all the fruits of Christ’s redemption, so that God’s love and forgiveness may extend everywhere. Let us live this Jubilee intensely, begging the Father to forgive our sins and to bathe us in His merciful “indulgence.” (MV 22)

The indulgence can be obtained during the whole Year of Mercy. The faithful are asked to pass through the “Holy Door”, to receive the sacramental reconciliation, to pray one “Our Father” and “Hail Mary”, and to do a work of mercy and charity.

“Most gracious Advocate, turn thine eyes of mercy toward us”

33 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” (Mt 5:7) The Lord shows us the key to the mercy of God in praising the merciful. We can be merciful only if we are compassionate. This we can learn from Our Lady standing under the cross of her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The moving words of the Stabat Mater Hymn can be a school of compassion if prayed in a spirit of faith, hope and love:

*O thou Mother! fount of love!
Touch my spirit from above,
make my heart with thine accord:*

*Make me feel as thou hast felt;
make my soul to glow and melt
with the love of Christ my Lord.
Holy Mother! pierce me through,
in my heart each wound renew
of my Savior crucified:*

*Let me share with thee His pain,
who for all my sins was slain,
who for me in torments died.*

*Let me mingle tears with thee,
mourning Him who mourned for me,
all the days that I may live:*

*By the Cross with thee to stay,
there with thee to weep and pray,
is all I ask of thee to give.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters, she – the Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy - will pray for us that we are living the Year of Mercy with a spirit ready for reconciliation and a heart full of compassion for those who are suffering and need our assistance. May the Lord bless you and keep you!

Bishop Paul Hinder OFM Cap
Apostolic Vicar of Southern Arabia

Abu Dhabi, 1st November 2015 (Solemnity of All Saints)

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AL AIN - St. Mary's Church

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JEBEL ALI - St. Francis of Assisi Church

P.O. Box 72715, Jebel Ali.

Tel: 04 884 5251, Fax: 04 884 5216

info@stfrancisjebelali.ae

www.stfrancisjebelali.ae

Location: *Jebel Ali Village, behind the Jebel Ali Hospital/ Al Muntazah complex in the churches' area*

FUJAIRAH - Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church

P.O. Box 1168, Fujairah.

Tel: 09 223 1377, Fax: 09 222 3238

olphufujairah@gmail.com

www.olphufujairah.org

Location: *Close to the Water Tower, Carrefour*

RAS AL KHAIMAH - St. Anthony of Padua Church

Box 10946, Ras Al Khaimah.

Tel: 07 222 2377, Fax 07 222 9618

Location: *Take Exit 119 of E311 towards Al Jazeera Al Hamra. The church is situated near the tall chimney of the glass factory.*

SHARJAH - St. Michael's Church

P.O. Box 1745, Sharjah.

Tel: 06 5662424 / 06 5662049, Fax: 06 5663324

stmichaelsch@emirates.net.ae

www.stmichaelssharjah.org

Location: *Al Yarmook Area, close to Al Estiglal Square, the Ministry of Labour*

PARISHES IN OMAN

RUWI - MUSCAT - Sts. Peter and Paul Church

P.O. Box 613, Ruwi 112.

Tel: +968 2470 1893, Fax: +968 2478 8840

ruwiparish@gmail.com

www.ruwichurch.org

GHALA - MUSCAT - Holy Spirit Church

P.O. Box 371, Madinat Qaboos 115.

Tel: +968 2459 0373, Fax: +968 2450 2513

ghalachc@omantel.net.om

www.holyspiritchurchoman.com

SALALAH - St. Francis Xavier Church

P.O. Box 1405, Salalah 211.

Tel: +968 2323 5727, Fax: +968 2323 5787

SOHAR - St. Anthony's Church

P.O. Box 842, Sohar 311.

Tel: +968 2684 1396, Fax: +968 2684 4469

office@soharchurch.org

www.soharchurch.org

The logo of the Jubilee of Mercy



The logo and the motto together provide a fitting summary of what the Jubilee Year is all about. The motto *Merciful Like the Father* (taken from the Gospel of Luke, 6:36) serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of the Father who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to give love and forgiveness without measure (cfr. Lk 6:37-38). The logo – the work of Jesuit Father Marko I. Rupnik – presents a small *summa theologiae* of the theme of mercy. In fact, it represents an image quite important to the early Church: that of the Son having taken upon his shoulders the lost soul demonstrating that it is the love of Christ that brings to completion the mystery of his incarnation culminating in redemption. The logo has been designed in such a way so as to express the profound way in which the Good Shepherd touches the flesh of humanity and does so with a love with the power to change one's life. One particular feature worthy of note is that while the Good Shepherd, in his great mercy, takes humanity upon himself, his eyes are merged with those of man. Christ sees with the eyes of Adam, and Adam with the eyes of Christ. Every person discovers in Christ, the new Adam, one's own humanity and the future that lies ahead, contemplating, in his gaze, the love of the Father.

<http://www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va>



**APOSTOLIC VICARIATE
OF SOUTHERN ARABIA**

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