

The Catholic Church of the
Immaculate Conception

2540 San Diego Avenue, San Diego, CA 92110 619 295-4141 FAX 619 295-4142
e-mail: parish@ic-sandiego.org Website: www.ic-sandiego.org

February 7, 2016

Rev. Richard L. Perozich, Pastor
parish@ic-sandiego.org 619-295-4141 x 11

Deacon Robert H. Fitzmorris
rfitzmor@sdcatholic.org; 858 490-8332

Liz Fielder, Manager, Serra Gifts
fielder@ic-sandiego.org 619-297-3426

Connie Rodriguez, Parish Secretary
parish@ic-sandiego.org 619-295-4141 x 10

Marsha Long, Music
pictures@marshalong.com

Parish Office Hours
Monday: Noon to 4:00 pm
Tuesday-Friday: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
Saturday & Sunday: Closed

Mass Schedule

Daily Mass: Monday - Saturday at 8:00 am
First Friday Mass & Devotion: 8:00 am

Sunday Masses

Saturday Vigil: 5:15 P.M.
Sunday: 8:30 AM, 10:00AM, 11:30 AM, 5:15 P.M.

Holy Day Masses: 8 A.M., 7:00 P.M.

Penance: For daily Mass goes 7:30 AM. For Parish on Saturday: 4:30 to 5:00 P.M., and by appointment

Baptisms & RCIA: *By appointment only.* Please email Deacon Fitzmorris at rfitzmor@sdcatholic.org.

Weddings: By appointment only. Arrangements must be made at least **one year** in advance. Please contact the office

Funerals: *For arrangements, please call the parish office.*



History of Immaculate Conception Parish

It was here in Old Town that Saint Junípero Serra celebrated his First Holy Mass in California on July 2, 1769, near the site of the present Immaculate Conception Church, and it was on the hill overlooking Old Town that he planted the cross which marked the site of the Mission and the Presidio.

In 1849, the first parish church was established in Old Town with the name of Immaculate Conception and was dedicated in 1858. It still stands and is known as the Old Adobe Chapel on Conde Street. The cornerstone to the present Immaculate Conception Church was laid in 1868 under the direction of Father Antonio Ubach. With the population swing toward the south, it was not until July 6, 1919, that the church was dedicated by Archbishop John J. Cantwell of Los Angeles.

WE PRAY

MASS INTENTIONS

08	8 AM	<i>St. Jerome Emiliani; St. Josephine Bakhita</i>	RP
		†Martin Morris	
09	8 AM	Weekday	RE
		†James Kelly	
10	8 AM	Ash Wednesday	RP
		Chris DiEdoardo, SI	
	12:00 PM	Liturgy of the Word with Ashes	RP
11	7 PM	Priest's Intentions	RP
	8 AM	Our Lady of Lourdes	RP
		†George Orozco	
	8 AM	Friday after Ash Wednesday	RP
13		Esperanza Kresge, SI	
	8 AM	Saturday after Ash Wednesday	RP
		Kathleen Feinberg, SI	
14	5:15 PM	People of Immaculate Conception	RP
	8:30 AM	†Edna Moore	RE
	10:00 AM	†Joan Schmitt	RP
	11:30 AM	†William Kennedy	RP
	5:15 PM	†Marie Havlickova	RP

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

February: Intentions of the Holy Father

Universal: That we may take good care of creation—a gift freely given—cultivating and protecting it for future generations.
Evangelization: That opportunities may increase for dialogue and encounter between the Christian faith and the peoples of Asia.

