

## An Oasis of Mercy

*'An oasis is a small fertile or green area in a desert region, usually having a spring or a well'*

**Song**                      **Let Your Mercy Wash Over Us (Trevor Thomson)**

**All sing:**              Let your mercy wash over us as the rainfall refreshing the earth  
Let your mercy wash over us we your people are thirsting for you

**Reflection**              **Pope Francis – Misericordiae Vultus, 12**

'The Church's first truth is the love of Christ. The Church makes herself a servant of this love and mediates it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of oneself. Consequently, wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident, in our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, **wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy.**'

**Reflection**

'When you fall into the **ocean of mercy**, you stop all counting and measuring. In fact, counting and weighing no longer make sense; they run counter to the experience of grace. As long as you keep counting, you will not realize that everyone is saved by mercy anyway.' (Richard Rohr O.F.M.)

**All sing:**              Let your mercy wash over us as the rainfall refreshing the earth  
Let your mercy wash over us we your people are thirsting for you

**Reflection**

'I recently visited the 9/11 Memorial at the site of the Twin Towers in New York City. A huge waterfall drops down into the darkness of a lower pool whose bottom you cannot see. It struck me deeply as a metaphor for God: **mercy eternally pouring into darkness**, always filling an empty space. Grace fills all the gaps of the universe. Counting and measuring can only increase the space between things. Even better, water always falls and pools up in the very lowest and darkest places, just like mercy does. And mercy is just grace in action.' (Richard Rohr O.F.M.)

**All sing:**              Let your mercy wash over us as the rainfall refreshing the earth  
Let your mercy wash over us we your people are thirsting for you

**Thought**                      **Brother Alois of Taizé**

**Mercy** is not sentimental but demanding; it **knows no limits**. A law sets clear limits to a duty, whereas mercy never says, "That's enough; I have done my duty."

**Song**                      **Kyrie (Taizé)**

**All sing:**              Kyrie, Kyrie eleison, Christe, Christe eleison, Kyrie, Kyrie eleison

**Prayer**                      **Medieval Irish Lyric (trans. Carney)**

God, grant me a **well of tears** my sins to hide or I am like arid earth unsanctified!

**Song**                    **Living Water (Ronan McDonagh)**

**All sing:**            I will give you **living water**, no more shall you thirst  
I will give you living water, springing up within you.

**Reflection**            **Pope Francis – Misericordiae Vultus, 22**

‘From the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God, the **great river of mercy wells up** and overflows unceasingly. It is a spring that will never run dry, no matter how many people draw from it. Every time someone is in need, he or she can approach it, because the mercy of God never ends.’

**All sing:**            I will give you living water, no more shall you thirst  
I will give you living water, **springing up** within you.

**Thought**                **Pope Francis – Laudato Si, 91**

‘A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings.’

**Prayer**                    **Let us pray,**

**All say:**            Source of mercy,  
Plant in us seeds of tenderness and generosity that will bear fruit  
in the unfolding days of Lent.  
Water the roots of forgiveness and green the arid areas of our  
lives with gentle drops of compassion.  
Pour your living grace into our hearts so that we can be an oasis  
of mercy wherever we are.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Create an oasis of mercy in your home, office, school or church inspired by this reflection. Water it with thoughtful, listening prayer and generous acts of mercy flowing from your own heart during the season of Lent. Wait with loving patience for the blossoming.*

**Psalm**                    **Like The Deer (Joseph Walshe OCSO)**

**All sing:**            Like the deer that yearns for running streams,  
so my soul is yearning for you, my God.

*(You are invited into an ‘Oasis of Mercy’ for an evening of music, reflection, drama and prayer on Monday **22 February** 2016 at 8.00 p.m. in the Monastery of St. Alphonsus, Drumcondra or view on webcam [www.rednuns.com](http://www.rednuns.com))*

**(Pat O’Donoghue - Dublin Diocesan Liturgy Resource Centre – Lent 2016)**

**Oasis of Mercy – Planting suggestions:  
Early and late Spring Garden – for Lent and Easter 2016**

**Bulbs**

Hyacinth Bulbs

Narcissus Bulbs

Tulip Bulbs

Crocus Bulbs

Iris Bulbs

Muscari Bulbs

Scilla Bulbs

Convallarian Bulbs - (Lily of the Valley)

Ornithogalum – (Star of Bethlehem)

Hyacinthoides Bulbs - (Bluebell)

**Plants**

Dictamnus – (Burning Bush)

Hellebores – especially variety called ‘Lenten Rose’.

