

*RICH*

*IN*

*MERCY*

During challenging times, and always, **MERCY** sustains us and all to whom we show **MERCY**!

**MERCY** is the loving heart of God our Father who is **RICH IN MERCY** through Jesus Christ our Savior. Saint Paul in his letter to the (Ephesians 2, 4–10) states; But God, who is rich in mercy, was moved by the intense love with which he loved us, and when we were dead by reason of our transgressions, he made us live with the life of Christ. By grace you have been saved. Together with Christ Jesus, and in him, he raised us up and enthroned us in the heavenly realm, that in Christ Jesus he might show throughout the ages to come the overflowing riches of his grace springing from his goodness to us. Yes, it is by grace that you have been saved through faith; it is the gift of God; it is not the result of anything you did, so that no one has any grounds for boasting. We are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus in view of good deeds which God prepared beforehand for us to practice.

My purpose centers on three Popes: St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis I. I call them 'THE THREE MERCY POPES'. These popes of our time bless and guide us with inspiring and inviting **TEACHING** on **MERCY**.

## PAPAL SOURCES

- ST. JOHN PAUL II – encyclical, *DIVES ET MISERICORDIA, RICH IN MERCY* – November 30, 1980
- BENEDICT XVI – Encyclicals:
  - DEUS CARITAS, GOD IS LOVE* – December 25, 2005
  - SPE SALVI, SAVED IN HOPE* – November 30, 2007
- FRANCIS I – *LUBILAEUM EXTRAORDINARIUM MISERICORDIA, EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY* – December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016

The Holy Spirit inspired them so as to inspire all believers to become **MERCY** people of God.

## POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II

Birth – Karol Jozef Wojtyla in Wadowice, Poland, May 18, 1920

Ordained priest – November 1, 1946

Elected pope – October 16, 1978

Ministry began October 22, 1978 for 27 years

Death – April 2, 2005

Beatified by Pope Benedict XVI – May 1, 2011

Canonized by Pope Francis I – April 27, 2014

Feast Day – October 22

## FOURTEEN ENCYCLICALS

- **FIRST – Redemptor Hominis – Redeemer of Mankind**  
March 4, 1979  
Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5, 7) “Blessed are the merciful, for they will have mercy shown to them”.
- **SECOND – Dives et Misericordia – Rich IN Mercy**  
November 30, 1980  
(2,2) “In Christ and through Christ GOD becomes especially visible in His **MERCY**”.

“Faith tells us God became man. He entered history, not to challenge, but to enlighten, to orient and to save by redeeming every soul”.

“**CHRISTMAS** begins the marvelous exchange uniting us to God; It begins the **REDEMPTION**”.

## POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II

- (13, 3) Church must profess and proclaim God's **MERCY**.
- (14, 3) **CHRIST CRUCIFIED** is for us the model, inspiration and loftiest encouragement, the magnificent source of **merciful love**.
- **Dives et Misericordia** (1, 2) "**MERCY** is the indispensable dimension of **LOVE**. It is love's second name".
- (2,2) "In Christ and through Christ, God also becomes especially visible in his **MERCY**. God becomes visible in a particular way as the Father who is **RICH IN MERCY**".
- In the transforming **LOVE** of God in Christ, we see everyone with the eyes of Christ".
- In the merciful **LOVE** of **CHRIST** we give others the look and gaze of **LOVE** they crave.

"Guide, O Christ, all the faithful in the truth – so that the Christian faith may inspire all their lives and make them courageous witnesses to your mission of salvation and dynamic members of the Church, sure of being children of God and brethren, with you and with all people! Guide us, O Christ, in the truth always".

Let us put Europe, united and formed by faith in Christ, once more under the sign of the Cross, for "in the Cross is hope." In the Cross lies hope of a Christian renewal of Europe, but only if Christians themselves take the message of the Cross seriously. The Cross means love is stronger than hatred and vengeance; giving is more joyful than receiving; devoting oneself is better than asking. The Cross means there is no shipwreck without hope; there is no dark without dawn; nor storm without haven. The Cross means God is always bigger than we men and is salvation even in the greatest failure. "Life is always stronger than death".

## Dives et Misericordia

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As the model of Merciful love for others, and by his way of life and his actions, makes the Father present “as love and **MERCY** (3.4). Jesus’ life of mercy is especially evident in his reaching out to those suffering from pain, injustice, or poverty – to the whole of humanity affected by physical and moral evil. The Incarnate Son, therefore, personifies mercy and enfleshes it in the situations of everyday life. At the same time, Jesus demands that those who are beneficiaries of divine **MERCY** must “be guided in their lives by love and **MERCY** (3.6). Christ’s messianic program of **MERCY** points out the path which the church and humanity must follow.

The biblical revelation of **MERCY** culminates in the Pascal Mystery of Christ’s **PASSION, DEATH and RESURRECTION**”, the summit of the revelation of the inscrutable mystery of God” (8.6). Christ’s redemptive act carried out for humanity’s salvation fulfills the demands of divine justice. But this justice, writes the Pope, is “to God’s measure”; it springs completely from love: from the love of the Father and the Son, and “completely bears fruit in love: (7.3) It is “a radical revelation of mercy” (8.1). On Calvary the revelation of divine love as merciful reaches its apex.

## Dives et Misericordia

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(13, 3) In sacred Scripture God’s love is merciful to sinners. It is a forgiving love which prevails over people’s sin and infidelity. The Father’s eternal love is a merciful love. By it he “gave his only Son” (Jn 3, 16) in the sacrifice of the Cross. According to John Paul II “to believe in this love is to believe in mercy. For mercy is an indispensable dimension of love; it is love’s second name, and at the same time the specific manner in which love is revealed and effected to the reality of evil in the world, affecting and besieging man. “God, ‘who is love’ “, writes he Pope, “cannot reveal himself otherwise than as mercy” (13, 4). Divine Mercy is that love which is more powerful than sin and death, lifting people up when they fall into the abyss.