PRAY: SEMINARIANS IN THEOLOGY

1st	Manuel Del Rio, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo
4th	David Exner, North American College, Rome
4th	Brian Frice, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR
2nd	Oscar Lopez, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo
3rd	Nathan McWeeney, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR
1st	Raymond Napuli, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR
1st	Michael O'Connor, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR
2nd	Eric Tamayo, North American College, Rome
4th	Corey Tufford, North American College, Rome
4th	Derek Twilliger, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR
3rd	Billy Zondler, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR

PRAY FOR OUR PRIESTS

08	Rev. Stephanos Pedrano, OSB
09	Rev. Richard Perozich
10	Rev. Michael Pham
11	Rev. Michel Pham, OSB
12	Rev. Phien Pham
13	Rev. José Pimentel, OP
14	Rev. Msgr. John Potman

PRAY THE SCRIPTURES

Monday: 1 Kgs 8:1-13; Ps 132:6-10; Mk 6:53-56
 Tuesday: 1 Kgs 8:22-30; Ps 84:3-11; Mk 7:1-13
 Wednesday: Jl 2:12-18; Ps 51:3-17; 2 Cor 5:20-6:2; Mt 6:1-18
 Thursday: Dt 30:15-20; Ps 1:1-6; Lk 9:22-25
 Friday: Is 58:1-9; Ps 51:3-19; Mt 9:14-15
 Saturday: Is 58:9-14; Ps 86:1-6; Lk 5:27-32
 Sunday: Dt 26:4-10; Ps 91:1-15; Rom 10:8-13; Lk 4:1-13

PRAY FOR HEALING

Jesus we ask you to bring your peace and healing touch to those who are ill afraid or worried. Amen

Esther Fitch	Amparo Valenzuela
Margaret Kelly	Robby Witt
Patricia Kennedy	Phyllis Altomare
Dorothy Kleint	Alicia Ambrose
Deena Marchiano	Shirley Pearson
Dena Mendoza	Inez Cerda Bull
Jean Miller	Cosmo Busalacchi
Patricia O'Grady	Maria Casanova
Mary Jane Tiernan	Steve Stone
Marguerite Vorst	Maria Esperanza Kramer
Marie Whitman	Joan Busalacchi
Martha Zamudio	Mark Brandon.
Carlos Amaya	Jeanne Pontius
Fred Levine	Esther Salazar
Mike Rodriguez	Joane Anderson
Lisa Becerra	Janet Meyers
Maguire Fitzpatrick	Yolanda Garcia
Tony Jenkins	Susan Rykowski
Peter Nalwalker	Elias Barajas
Bob Witt	Shirley Ilog
Frank Garay	Olivia Ingram
Frances Garcia	Grace Mulvanity
Socorro Pacheco	Angelica Ortega
Linda Lee	Barbara Driscoll



PRAY FOR OUR DEPLOYED MILITARY

Jesus protect all who serve our country.

Sgt. Ahmed John Alexander	Sgt. Adriana Matizel
Natalie Augustine	Wendell Miculob
Major Jerry Bloomquist	LTJG Joe F. Morales, USN;
Col. Mike Bodkin	LCPL Matthew A. Pena
Danny Carpenter, USMC	Sgt. Richard Pierce
LTJG Joseph Colangelo, USN	Sgt. William Paul Powers and
Cpl. Samuel James Comer	Cinco
Daniel Dinglebeck, USN PFC	CPL Wilson Santiago
David Eley, USMC	Alfred Tello
Micah Emery	Ricky Thibeault
Sgt. Christopher Escalona	Tony Tulloss
Capt. Pedro Esquivel	PFC Travis Vliet; & 3rd
1Lt. Cortez Fabia	Marine Aircraft Wing.
Juan Carlos Galazza	SCPO Desiree S. Hayes, USN
SSGT. Vincent Charles Lucario	Gil Perez, US Navy
Robert Clinton Long, MC2	

† PRAY FOR OUR DECEASED †

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace Amen.