Viola (common-name is Pansie)

Primula

Polygonatum – (Solomon’s Seal) – needs shade

Trollius – (globeflowers) – needs wet soil.

Cardamine – (Lady’s Smock)

**Shrub/Small Trees**

Magnolia – especially ‘star magnolia’ variety

Camellia – needs partial shade, away from early morning sun. Also needs ericaceous soil.

Daphne – ‘eximina’ variety

Rhododendron – praecox variety. Needs full sun, but frost may damage flowers

Forsythia

Malus (crab-apple tree) – blossoms in spring, fruits in autumn.

Dicentra ‘bleeding heart’.

### Some Ideas

Many of the early flowering species in Spring are bulbs. Mostly they are woodland carpet bulbs in their wild/ natural. This is because the tree canopy above them gives them shelter from the wind, frost and winter conditions in general. The canopy also absorbs much of the rain so that the bulbs are not overwatered and the flowers do not suffer from wet rot. I think we can draw many parallels from this with regard to relationships with one another and with God. We are protected and thrive in the shelter of the other. It is the early bulbs that need forest protection. Later the canopy will thicken with leaf growth and block light in the summer which would stunt carpet growth. Also the canopy would absorb the reduced summer rainfall and leave the carpet parched. So it's about knowing when to move close and shelter or when to move apart and give room to breathe. The desired result for both cases is to facilitate the blossoming of the person\ plant.

I also included the camellia shrub, among others which need partial shade. This is because it blooms so early that frost can encase it during cold nights. In partial shade as the day heats up the frost will slowly melt and leave the buds unharmed. In direct morning sun the interaction between hot and cold is too intense and the defrosting process will damage the buds and blossoms. This is a good example of what Teilhard de Chardin referred to as "the slow work of God". The scriptures refer to this gradual process of merciful encounter repeatedly. The haggling of Abraham for the salvation of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah is an early case in point. God gradually allows Abraham to grow bold in his presumption upon the mercy of God. Therefore the haggling starts with high figures. Having secured that figure he builds upon it until he bargains God down to a promise to save the cities even if only 10 just men can be found there. Had he continued he would have found out what we now have the privilege to know. God was willing all along to save the whole world for the sake of one good man, Jesus. The enormity of the depths of God's mercy can only be absorbed over an entire lifetime, and indeed into eternity. Dante understood this well. In the Divine Comedy he chooses Mary as the one most worthy to gaze deeper and deeper into the depths of God's love. Beholding these levels of Divine love adds a special nuance to the invocation "turn your eyes of mercy towards us". Mary is not the source of this mercy, but her eyes are the channel through which God communicates it to Dante/ us in ways which he/we can comprehend. This week's Feast of the Conversion of St Paul is timely in this regard too. We do well to remember that while the intervention of Christ was sudden the subsequent conversion was a more gradual process until the scales eventually fall from his eyes. The core message, of course, is that if God did not give up on Saul the persecutor then there is hope for all of us. Paul's story reminds us that every Saint has a past and every sinner has a future!

The Gospels parables for yesterday's Mass bring us right back to nature. Contained in the mustard tree is both the tiniest of seeds and the largest of shrubs. Again a reminder to allow the potential in us and all things to develop to the full. Let us not limit our vision to the meagreness of our starting point.

The parable of the sower proclaimed yesterday is so apt. The work of human hands is part of the story of the harvest, both in the sowing, tending and reaping. But there is more to the story. The cycle of nature and its inbuilt drive to life is at work in seed and soil and climate. We are part of life, not masters of it. We are called to responsible stewardship of the earth and its resources. We are dependants of this generous natural cycle. Our contemporary disconnectedness from the reality of our contingency upon the bounty of nature is at least in part responsible for our lack of the sense of God as part of the very air we breathe.

The remedy can be to get our hands dirty in harmony with nature, to appreciate it and to let it teach us so much about the beauty of creation and the infinite beauty of the creator of all that is.

## ST FRANCIS XAVIER – 1506-1542



St Francis Xavier has promised that all who make the novena of Grace, nine days of prayer before the date of his canonisation, will receive great graces. That is generally our experience. Nine days when we come close to God and allow God come close to us; when we renew the graces of our Baptism and receive the Eucharist; when we ask for specific graces and just spend some time with Jesus Christ.

