

# *Fulfilling the Mission of Mercy*

2016 STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL



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**&** JOSEPH PARISH  
NATIVITY  
OF THE BVM PARISH

# Fulfilling the Mission of Mercy

***“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:36)***

December 8, 2015 marked the start of the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, as declared by Pope Francis. This past year has been a historic one for our Church, but even more importantly, it has been a calling to each of us for deeper and further conversion. “Mercy,” as Pope Francis defines it, is “the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.” Each and every one of us is in need of God’s mercy. He forgives us despite our failures and selfishness, and we are called to show that same mercy to those we encounter in our daily lives. Although this Year of Mercy is coming to a close, our mission to live it out never ends.

A life of stewardship can only flow from the awareness that God is love and that His love is merciful. We, as sinners, do not deserve any of the gifts He has given us, but, “God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ” (Ephesians 2:4). A good steward knows it is only by God’s grace that we have this life of abundance. And a good steward knows it is our responsibility to return a portion of those gifts back to Him. How will you carry forward the fruits you have received during this Year of Mercy?





# Stewardship of Time

*“In order to be capable of mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God’s mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle.” — Pope Francis*

If someone gave you the most magnificent gift you have ever received, what would your reaction be? Most people would give a hug, write a thank you note, or at least say, “Thank you!” If this is our reaction to a material gift, how much more should we rejoice over the gifts God has given us?

“Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7). One might argue that the second greatest gift that God gave man — second only to the gift of His Son — is the gift of life. There was no need for God to create man on the sixth day, but out of pure love, God created a being in His image. And even when we fall and choose to turn away from Him, God continues to invite us back into union with Him through the sacraments, specifically that of Reconciliation, through which our soul is wiped clean and we are given the grace to start anew.

This next year, will you show God gratitude for His mercy by spending time with Him in prayer? Will you frequent the sacraments, especially Reconciliation, to receive forgiveness and the grace you need to live a life of holiness, growing closer to Christ?

***A regular prayer life takes time and practice. Pope Francis’ encouragement is to start with 10 minutes each morning, inviting God to be a part of your day.***

- Consider reading the daily readings of the Catholic Church (found at [uscgb.org/bible/readings](http://uscgb.org/bible/readings)).
- Pray with your children each night before bed, giving each family member an opportunity to pray for something and concluding with an Our Father, Hail Mary and the Glory Be.
- Download and utilize Catholic phone and tablet apps, such as iBreviary, Magnificat, The Pope App or Divine Office.

# Stewardship of Talent

Pope Francis tells us that, “Love, after all, can never be an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviors that are shown in daily living.” Not only does God show mercy to His people, but also we are called to imitate Him and show mercy to our fellow man. As a Christian people, we should put the needs of others before the needs of our own, recognizing that if we are to love as Christ loves, our actions should be full of humility and service.

Here in our Catholic community, we show each other Christ’s love through participation in our various parish ministries. Each ministry exists ultimately for the purpose of drawing others into a deeper and fuller relationship with Christ. Please take a minute to look through our ministry catalog, and pray about where God is calling you to serve.

***Serving others means putting their needs before your own***

- Pray and ask God to show you how your talents can be used to help others.
- Get involved in a ministry that pushes you to be more selfless, putting others’ needs first.
- Talk to others about how you’ve grown through service and encourage them to join you!

# Stewardship of Treasure

Throughout the history of the Church, countless Saints gave their all for Christ — many of them willingly handed over their lives because of their love for Jesus. While God continues to call some of the faithful to martyrdom, He calls all of us to give back in thankful response to the gifts we have been given. During this upcoming year, prayerfully discern how God is asking you to give to Him through our parish offertory.

Our parish asks each family to tithe - giving 10% of our household income to our church, the diocese and to other charities. Our parish breaks down the scriptural tithe into 5% to the parish, 1% to the diocese, and 4% to other charities. Ask God where He wants your financial giving to be and take a step increasing your giving by 1% or 2% this year.



***Stewardship requires a shift in perspective — indeed, in the very way we view life itself. God has shown mercy to each and every one of us and given us a life of abundance. How will you view your life in the context of a gift, and express your gratitude to Him - our God who is, “gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in mercy”? (Psalm 145:8)***

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