William Kennedy	Angela Cordova
Joan Schmitt	Ramiro Moreno
Robert McMahon	Alexander Toczko
Concepción Garza	Jeannette Toczko
Richard Solís Moreno	José Teofilo Solorio
Alvin Weaver	Ray & Betty Jackson
William Bethel	Denise Cooney
Lillian Sinclair	Joanne Mangiameli
Olga Hritz	Edna Moore
Angelina Olivarez	Paul Ramirez
Alice Perry	Isabella Asaro
Joseph Moreno	Maude Laracy
Louie Serrano	Helen Peña
Gustavo Sosa	Lydia Castillo Herrera
Floyd Watson	Maria Necochea
Iola Torre	Bertha Lockwood
Emilie Graham	Salvador Rivera

A JOYFUL LENT

FROM THE PASTOR

With the change from do whatever I want to a discipline of prayer, fasting, and mercy, the idea of Lent being a joyful experience may sound odd to the average American who has so much in possessions, power, and prestige compared to the majority of humanity in 2015.

But this is a training period for our life's work, a boot camp to use the military or gym phrases, putting aside the old life and training our minds, hearts, bodies, and souls for a specific purpose which the opening prayer of the Mass for Ash Wednesday tells us:

"Grant, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting this campaign of Christian service, so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils, we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint."

Our work is to battle spiritual evils: pride, ire, greed, envy, sloth, gluttony, and lust. Our enemies are Satan and the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of those souls whose lives were purchased by the blood of the Lamb. Our weapons of spiritual warfare are: humility, meekness, generosity, magnanimity, diligence, temperance, and chastity. But we must be trained in these through experience so we know how to use them well.

Spiritual warfare is like the military. We have to break our comfortable faith like Goldie Hawn who in the movie *Private Benjamin* said,

*"See, I did join the army, but I joined a *different* army. I joined the one with the condos and the private rooms."*

Just as young adults in the military begin their service with a break from regular life and of yielding to the capricious whims of their thoughts, their urges and their desires, for the discipline imposed by the drill sergeant, Christians also each year in imitation of Jesus' 40 days of prayer and fasting for His public ministry do the same.

During the boot camp the soldier is called to reveille at 5 am, awakened for surprise inspections, kept beyond normal working hours, deprived of sleep and food on his schedule and fed on the military's schedule, told when he can leave and when he has to stay on base, given a rigorous exercise routine, shown discipline, humility, obedience, and mortification.

When boot camp is finished, the soldier is ready to go to battle. After the battle is finished, he can rest. The prayer of the second Sunday of Lent brings us this message

"O God, who have commanded us to listen to your beloved Son, be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory."

If 40 days were good enough for Jesus, they are good enough for me to imitate Him. Lenten days begin on Ash Wednesday and end at Holy Thursday Mass, Sundays are excluded in the count.

We begin this Lent on Ash Wednesday. We acknowledge our sinfulness, our need for Jesus' forgiveness, receive the sign of ashes, develop our attitude of repentance from sin and turning to goodness, and from our weakness that must be brought to perfection by grace.

The disciplines of Lent are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving-mercy. We abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, all Fridays, and during the Triduum on Good Friday. We fast either the full fast of one meal / day and no snacks, or the modified fast of two small meals and a regular one without snacks.

We go to confession during Lent, one of the precepts of the church, taking a careful inventory of our iniquities and sins, and asking forgiveness with a firm purpose of amendment to rid ourselves of bad habits. The custom of "giving up" something for Lent is a fine devotion, but we need to give up our really sinful tendencies not just for 40 days, but as a discipline to leave them behind forever.

To attend daily Mass more often with reception of the Eucharist is helpful. The Stations of the Cross, visits to Jesus before the Blessed Sacrament during this time develop in us the habit of doing so for the rest of our lives so that we continue the spiritual warfare with Jesus who has conquered sin and death.

Lent, the boot camp, ends with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening; but we soldiers are not yet released from our formation. We continue on with the Passion of the Lord on Good Friday and abstinence from meat with fasting as well. Then after the Easter Vigil, we rejoice in the Resurrection of Jesus who conquers the devil, sin and death.

