



DIOCESE OF COVINGTON

Office of the Bishop

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November 9, 2015

My dear Friends in Christ,

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has proclaimed the upcoming year to be an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, which will be celebrated from Tuesday, December 8, 2015, through Sunday, November 20, 2016. The Holy Father's intention in proclaiming this Jubilee is to offer the Church an opportunity to "gaze even more attentively on mercy, so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives" (*Misericordiae vultus* 3). Our diocesan celebration of the Jubilee will begin with the opening of the Door of Mercy at the Cathedral at 3:00 PM on Sunday, December 13, 2015, which all are invited to attend.

Saint Paul wrote, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). Although we have repeatedly turned away from God through sin, He has never turned away from us. Since the sin of Adam and Eve, God has been carrying out in our world His plan of salvation, which reached its culmination in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. In Jesus Christ, God has identified Himself with us in our weakness and definitively revealed the depths of His mercy and love for us.

The Lord reaches down to us in mercy, but so great is His mercy that He is not content to leave us as we are. In the Gospel according to Saint Mark, the very first words of Jesus are a call to conversion: "Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15). Jesus did not condemn the woman caught in adultery, but He did command her, "Go and sin no more" (Jn 8:11). God has come into our midst not to confirm us in our sins, but rather to lead us away from them.

Pope Francis writes that this Jubilee of Mercy is "the opportune moment to change our lives!" (*MV* 19). Indeed, this Holy Year is an opportunity for us to undergo a more profound conversion of heart by availing ourselves of the mercy of God and offering that mercy to others. We experience the mercy of God principally in the sacrament of confession. It is in this sacrament that our sins are forgiven and that, in the words of our Holy Father, people are enabled "to touch the grandeur of God's mercy with their own hands" (*MV* 17). And, at the same time, it is in this sacrament that we receive from God the grace to change our lives and to become living witnesses to His mercy, above all by reaching out with compassion and love to the poor, the sick, and the suffering.

Throughout the upcoming year, please follow the *Messenger*, our diocesan newspaper, for information about the events by which we will celebrate the Jubilee. By participating in this Jubilee of Mercy as fully as possible, I am confident that we ourselves will grow closer to God and offer to a world that desperately needs it a clear and convincing testament to the power of the mercy of God.

Yours devotedly in the Lord,

Most Reverend Roger J. Foys, D.D.
Bishop of Covington