

Pilgrims of Mercy

Fr. Oscar Saldivar

Homily at the Mass for the Opening of the Holy Door at **Tupãrenda** –
Jubilee of Mercy

Dear brothers and sisters;

We begin the Holy Year of Mercy here in the Shrine of Tupãrenda with the opening of the “Holy Door” at the Santa María de la Trinidad [Holy Mary of the Trinity] Church and with the celebration of this Eucharist.

Thus, we unite with our diocesan Bishop Joaquín Robledo, who opened the “Holy Door” at the Cathedral of San Lorenzo today. We also unite with our Holy Father, Pope Francis, who solemnly opened the “Holy Door” at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome on 8 December. During this time of grace, we unite with the entire Church as it goes on pilgrimage towards the Lord who comes to meet us.

Life itself is a pilgrimage

One of the gestures that we carried out today was that of pilgrimage. From the “Pilgrims’ House” we have gone on pilgrimage toward Santa María de la Trinidad Church. What does this gesture symbolize? “The practice of *pilgrimage* has a special place in the Holy Year, because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life. Life itself is a pilgrimage and the human being is a *viator*, a pilgrim travelling along the road, making his way to the desired destination.”¹

Yes, each one of us is a pilgrim on the road of life. However, a pilgrimage is not just any journey. The pilgrim recognizes that he/she should move toward a goal; he/she recognizes that he should get out of himself: of his ordinariness, his routine, his comfort, and sometimes of the closing into his own “me”, his ego. The pilgrim gets on the road with an inner viewpoint lightening the load to enable walking freely, leaving behind the superfluous, and most of all alleviating the heart and mind. Finally, the pilgrim moves toward a goal, which distinguishes him from vagabonds, who cease being pilgrims and “become drifters, who flit around themselves and never getting anywhere.”²

We do not want to be wandering vagabonds, we want to be “*pilgrims of mercy*,” we want our life to be a “pilgrimage with Christ to the Father”.³

That is why, upon beginning this Holy Year, this pilgrimage of mercy, it is worthwhile that we ask ourselves, “Where do I need to go out? What situations, which sins, which egoisms and bitterness should

¹ POPE FRANCIS, *Misericordiae Vultus* 14.

² Cf. POPE FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation, The Joy of the Gospel, *Evangelii Gaudium* 170.

³ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation, The Joy of the Gospel, *Evangelii Gaudium* 170.

I get out? Moreover, we should not only ask ourselves, but we also have to dare taking the necessary steps to begin this pilgrimage.

Throughout this year, by turning to the sacrament of confession, we will be able to lighten the heart, and unload the weights and ballasts that do impede us advancing on the road of love.

Part of our pilgrimage is in walking with others, walking together, mutually helping each other. Every time that we do a good thing for others, every time that we do any *work of mercy*, we will advance on the road of mercy.

Our goal is the Father, good and merciful, who always waits for us (cf. Lk. 15:20), who is always willing to welcome us, forgive us and heal us, the Father who is always happy with our presence and transforms our life into a joyful celebration (cf. Lk. 15:22-24).

Holy Doors of Mercy

Today the goal of our pilgrimage was the “Holy Door”, the “Door of Mercy.” Throughout the Church, the door is first a Christological symbol, a symbol of Jesus Christ. In the Gospel according to St. John, Jesus says of himself: *“I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”* (cf. John 10:9).

Jesus is the door that is always open so that we can enter the house of the Father. Jesus is the door that is always open to the heart of God. Jesus is the door that is always open to forgiveness and love. That is why crossing the Holy Door threshold symbolizes entering through Jesus, through his life and his word, to the encounter with the love of God. Thus every time we cross the “Holy Door” throughout this year “we find the strength to embrace God’s mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful to others as the Father has been with us;”⁴ *“Merciful like the Father”* is the motto for this Holy year.

“...but he who is mightier than I is coming...”

We also know that every pilgrimage requires effort. “Mercy is also a goal to reach and requires dedication and sacrifice.”⁵

The temptation of “weariness of the heart” can also happen on the road of mercy and can appear: sometimes we tire of asking forgiveness or to forgive; sometimes we tire of starting over; sometimes we tire of loving and trusting again and helping.

When this weariness appears on our road, it would do us good to listen in the heart to the words that John the Baptist addresses to us today: “...but he who is mightier than I is coming...” (cf. Lk. 3:16). Jesus is coming, whose mercy and love is mightier than our weariness and sins.

⁴ POPE FRANCIS, *Misericordiae Vultus* 14.

⁵ *ibid*

When it is hard to forgive “...but he who is mightier than I is coming..”

When it is hard to start over: “...but he who is mightier than I is coming..”

When the struggle against our own egoism and sin tires us: “...but he who is mightier than I is coming...”

Yes, what we cannot do alone, Jesus’ mercy can. This is the reason for our hope and joy. This hope sustains our walk, our pilgrimage.

“...but he who is mightier than I is coming...”

May Mary, Mother of Mercy accompany and sustain our pilgrimage throughout this Holy Year, and may “the sweetness of her countenance”⁶ help us to rediscover the joy and the beauty of God’s mercy. Amen.

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⁶ POPE FRANCIS, *Misericordiae Vultus* 24.