With our new discipline, we go out into the world formed anew into the image of Jesus, leaving behind our undisciplined lives, and now rejoice in the new life of grace in Jesus, the risen Lord to battle evil each day.

AROUND THE PARISH



2016 Baptism Schedule
February 07 Baptism
No baptisms during March.
 Schedule is available on the parish website (ic-sandiego.org).

10 FEB ... ASH WEDNESDAY
Mass with distribution of ashes:
8:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.
Liturgy Service for distribution of ashes:
12 Noon

14 FEB ... FAMILY CATECHESIS
 Parents and children as well as all interested adults are welcome to attend Family Catechesis in the bride's room of the parish hall every other week. The program continues on Sunday, February 14 at 9:45 right after the 8:30 AM Mass. All children must be accompanied by their parents at each session.



Stations of the Cross will be held on each Friday at 7:00 p.m. during Lent, beginning February 12 and ending March 25.
Exception: Stations of the Cross will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Good Friday, March 25.

The **Prayer Chain Ministry** has been established in our parish. Our intention is to mobilize our parish community to pray for someone who has suddenly become ill, is going in for surgery, has a personal emergency or special needs they would like kept in prayer. Please contact Ruthe Jenkins if you are in need of prayers or if you are interested in being part of this powerful ministry on either the contact team or as part of the prayer chain. Email: rutheis@cox.net or phone 619-981-1424.

HARP MEDITATION
 Marsha Long, choir director and organist, will provide harp music for meditation on Thursdays during Lent from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm in the church.

POST-ABORTION HEALING
 Overnight Healing Retreat for Catholic Women:
 February 19-21, 2016
 St. Mary's Retreat Center, Escondido
 For information, call (760) 305-8044
 One-day workshop for Catholic Men:
 February 20, 2016--Diocesan Pastoral Center
 For information call: 858-581-3022
Confidentiality Maintained

2016 ANNUAL CATHOLIC APPEAL
CELEBRATE THE YEAR OF MERCY
 Our goal is \$24,000.00
 Pledge cards have been mailed to parishioners. Pledges may be mailed to the parish or dropped in the collection basket.

20 FEB ... ST. JOSEPH ACADEMY ...
 St. Joseph Academy (K-8 & High School) **OPEN HOUSE** Feb 20, from 10am-1pm. St. Joseph Academy embodies academic excellence, Catholic faith, athletics and leadership. Also on campus, SJA High School is an affordable (\$9,700), college prep, Catholic high school with avg SAT scores of 1867 (top 30%), Avg Class size of 16 and 95% of students participating in CIF sports, clubs & activities. Come see our beautiful 4-acre campus nestled in the hills of San Marcos www.SaintJosephAcademy.org. Personal tours available anytime at (760) 305-8505.

2015 Donations
 Letters substantiating tax-deductible donations of \$250 or more for the year were mailed out the week of January 25.
 Should you have any questions after receiving your letter, please contact Connie at the parish office, 619-295-4141, ext. 10.

A nation or civilization that continues to produce soft-minded men purchases its own spiritual death on the installment plan.
 — *Martin Luther King*

AROUND THE PARISH

Gifts of Treasure

With gratitude for the gifts we have received parishioners and visitors made a joyful return to the Lord.

January 31, 2016

Total Collection: \$4,630.45
Envelopes: \$2,786.00 Plate: \$1,844.45
Total contributing households: 77

5:15 Sat	\$ 577.00
8:30 Sun	\$1186.75
10:00 Sun	\$ 864.46
11:30 Sun	\$ 668.24
5:15 Sun	\$ 497.00
Mailed	\$ 837.00

EXPENSES

January 25-29, 2016

Cable/Internet	\$89.23
Diocesan Tax	\$2,395.25
Health Insurance	\$1,530.42
Music	\$500.00
Office Supplies	\$ 46.42
Waste Disposal	\$284.15
Workers Comp	\$225.82

Total: \$ 5,071.29

Serra Gifts...