The novena of grace from 4-12 March each year promises the graces of God to those who take part. Men and women have been making the novena for over fifty years, and some for the first time. The novena concludes on the anniversary of the canonisation of Francis, with St Ignatius, on March 12.

### FIRST JESUITS

Born in 1506, Francis Xavier was one of the first Jesuits and is best remembered for his missionary journeys. No saint since St Paul made so many journeys – his were from Lisbon in Europe to Goa in India, around the coastline of South India, to Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan and finally to the coast of China where he died of malaria on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1552.

### MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

Xavier is remembered for his journeys to bring the good news of Jesus to people who had never heard of him. He is remembered also as one of the first Jesuits, and with Peter Favre, one of the closest companion of St Ignatius Loyola, prior to the founding of the Jesuits in 1540 and his journey to India in 1546.

### JOURNEY OF PRAYER

However we do not understand Xavier unless we follow his journey inwards: he began student life in Paris with the ambition of getting a big post in the church in Spain, for which he would work hard. He enjoyed life in Paris, was well known on the social and sporting scene and resisted for a long time any influence from his room-mates in the university, Ignatius of Loyola and Peter Favre. It is remembered that Ignatius found him pupils to tutor when Xavier's funds were low! Gradually the stone wall Xavier had put up to Ignatius were demolished and he made the Spiritual Exercises, during which his huge ambitions for himself became huge ambitions for God.



## Quotation

'Do not put on solemn airs when you speak with the people,' he wrote to the Jesuits who followed him to the Far East, echoing his own practice. 'Be very lowly and modest in all your dealings with others. Learn to pardon and support their weaknesses very patiently, reflecting that if they are not good now, they will be some day.'



## Further Resources

**St Francis Xavier**, by Philip Fogarty SJ, an illustrated life of St Francis Xavier, is available **free** of charge for any parish who wishes to distribute it during the novena. Organ accompaniment for ***O Thou who hearkened to the Call'***, the hymn to St Francis Xavier.

**Novena prayer** – leaflet available from Messenger Office. 6764921. Discount for orders over 20.

## Novena of Grace 2016/Works of Mercy

### Jubilee of Mercy

'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. Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these *corporal works of mercy*: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. And let us not forget the *spiritual works of mercy*: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead.' **(Pope Francis - *Misericordiae Vultus* 15)**



### 4 March

**Mark 12:30** – *'You must love your neighbour as yourself'*

'Feed the world, make it a better place, for you and for me and the entire human race' are words from the refrain of a song popular in the 1990s that come to mind when considering the first of the corporal works of mercy – **Feed the Hungry**. The commandment to love our neighbour as we would ourselves invites us to share what we have to eat with those who are hungry. When confronted with a large number of people who needed to be fed the disciples around Jesus wanted to send them away as if it was no concern of theirs. Jesus intervened and said 'There is no need for them to go; give them something to eat yourselves' - (Matt 14:16). They made excuses of course, as we all do, but Jesus showed them how to provide for others and still have plenty left over. Selfless love knows no bounds, makes no distinctions and offers no excuses. **Mary's Meals**, founded in 2002, began as a limited project to provide food to 200 children in Malawi. Today over a million children throughout the world receive free school meals every day as a result of the inspiration of one Scotsman – Magnus McFarlane-Barrow. Think about 'meals on wheels' which so successfully brings nourishment and company to so many who are housebound. It is supported and maintained by people who bring this Gospel passage to life by their practical love of neighbour. What can we do today?

## 5 March

**Luke 18:14** - *'For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the man who humbles himself will be exalted'*

The Gospel story paints a picture of two different characters – the one who had a great welcome for himself and the other who had what some people today call 'low esteem' issues. Jesus was a great teacher. He created stories to help us open our minds to see our own blind spots and to point us towards the path of integrity and truth. Three of the spiritual works of mercy can be grouped under the heading of being outwardly mindful - **Counsel the Doubtful, Instruct the Ignorant and Admonish Sinners**. Instead of looking into ourselves these works invite us to consider humbly others who may require advice, knowledge or truthful challenge in their lives. The character Mrs 'Nettles' Kelly in the movie Brooklyn would not be a model for the compassionate directness that is required. Her social pecking order in the shop has the hallmark of the 'Pharisee'. The example of the publican in the Gospel, however, shows us the essential quality – humility – as we charitably offer our Christian hand to those who are uncertain, or without knowledge or insight. We are conscious always that what we say comes from a deep place of concern and with a consciousness of our own need for counsel, instruction and admonishment.



