



The Holy See

EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY **POPE FRANCIS JUBILEE AUDIENCE** *Saint Peter's Square*

Saturday, 30 April 2016 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Mercy and reconciliation

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today I would like to reflect with you on an important aspect of mercy: reconciliation. God has never failed to offer his forgiveness to men and women: his mercy is felt from generation to generation. Often we believe that our sins distance the Lord from us. In reality, in sinning, we may distance ourselves from him, but, seeing us in danger, he tries all the harder to find us. God never gives in to the possibility that a person could stay estranged from his love, provided, however, that he find in him or her some sign of repentance for the evil done.

By our efforts alone, we cannot be reconciled to God. Sin truly is the expression of the rejection of his love, with the consequence of closing in on ourselves, deluding ourselves into thinking that we have found greater freedom and autonomy. Far from God we no longer have a destination, and we are transformed from pilgrims in this world to “wanderers”. To use a common expression: when we sin, we “turn away from God”. That’s just what we do; the sinner sees only himself and presumes in this way to be self-sufficient. Thus, sin continues to expand the distance between us and God, and this can become a chasm. However, Jesus comes to find us like a good shepherd who is not content until he has found the lost sheep, as we read in the Gospel (cf. Lk 15:4-6). He rebuilds the bridge that connects us to the Father and allows us to rediscover our dignity as children. By the offering of his life he has reconciled us to the Father and given us eternal life (cf. Jn 10:15).

“Be reconciled to God!” (2 Cor 5:20): the cry that the Apostle Paul addressed to the early Christians in Corinth, today applies to us all with the same vigour and conviction. Let us be reconciled to God! This Jubilee of mercy is a time of reconciliation for everyone. Many people would like to be reconciled to God but they don’t know how to do it, or they don’t feel worthy, or they don’t want to admit it, not even to themselves. The Christian community can and must foster the sincere return to God for those who feel this yearning. Especially those who carry out the

“ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18) are called to be instruments docile to the Holy Spirit, for where one has abandoned sin mercy can abound (cf. Rm 5:20). No one should be separated from God because of obstacles put there by mankind! And — I want to underline this — that also goes for confessors. It’s valid for them: please, don’t put up obstacles for people who want to be reconciled to God. The confessor must be a father! He stands in the place of God the Father! The confessor must welcome those who come to him to be reconciled to God and help them on the journey to this reconciliation that we are making. It is a very beautiful ministry: not a torture chamber or an interrogation room. No. It is the place where the Father receives, welcomes and forgives this person. Let us be reconciled to God! All of us! May this Holy Year be a positive time to rediscover our need for the tenderness and closeness of the Father, to return to him with all our heart.

The experience of reconciliation to God allows us to discover the necessity of other forms of reconciliation: in families, in interpersonal relationships, in ecclesial communities, as well as in social international relations. Someone recently said to me that in the world there are more enemies than friends, and I believe he is right. Instead, let us build bridges of reconciliation among us, beginning in the family. How many siblings have argued and become estranged over inheritance. This shouldn’t happen! This year is the year of reconciliation, with God and among us! Reconciliation is also a service to peace, solidarity and the welcome of all.

Let us accept, therefore, the invitation to be reconciled to God, in order to become new creatures and to radiate his mercy among our brothers, among the people.

Greeting to participants in the Jubilee for the armed forces and law enforcement:

With joy I welcome the representatives of the armed forces and police, here from all over the world, on pilgrimage to Rome for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. Law enforcement — military and police — have the mission of ensuring a safe environment, so that each and every citizen can live in peace and serenity. In your families, in the various areas in which you operate, may you be instruments of reconciliation, builders of bridges and sowers of peace. Indeed, you are called not only to prevent, manage and put an end to conflicts, but also to contribute to the building of an order founded on truth, on justice, on love and on freedom, according to St John XXIII’s definition of peace in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (nn. 18 ff.).

The affirmation of peace is not an easy task, especially because of war, which uproots hearts and augments violence and hatred. I urge you not to be discouraged. Continue on your journey of faith and open your hearts to God the merciful Father who never tires of forgiving us. Faced with the challenges of every day, be shining examples of Christian hope, which is the certitude of the victory of love over hate and of peace over war.

Greetings:

I greet the English-speaking visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly those from the armed forces and law enforcement agencies who have come from Canada, Kenya, Korea, the Philippines and the United States of America. I also greet the pilgrimage groups from Scotland and the United States. In the joy of the Risen Lord, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

I affectionately greet *young people*, the *sick* and *newlyweds*: to each of you I extend my encouragement to follow Christ. I entrust you all to the motherly protection of Our Lady.