**Street Level of
Fr. Serra Hall
619-297-3426**



Open 7 days a week
 Monday - Friday 9:30 -4:00
 Saturday 10:00 to 4:00
 Sunday 9:30 to 3:00

Serra Gifts offers a beautiful assortment of religious items for your home, for your family, and friends.

Serra Gifts offers a beautiful assortment of religious items for your home, for your family, and friends.

In addition to rosaries, religious medals, prayer/novena books, the gift shop also offers a limited number of outdoor items and religious music CDs.

See our online catalog at:
<http://www.ic-sandiego.org/gift-shop>

**SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL:
DIGNITATIS HUMANAE**

MAN'S DIGNITY AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

10. It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man's response to God in faith must be free: no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will. This doctrine is contained in the word of God and it was constantly proclaimed by the Fathers of the Church. The act of faith is of its very nature a free act. Man, redeemed by Christ the Savior and through Christ Jesus called to be God's adopted son, cannot give his adherence to God revealing Himself unless, under the drawing of the Father, he offers to God the reasonable and free submission of faith. It is therefore completely in accord with the nature of faith that in matters religious every manner of coercion on the part of men should be excluded. In consequence, the principle of religious freedom makes no small contribution to the creation of an environment in which men can without hindrance be invited to the Christian faith, embrace it of their own free will, and profess it effectively in their whole manner of life.

**WELCOME TO IMMACULATE
CONCEPTION!**

To register at the parish, please fill out the form below and drop it in the basket or call the office at 295-4141.

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY/ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

PARISH & COMMUNITY

Parish Calendar

February

07	Baptism	2:00 PM
09	Night Fever	7:00 PM
10	Ash Wednesday Mass / Ashes	8:00 AM
	Liturgy of the Word / Ashes	12 Noon
	Mass / Ashes	7:00 PM
11	Harp Meditation	2:00 PM
	Choir Practice	6:00 PM
12	Soup Supper	6:00PM
	Stations of the Cross	7:00 PM
13	Quilting Group	9:30 AM
14	Parish Registration Sunday	
	Parish Breakfast	9:30 AM
	Family Catechesis	9:45 AM
15	President's Day Holiday	
	Parish Office closed	
18	Harp Meditation	2:00 PM
	Choir Practice	6:00 PM
19	Soup Supper	6:00 PM
	Stations of the Cross	7:00 PM
20	Quilting Group	9:30 AM
25	Harp Meditation	2:00 PM
	Choir Practice	6:00 PM
26	Soup Supper	6:00PM
	Stations of the Cross	7:00 PM
27	Quilting Group	9:30 AM
28	Quarters and Cans Sunday	



LENTEN SOUP SUPPER

Soup supper will be served each Friday during Lent from 6:00 to 6:45 p.m. in the Parish Hall. No charge. Enjoy a lenten meal before the Stations of the Cross.

Courtyard Renovation

The renovation of the courtyard has begun. Tile orders may be returned to Glen Rasmussen or dropped off at the Parish Office.

Questions regarding the project should be directed to Glen Rasmussen.

Pardon the inconvenience: While construction work continues in the courtyard, please avoid using the courtyard to enter/exit the church. Disabled persons may be assisted across the courtyard to enter the church or may enter from Twiggs Street entrance.