## 6 March

**Luke 15:3** - *'This man' they said 'welcomes sinners and eats with them'*

The Story of the Prodigal is a fitting companion to the spiritual works around reconciliation and mercy – **Forgive Offences Willingly** and **Bear Wrongs Patiently**. The gentle mercy of the Father is a model for us of generosity in the face of hurt and of welcome in response to betrayal. The insight and courage of the younger son is matched by the forgiving reception and the joyful celebration. The older son finds it difficult to bear the 'wrongs' of his brother patiently. Pope Francis speaks of this parable: '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 judgement is severe and unjust and meaningless in light of the father's boundless mercy.' He also advises confessors to imitate the Father and to 'interrupt the speech prepared ahead of time by the prodigal son, so that confessors will learn to accept the plea for help and mercy pouring from the heart of every penitent'. These words of Pope Francis speak to us too as we face the 'elder brother' inside and indeed as we encounter the prodigal on his journey home.



## 7 March

**John 4: 49** – *‘Go home,’ said Jesus, your son will live’*

How consoling those words must have been to the court official whose son was so gravely ill - words spoken from the heart. In the same way we are called to **‘Comfort the Afflicted’** who we encounter on our journey. In these days when we sometimes have little time to talk with each other or fear keeps us apart in public situations we miss out on opportunities to reach out to strangers who may need a generous ear and some comforting words. We speak today about being out of our ‘comfort zone’ and yet that is where followers of Jesus are called to be. We sometimes find it hard to put into words our concern for those who are ill, anxious or bereaved. We forget the value of a silent presence and a simple gesture. We don’t have to bring flowers - only the scent of kindness and understanding is asked of us.

## 8 March

**John 5:7** - *‘I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is disturbed’*

The plight of the sick man at the pool of Bethzatha who had no one to help him in his time of need brings to mind two further works of mercy – **‘Visit the Sick’** and **‘Visit the Imprisoned’**. For some people who are sick the gift of presence is itself a bonus. Sick people often feel invisible for many reasons and our visit can really make a difference. Hospitals and nursing homes have training programmes for those who wish to bring communion to the sick and this might be your calling. When we can also make a cup of tea, go for medication or massage weary hands we add so much to the care of those who are ill. Prisoners often feel invisible too as they are taken out of society. This Jubilee of Mercy invites us to contrast the notion of ‘restorative justice’ as opposed to ‘vengeful justice’. Is there some way that one can become part of a visiting team under the supervision of the chaplains?

## 9 March

**Isaiah 49:10** - *‘They will never hunger or thirst, scorching wind and sun shall never plague them; for he who pities them will lead them and guide them to springs of water.’*

Pope Francis and his namesake St. Francis of Assisi love for the poor. They also share a love of all God’s creation as we saw from his recent document on the environment *‘Laudato Si’*. In it he says that ‘Water poverty especially affects Africa where large sectors of the population have no access to safe drinking water or experience droughts which impede agricultural production. Some countries have areas rich in water while others endure drastic scarcity’ (L.S. 28). The passage from Isaiah reading speaks truth and hope to us. The second corporal work of mercy is **‘Give Drink to the Thirsty’** and we can help to do that by our awareness of the causes of climate change and our own use of natural limited resources. Trócaire is the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland that works tirelessly to alleviate the effects of climate change on those who are most affected. We can help in this work by our practical support of the work of Trócaire.

## 10 March

**John 5:44** – *‘How can you believe, since you look to one another for approval and are not concerned with the approval that comes from the one God?’*

Clothes are a way in which some people gain the approval of others. For many people clothing is not a window into a personality but a vital way of keeping warm and healthy. Saint Martin of Tours, we are told, gave half his cloak to a beggar and that very night Christ appeared to him in that half cloak to say thank you. When we recognise the face of Christ in others we are honouring the divine within them. That same respect for the body of Christ applies when someone dies and we honour their mortal remains with the rites of a Christian burial. Divine approval is what matters and what we wear in life and in death is immaterial at a spiritual level. Nonetheless our Christian charity leads us to such works of mercy as – **Clothe the Naked** and **Bury the Dead** as we honour the body of Christ.

