

December 4, 2015

My dear brother priest:

This week begins the Year of Mercy in the diocese of San Diego and throughout the world. The central goal of this special Jubilee celebration is to communicate to our people throughout the coming year the depth of the mercy and love and compassion of our God. It is also to communicate the mission of all disciples of Jesus Christ that we are called to embody in our own lives the mercy of God through prayer and action in the world.

In consultation with the deans and the pastoral curia of the diocese, and understanding the many demands which are placed upon the parishes and upon you in the normal course of your ministries, I propose the following direction for the observance of the Year of Mercy in our local church of San Diego:

1. The pastoral offices of the diocese will work to integrate the theme of mercy substantively into all of their activities during the coming year as a central priority.
2. The Southern Cross will dedicate sustained and systematic attention to educating our people about the corporal and spiritual works of mercy that are a centerpiece of the world-wide celebration of this Jubilee year. This effort, which will be complemented by social media materials that we will develop and share with you during the course of the year, will point to the nature of the works of mercy, how they are being carried out heroically in many ways in the life of our diocese, and how they can practically be integrated into the lives of our parishioners not only during this Jubilee Year, but also on an ongoing basis.
3. The parishes and faith communities of the diocese are asked to look for opportunities to bring the theme of God's mercy into the liturgical year, particularly in preaching and in the provision of the sacraments of Reconciliation. The parishes are also asked to give focused attention at some appropriate point during the year to educating their parishioners about the corporal and spiritual works of mercy as a call in discipleship.

4. Seven churches within the diocese are being designated as formal places of pilgrimage during the Jubilee Year of Mercy, with the provision of an indulgence for pilgrims who visit there. These churches are: Saint Joseph Cathedral, Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá, the Shrine of Saint Jude of the West, Our Lady of Guadalupe in Calexico, Saint Thomas More, Mission San Luis Rey and La Capilla Cristo Rey at Our Lady of Guadalupe in El Centro.


5. At the initiative of Pope Francis, a group of priests will be designated in the coming months as "Missionaries of Mercy" who will be available to preach and teach on the theme of God's mercy throughout the diocese and provide spiritual guidance. Bishop Brom has graciously agreed to give parish presentations on the theme of mercy; you may contact Aurelia Vargas at 858-490-8300 to make arrangements if you wish to have him give a presentation in your parish. Several religious communities of men have initiated in Rome the process for designating as missionaries of mercy specific members of their orders who serve within the diocese of San Diego. Once the Holy See finalizes these designations I will forward these names to you as a group.

It is my hope that this approach will provide a substantial foundation for bringing a deeper understanding of the nature of God's mercy to the entire community of our local church, while not burdening you greatly.

Pope Francis has given us a tremendous opportunity in his ministry and in this Jubilee Year to point to the immense compassion of our God as the foundation for our relationship with the Lord. The Year of Mercy is also an opportunity for us all to increase our outreach to those who have drifted away from the life of the church or been alienated, especially because of the judgmentalism which all too easily creeps into our own hearts and into the life of the Church.

I pray that in these great days of Advent, so rich in joy and hope, you and all of our local church may experience with particular intensity the overwhelming love of God which knows no bounds.

Your brother in the Lord

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ R.W. McElroy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Most Reverend Robert W. McElroy