FROM MISERICORDIAE VULTUS - Pope Francis

BULL OF INDICTION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

*FRANCIS
BISHOP OF ROME SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS
OF GOD TO ALL WHO READ THIS LETTER,
GRACE MERCY, AND PEACE*

16. In the Gospel of Luke, we find another important element that will help us live the Jubilee with faith. Luke writes that Jesus, on the Sabbath, went back to Nazareth and, as was his custom, entered the synagogue. They called upon him to read the Scripture and to comment on it. The passage was from the Book of Isaiah where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to those in captivity; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Is 61:1-2). A "year of the Lord's favor" or "mercy": this is what the Lord proclaimed and this is what we wish to live now. This Holy Year will bring to the fore the richness of Jesus' mission echoed in the words of the prophet: to bring a word and gesture of consolation to the poor, to proclaim liberty to those bound by new forms of slavery in modern society, to restore sight to those who can see no more because they are caught up in themselves, to restore dignity to all those from whom it has been robbed. The preaching of Jesus is made visible once more in the response of faith Christians are called to offer by their witness. May the words of the Apostle accompany us: He who does acts of mercy, let him do them with cheerfulness (cf. Rom 12:8).

16 Feb ... SAVE THE DATE ...

Father Joe's Villages, Ladies Guild, Annual Charity Luncheon: "Ooh-La-La Paris"
10:45 a.m., Sheraton Mission Valley.
\$55 per person
All proceeds benefit the children at Father Joe's Villages.
For information or donations, contact Kristi at 858-453-9640 or kristikeith@mac.com or Jane at 858-453-7016 or janehargrove67@gmail.com

Healing Support Group

Sacred Heart Parish offers a free 13-week healing support group for the separated and divorced on Tuesdays, beginning February 9 through May 3. It is held from 6:30 to 8:00 pm in the Church Ministry Center, 655 C Avenue, Coronado 92118. For information, call Martha, 619.435.6136 or Tom, 619.437.6689, or go online: <http://www.sacredheartcor.org/content/new-paths-separated-and-divorced>.

POPE FRANCIS'S MESSAGE FOR LENT 2016

"I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (Mt 9:13)

The works of mercy on the road of the Jubilee

1. Mary, the image of a Church which evangelizes because she is evangelized

In the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, I asked that "the season of Lent in this Jubilee Year be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God's mercy" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 17). By calling for an attentive listening to the word of God and encouraging the initiative "24 Hours for the Lord", I sought to stress the primacy of prayerful listening to God's word, especially his prophetic word. The mercy of God is a proclamation made to the world, a proclamation which each Christian is called to experience at first hand. For this reason, during the season of Lent I will send out Missionaries of Mercy as a concrete sign to everyone of God's closeness and forgiveness.

After receiving the Good News told to her by the Archangel Gabriel, Mary, in her Magnificat, prophetically sings of the mercy whereby God chose her. The Virgin of Nazareth, betrothed to Joseph, thus becomes the perfect icon of the Church which evangelizes, for she was, and continues to be, evangelized by the Holy Spirit, who made her virginal womb fruitful. In the prophetic tradition, mercy is strictly related – even on the etymological level – to the maternal womb (*rahamim*) and to a generous, faithful and compassionate goodness (*hesed*) shown within marriage and family relationships.

2. God's covenant with humanity: a history of mercy

The mystery of divine mercy is revealed in the history of the covenant between God and his people Israel. God shows himself ever rich in mercy, ever ready to treat his people with deep tenderness and compassion, especially at those tragic moments when infidelity ruptures the bond of the covenant, which then needs to be ratified more firmly in justice and truth. Here is a true love story, in which God plays the role of the betrayed father and husband, while Israel plays the unfaithful child and bride. These domestic images – as in the case of Hosea (cf. Hos 1-2) – show to what extent God wishes to bind himself to his people.

This love story culminates in the incarnation of God's Son. In Christ, the Father pours forth his boundless mercy even to making him "mercy incarnate" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 8). As a man, Jesus of Nazareth is a true son of Israel; he embodies that perfect hearing required of every Jew by the Shema, which today too is the heart of God's covenant with Israel: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Dt 6:4-5). As the Son of God, he is the Bridegroom who does everything to win over the love of his bride, to whom he is bound by an unconditional love which becomes visible in the eternal wedding feast.