## 11 March

**John 7:29** – *‘I have come from him and it was he who sent me’*

This phrase from today’s Gospel puts us in touch with the relationship of God the Creator and Jesus the Messiah, the one anointed and sent. When we pray through Jesus to God, the source of life, we are availing of that avenue of communication that Jesus opened for us by his life, death and resurrection. It is in that same spirit we reflect on the spiritual work of mercy to – **‘Pray for the living and the dead’**.

Prayer is at its heart about connections. We offer in prayer the works of our day, we ask that God would be mindful of those still with us and those already gone home and we trust that God has everything under control. Our prayers reinforce our understanding of the communion of saints who intercede for us with God who knows what grace everyone needs. This connectedness is captured in the saying of St Ignatius of Loyola: ‘Pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you.’

## 12 March

**John 7:40** - *‘Would the Christ be from Galilee?’*

Jesus knew what it was like to be an outsider – to be misunderstood – to be rejected. His proclamation of a different kind of kingdom was challenging for those who held power and confusing for others who were genuinely searching for truth. We can exclude people or become suspicious about them because of fear. What will it mean for me if we allow these migrants into our country, into our city or into our estate? One of the corporal works of mercy is **Welcome the Stranger** - We have a long tradition of hospitality in our country – Céad Míle Fáilte – the land of a hundred thousand welcomes. Our Celtic spirituality also embraces this Christian ideal.

‘I saw a stranger last night. I put food in the eating place, drink in the drinking place, music in the listening place, and in the sacred name of the Triune, he blessed myself and my house and my cattle and my dear ones. And the lark said in her song, ‘Often, often, often goes the Christ in the stranger’s guise.’

*(Pat O’Donoghue – Dublin Diocesan Liturgy Resource Centre – Lent 2016)*

**24 HOURS FOR THE LORD - JUBILEE OF MERCY  
LITURGY OF RECONCILIATION (1) – LENT 2016**

**Song**                    **Bless the Lord, My Soul (Taizé)**

**All sing:**            Bless the Lord, my soul and bless God's holy name.  
Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me into life.

**Opening Prayer**    **Let us pray,**

**All say:**            Compassionate and understanding God, we ask your help  
as we journey home to you on the road of reconciliation.  
Open our hearts to your boundless love and mercy.  
Give us the courage to walk into your loving embrace  
where we can be restored, refreshed and renewed.  
We ask this, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**Prayer**                    ***Is peacach bocht mé (Trad. Irish)***

*Is peacach bocht mé faoi ualach trom  
Is méid mo pheacaí is aithreach liom;  
Ach admháim creideamh Dé de shíor  
Le grá ó mo chroí is dóchas fíor.  
Ó bhun na croiche glaoím suas;  
A Íosa, a Thiarna, claon anuas.*

*A poor sinner under a heavy burden,  
sorry am I that my sins are so many;  
but I confess always my faith in God  
with heartfelt love and steadfast hope;  
from the foot of the cross my cry goes up:  
O Jesus, Lord, look down on me.*

**All sing:**            Bless the Lord, my soul and bless God's holy name.  
Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me into life.

**Reading**                **Luke 15:1-3. 11-13**

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man' they said 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he spoke this parable to them: 'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me." So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

**Song****My Son Has Gone Away (Bob Dufford)**

My son has gone away, left me, gone astray.  
But I have seen the way he went and I will bring him back.  
Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how could you run away?  
Jerusalem, how long my son? I'll wait for you, I'll stay.

**Examen**

Have I wasted time, money and energy on my own pleasures?  
Have I wasted my gifts by not using them for the service of others?  
Have I wasted the opportunities to build strong relationships with others?

**Chant****Kyrie (Taizé)**

**All sing:** Kyrie, Kyrie eleison, Christe, Christe eleison, Kyrie, Kyrie eleison

**Silence****Reading****Luke 15:14-20**

'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants." So he left the place and went back to his father.

**Song ctd.**

Perhaps my son is weary and cold. Perhaps he's tired and sad.  
Tonight I'll go and watch again, and wait for his return.  
Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how could you run away?  
Jerusalem, how long my son? I'll wait for you, I'll stay.

**Examen:**

I realise that I have made mistakes, hurt others by my actions and words. I want to walk that road of reconciliation back home to you. I know you are waiting for my return. I don't need to rehearse my apology as if you were a judge and I am facing you in court. Help me make a good confession so that I can truly let go of the weight I carry around with me – the weight of my faults, the burden of my guilt, the opinion of others, my pride, my low self-esteem and my anger. Encourage me when I think of you in human terms as one looking for vengeance to see instead your open arms and the unconditional face of your mercy.