## Dives et Misericordia

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The pope also notes that the practice of mercy among persons is based on a shared encounter. There is an exchange of mercy. Both its giver and its recipient meet. "In reciprocal relationships", writes John Paul, "merciful love is never a unilateral act or process. (14.2) The mutuality of Mercy is at work even in the Redemption. Christ is not only the merciful Redeemer, but also "the one who stands at the door and knocks at the door of everyman". (8.4)

A person who practices mercy is as well a beneficiary of mercy. Anyone who performs a true act of merciful love knows that he is receiving mercy from the one who accepts it. Those who practice mercy discover their own dignity because it is valued. (14, 5) The giver and the recipient of mercy meet at an essential point - namely the dignity and value of the person (14, 11). For the Pope, (John Paul II), a fellowship of mercy is more profoundly human than a society of justice.

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## THE INCARNATION OF MERCY

(2, 1) "No one has ever seen God" writes St. John (Verse 18) in The Gospel Prologue from John's Gospel.

(1, 18) On God no man has ever laid his eyes; the only begotten Son, who rests in the Father's bosom has himself been the interpreter.

(2, 1) In his PROLOGUE John writes: "No one has ever seen God" and John stresses 'the only Son has made him known'. This 'making known' reveals the mystery of God's being, especially in God's relationship of love for man; it becomes visible in Christ and through Christ's actions and words and finally through his death on the Cross and his Resurrection.

(2, 2) In this way, in Christ and through Christ, God becomes visible in his **MERCY**. Christ himself makes it incarnate and personifies it. He himself is **MERCY**.

(2, 2 con't) God becomes visible in a particular way as the Father “who is rich in MERCY”. (Eph 2, 4 – 10)

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The Son of God, who suffered death upon the Cross, never ceases to speak of God the Father, who so loved man in the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him, not perish but have eternal life. (John 3, 16)

Believing in that love means ‘believing’ in MERCY. For mercy is an indispensable dimension of Love; it is as if it were Love’s second name.

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(8.4) Christ, precisely as the crucified one, is the Word that does not pass away, and he stands at the door and knocks at the heart of every man, without restricting his freedom, but instead, seeking to draw from this freedom LOVE, which is not only an act of solidarity with the suffering Son of man, but also a kind of mercy, shown by each one of us to the Son of the eternal Father. In the whole of this messianic program of Christ, in the whole revelation of MERCY through the Cross, could man’s dignity be more respected and enabled, for in obtaining MERCY, he is in a sense the one who at the same time “shows MERCY”?

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(13.5) Mercy in itself, as a perfection of the infinite God, is also infinite and inexhaustible is the Father’s readiness to receive the prodigal children who return to his home especially in the face of the witness of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ.

## POPE BENEDICT XVI

Birth – Joseph Alois Ratzinger, April 16, 1927 in Markt-am Inn

Ordained Priest June 28, 1951

Elected Pope April 19, 2005

Papacy 2005 – 2013

Resignation February 28, 2013

Death December 31, 2022

- FIRST ENCYCLICAL – DEUS CARITAS EST – GOD IS LOVE – December 25, 2005

“Love can be commanded because it has first been GIVEN”.

“The command to love is only possible because it is more than a RULE or REQUIREMENT”.

“Our credibility is seen in how we show MERCIFUL and COMPASSIONATE LOVE”.

- SECOND ENCYCLICAL – SPE SALVI – SAVED IN HOPE – November 30, 2007

“Jesus is God’s YES to us”.

“Jesus is our YES to God”.

## HOMILIES – April 2005

- When we meet the living God in CHRIST we begin to know what LIFE is.
- Each of us is of the mind of God – EACH IS WILLED!  
EACH IS LOVED!  
EACH IS NECESSARY!
- Nothing more beautiful than:
  - To know Christ
  - To speak of our friendship with him.
  - Only in this are the doors of life opened wide.
  - We must be inspired by a holy restlessness to bring everyone the gift of faith, 'Friendship with CHRIST.

## POPE FRANCIS I

**Born:** Jorge Mario Bergoglio December 17, 1936 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

**Ordained priest:** December 13, 1969

**Elected Pope:** March 13, 2013

**Papacy:** 2013 to present

Pope Francis wrote two papal documents on **MERCY**.

- Decree announcing a coming Jubilee of Mercy – April 11, 2015
- Decree on an Extraordinary Jubilee from December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016.

“Pope Francis blesses us with EYE–OPENERS and HEART–WARMERS!”

### SPIRITUAL JEWELS OF MERCY

- Jesus is the **FACE** of the Father’s **MERCY**.
- **MERCY** – bridge that links God and man to the **HOPE** that loves us forever.
- **MERCY** – foundation of the Church’s **LIFE**.
- **MERCY** – supreme act by which God comes to us.
- **MERCY** – basic law and quality that dwells in the heart of every person looking into the eyes of all on the path of life.
- **MERCY** – From the heart of the Trinity, the great **RIVER** of **MERCY** wells up, a spring that never runs dry.

St. Paul teaches: "The life I live is not my own; Christ is living in me. I live my human life in the Son of God who loves me and gave himself for me".  
(Galatians, 2, 19 - 20)

St. Paul's letter to (Ephesians 2, 4 - 10)

"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, raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through FAITH, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God, for we are his handiwork".

St. Paul's letter to (Colossians 3 , 1-4) Life is Hidden with Christ:

"If, then, you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, your life, appears, then you shall appear with him in glory".

Carl F. Mengeling  
Bishop Emeritus, Diocese of Lansing  
January 13, 2025