This is the very heart of the apostolic kerygma, in which divine mercy holds a central and fundamental place. It is "the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 36), that first proclamation which "we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment" (*ibid.*, 164). Mercy "expresses God's way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 21), thus restoring his relationship with him. In Jesus crucified, God shows his desire to draw near to sinners, however far they may have strayed from him. In this way he hopes to soften the hardened heart of his Bride.

3. The works of mercy

God's mercy transforms human hearts; it enables us, through the experience of a faithful love, to become merciful in turn. In an ever new miracle, divine mercy shines forth in our lives, inspiring each of us to love our neighbor and to devote ourselves to what the Church's tradition calls the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. These works remind us that faith finds expression in concrete

everyday actions meant to help our neighbors in body and spirit: by feeding, visiting, comforting and instructing them. On such things will we be judged. For this reason, I expressed my hope that "the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; this will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty, and to enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy" (*ibid.*, 15). For in the poor, the flesh of Christ "becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us" (*ibid.*). It is the unprecedented and scandalous mystery of the extension in time of the suffering of the Innocent Lamb, the burning bush of gratuitous love. Before this love, we can, like Moses, take off our sandals (cf. Ex 3:5), especially when the poor are our brothers or sisters in Christ who are suffering for their faith.

In the light of this love, which is strong as death (cf. Song 8:6), the real poor are revealed as those who refuse to see themselves as such. They consider themselves rich, but they are actually the poorest of the poor. This is because they are slaves to sin, which leads them to use wealth and power not for the service of God and others, but to stifle within their hearts the profound sense that they too are only poor beggars. The greater their power and wealth, the more this blindness and deception can grow. It can even reach the point of being blind to Lazarus begging at their doorstep (cf. Lk 16:20-21). Lazarus, the poor man, is a figure of Christ, who through the poor pleads for our conversion. As such, he represents the possibility of conversion which God offers us and which we may well fail to see. Such blindness is often accompanied by the proud illusion of our own omnipotence, which reflects in a sinister way the diabolical "you will be like God" (Gen 3:5) which is the root of all sin. This illusion can likewise take social and political forms, as shown by the totalitarian systems of the twentieth century, and, in our own day, by the ideologies of monopolizing thought and technoscience, which would make God irrelevant and reduce man to raw material to be exploited. This illusion can also be seen in the sinful structures linked to a model of false development based on the idolatry of money, which leads to lack of concern for the fate of the poor on the part of wealthier individuals and societies; they close their doors, refusing even to see the poor.

For all of us, then, the season of Lent in this Jubilee Year is a favorable time to overcome our existential alienation by listening to God's word and by practicing the works of mercy. In the corporal works of mercy we touch the flesh of Christ in our brothers and sisters who need to be fed, clothed, sheltered, visited; in the spiritual works of mercy – counsel, instruction, forgiveness, admonishment and prayer – we touch more directly our own sinfulness. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy must never be separated. By touching the flesh of the crucified Jesus in the suffering, sinners can receive the gift of realizing that they too are poor and in need. By taking this path, the "proud", the "powerful" and the "wealthy" spoken of in the Magnificat can also be embraced and undeservedly loved by the crucified Lord who died and rose for them. This love alone is the answer to that yearning for infinite happiness and love that we think we can satisfy with the idols of knowledge, power and riches. Yet the danger always remains that by a constant refusal to open the doors of their hearts to Christ who knocks on them in the poor, the proud, rich and powerful will end up condemning themselves and plunging into the eternal abyss of solitude which is Hell. The pointed words of Abraham apply to them and to all of us: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them" (Lk 16:29). Such attentive listening will best prepare us to celebrate the final victory over sin and death of the Bridegroom, now risen, who desires to purify his Betrothed in expectation of his coming.

Let us not waste this season of Lent, so favorable a time for conversion! We ask this through the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, who, encountering the greatness of God's mercy freely bestowed upon her, was the first to acknowledge her lowliness (cf. Lk 1:48) and to call herself the Lord's humble servant (cf. Lk 1:38).