**All sing:** Kyrie, Kyrie eleison, Christe, Christe eleison, Kyrie, Kyrie eleison

**Reading**                    **Luke 15:21-24**

‘While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.” But the father said to his servants, “Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.” And they began to celebrate.

**Silence**

**Thought**                    **Brother Roger of Taizé**

‘Bless us, Lord Christ; by your forgiveness you place on our finger the ring of the prodigal son.”

**Song**                            **God of Second Chances (David Haas)**

**All sing:**                    Come now, O God, of second chances; open our lives to heal.  
Remove our hate, and melt our rage. Save us from ourselves.  
Come now, O God, release our demons; open our eyes to see  
the shame within, our guilt and pain. Mend us; make us whole.

**Reading**                    **Luke 15: 25-32**

Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. “Your brother has come” replied the servant “and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound.” He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening.”

‘The father said, “My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it is only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.”

**Song ctd.**

**All sing:**                    Come now, O God, and still our anger; open our minds to peace.  
Embrace our fear, and hold us close. Calm the storm within.  
Come now, O God, shake our resentment; open our way to  
choose the way of love over the revenge. Show us a new way.

**Reflection**            **Ronald Rolheiser**

‘Unless we mourn properly our hurts, our losses, life’s unfairness, our shattered dreams...and all life that we once had but that has now passed us by, we will live either in an unhealthy fantasy or an ever-intensifying bitterness. Spiritually we see this in the older brother of the prodigal son. His bitterness and inability to dance points to what he is still clinging to life – life’s unfairness, his own hurt, and his unfulfilled fantasies. He is living in his father’s house but he is no longer receiving the spirit of that house.’

**Prayer**

**Let us pray,**

**All say:**

Almighty and most gentle God,  
who brought forth from the rock a fountain of living water  
for your thirsty people, bring forth, we pray,  
from the hardness of our heart, tears of sorrow and repentance  
and receive forgiveness from your mercy.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns  
with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.  
**Amen.**

**Act of Sorrow**

**All say:**

O My God, I thank you for loving me, I am sorry for all my sins.  
Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again.

**Individual Confession and Absolution**

**Psalm**

***Like the Deer that Yearns (Joseph Walshe)***

**All sing:**

*Like the deer that yearns for running streams so my soul is  
yearning for you my God*

**Litany**

***Kyrie (Sean Ó Riada)***

*For our failure to respect the gifts of God’s creation  
For our wasteful use of limited natural resources  
For our neglect of those most vulnerable to climate change*

***A Thiarna déan trócaire***

*For our failure to show love and compassion to others  
For our harsh judgements of the actions of others  
For our reluctance to forgive others*

***A Chríost déan trócaire***

*For our failure to welcome strangers  
For our intolerance of people from other faiths and traditions  
For our lack of openness to the opinions and views of others*

***A Thiarna déan trócaire***

***Prayer for Protection (11<sup>th</sup> c. Maol Íosa Ó Brolcháin trans. from Irish)***

*Protect for me my eyes  
O Jesus, Son of Mary  
That it not make me greedy  
To see another's wealth*

*Protect for me my ears  
That they will pay no heed to backbiting  
And that they will not regularly listen  
To foolish talk in the world*

*Protect for me my tongue  
That it slander no one  
That I criticise no one  
That I am not boastful*

*Protect for me my heart  
O Christ, that through your love,  
I may not pursue any  
Perverse desire*

*Let there be no hatred in my heart  
Nor envy nor blindness  
Nor pride, nor disrespect  
Nor corruption, nor harm.*

*Protect my good belly  
That it be filled with due temperance  
That I may not stuff it without care*

*Protect for me my hands  
That they be not stretched out in conflict  
That they pursue nothing shameful*

*Protect for me for feet  
Upon the good ground of Ireland  
That they stir not out of place  
On no good business*

*Protect my sexuality  
In wholesome purity of desire  
Let lust not overcome me*

*Let me not fall into any of the  
Notorious great chief sins  
O Christ come to me to aid me with them*

*I give myself totally to you  
To protect me  
By your great grace O Lord, Protect me.*

**Concluding Prayer Let us pray,**

**All say:** Merciful and gentle God,  
We thank you for the gift of your forgiveness: that lightens our step and lifts the burden of guilt from our shoulders.  
We thank you for the gift of your forgiveness: that inspires us to open our hearts to others in a spirit of reconciliation.  
We thank you for the gift of your forgiveness: that encourages us to walk your path of truth and justice. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**Concluding Blessing**

God of mercy, love and understanding, we praise you for the gift of this Sacrament of Reconciliation. We are happy to have been blessed at the well of your forgiveness. As a forgiven people may we be a forgiving people. **Amen.**

God of wisdom and insight, we praise you for the gift of your Word that opened our hearts to your generosity and care. May we carry your words in our hearts and live them in our lives. **Amen.**

God of providence, you care for all your people may we be faithful to our mission to be your presence in the world today. May we work together to build up your kingdom of mercy, justice, love and peace. **Amen.**

**Final Song**

**All sing:** **The Peace of the Earth (Guatamalan Arr. J. Bell/M. Haugen)**  
The peace of the earth be with you,  
the peace of the heavens too.  
The peace of the rivers be with you, the peace of the oceans too.  
Deep peace flowing over you, God's peace dwelling in you.

*(Feel free to shape your own service from this resource - optional material in italics  
Pat O'Donoghue - Dublin Diocesan Liturgy Resource Centre 2016)*



**24 HOURS FOR THE LORD - JUBILEE OF MERCY  
LITURGY OF RECONCILIATION (2) – LENT 2016**

**Gathering Song**      **Come Back to Me (Gregory Norbet)**  
**All sing:**            Long have I waited for your coming home to me  
and living deeply our new life.

**Opening Prayer**      **Let us pray,**  
Compassionate and loving God,  
Open our hearts to the grace of forgiveness that flows so  
generously from yours.  
May your patient love and acceptance encourage us to take this  
step along the bridge of reconciliation.  
Sustain us on that journey especially when we are tempted to  
give up. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**Song**                      **Lord, Show Us Your Mercy (Jeanne Cotter)**  
**All sing:**            Lord, show us your mercy and love

**Scripture**              **'This son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was  
lost and is found (Luke 15:24)**

**A Thought**            **Pope Francis**  
I think when the Prodigal son returned home, his father didn't say: 'But you, listen,  
sit down. 'What did you do with the money?' No he held a party. Then, maybe,  
when the son wanted to talk, he talked.'

**All sing:**            Lord, show us your mercy and love

**Scripture**              **My offences truly I know them (Psalm 50)**

**Examination of Conscience**

**What I have done...What I have failed to do**

I have neglected my relationship with God in prayer  
I have made a God of my ambition and my pride  
I have spent too little quality time with family and friends

**All sing:**            Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned

I have spoken unkindly or untruthfully about others  
I have been jealous of the gifts of friends and neighbours  
I have been unfaithful in honouring my commitments to others

**All sing:**            Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned

I have passed by my neighbour in their time of need  
I have failed to speak up for justice and truth  
I have been dishonest in my dealings with others

**All sing:** Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned

I have held on to grudges and refused the apologies of others  
I have not said sorry to those who I know I have hurt  
I have encouraged others to be stubborn and heartless

**All sing:** Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned

I have been impatient with those who have disabilities  
I have been thoughtless in my use of limited resources  
I have been careless in my use of the road

**All sing:** Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned

## **Act of Sorrow**

### **Individual Confession and Absolution**

*As people come forward for confession reflections and music help to maintain the spirit of quiet. After the absolution people are invited to wash their hands in bowls held for them by members of the community.*

#### **Reflection**

##### **Liberator God (Edward Hays)**

How often we find ourselves  
In a prison of our own making,  
Held by resentment and hostility  
Or cultural pressures to look good.  
Pressed by the need to be right,  
Caught up in heartless criticism  
Or useless apprehensions.  
You free us from one prison cell,  
But then we move to another.  
Help us to be fully liberated.

#### **Blessing**

May the God the creator shine mercy on your face  
May Christ the healer touch you with love  
May the Holy Spirit fill you with courage to change  
Go in peace to share the forgiveness you have received. **Amen.**

#### **Song**

##### **Lead us to the Water (Tom Kendzia)**

**All sing:** Lead us to the water, bring us to the feast.  
Wash us in the river and fill us with your peace.

*(Feel free to shape your own service from this resource -  
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