



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** *Saint Peter's Square*

Wednesday, 6 April 2016 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

13. The Gospel of Mercy

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

After reflecting on the mercy of God in the Old Testament, today we begin to meditate on how Jesus fulfilled it. It was a mercy he expressed, realized and communicated throughout his earthly life. Encountering the multitudes, proclaiming the Gospel, healing the sick, being close to the least, forgiving sinners, Jesus made visible the love that is open to us all: none excluded! Open to all without borders. A love that is pure, freely-given, absolute. A love that culminates in the Sacrifice of the Cross. Yes, the Gospel is truly the “Gospel of Mercy”, for Jesus is Mercy!

All four Gospels testify that Jesus, before taking up his ministry, *wanted to be baptized by John the Baptist* (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22; Jn 1:29-34). This event gives decisive direction to Christ’s entire mission. Indeed, he did not present himself to the world in the splendour of the temple: he could have done so. He did not announce himself with the sounding of trumpets: he could have so. And he did not come vested like a judge: he could have so. Instead, after 30 years of a hidden life in Nazareth, Jesus went to the River Jordan, together with many of his people, and there waited in line with sinners. He wasn’t ashamed: he was there with everyone, with sinners, to be baptized. Therefore, from the very beginning of his ministry, he manifested himself as the Messiah who takes upon himself the human condition, moved by solidarity and compassion. As he said in the synagogue of Nazareth by identifying with the prophecy of Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk 4:18-19). Everything that Jesus accomplished after his baptism was the realization of that initial design: to bring to all people the saving love of God. Jesus did not bring hatred, he did not bring hostility: he brought us love! A love that saves!

He made himself neighbour to the lowliest, communicating to them God’s mercy that is forgiveness, joy and new life. Jesus, the Son sent by the Father, is truly the start of the time of

mercy for all humanity! Those present on the banks of the Jordan did not immediately understand the full extent of Jesus' gesture. John the Baptist himself was stunned by his decision (cf. Mt 3:14). But not the Heavenly Father! He let his voice be heard from on high: "Thou are my beloved son, with thee I am well pleased" (Mk 1:11). In this way, the Father confirmed the path that Son has taken up as Messiah, as the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove. Thus, Jesus' heart beats, so to speak, in unison with the heart of the Father and of the Spirit, showing to all men that salvation is the fruit of God's mercy.

We can contemplate even more clearly the great mystery of this love by *directing our gaze to Jesus Crucified*. As the Innocent One is about to die for us sinners, he pleads to the Father: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). It is on the Cross that Jesus presents the sin of the world to the mercy of the Father: the sin of all people, my sins, your sins, everyone's sins. There, on the Cross, he presents them to the Father. And with the sin of the world, all our sins are wiped away. Nothing and no one is left out of this sacrificial prayer of Jesus. That means that we must not be afraid of acknowledging and confessing ourselves as sinners. How many times have we said: "Well, this one is a sinner, he did this and that...", we judge others. And you? Every one of us ought to ask ourselves: "Yes, he is a sinner. And me?". We are all sinners, but we are all forgiven. We all have the opportunity to receive this forgiveness which is the mercy of God. Therefore, we mustn't be afraid to acknowledge that we are sinners, to confess that we are sinners, because every sin was borne by the Son on the Cross. When we confess it, repenting, entrusting ourselves to him, we can be certain of forgiveness. The Sacrament of Reconciliation makes present to each one of us that power of forgiveness that flows from the Cross and renews in our life the grace of mercy that Jesus purchased for us! We must not be afraid of our defects: we each have our own. The power of the love of the Crucified One knows no bounds and never runs dry. This mercy wipes away our defects.

Beloved ones, in this Jubilee Year let us ask God for the grace to experience the power of the Gospel: the Gospel of mercy that transforms, that lets us enter the heart of God, that makes us capable of forgiving and looking at the world with more goodness. If we accept the Gospel of the Crucified and Risen One, our whole life will be formed by his renewing love.

Special greetings:

Today we celebrate the third International Day of Sports for Peace and Development, called for by the United Nations. Sports is a universal language, which brings people together and can foster encounter and overcome conflict. Thus, I encourage people to engage in sports like a training field for virtue in the integral growth of individuals of communities.

I offer an affectionate greeting to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience, including those from England, Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway,

Kenya, Zimbabwe, Australia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States. As we celebrate the Easter Season, may our hearts be open to the Risen Lord so that, strengthened by his grace, we may share with our families and communities the Gospel of Mercy. God bless you all!

I give a special thought to *young people*, to the *sick* and to *newlyweds*. Look to the example of the Virgin Mary in order to live this Easter Season by listening to the Word of God and practicing charity, by living with joy our membership to the Church, the family missionary disciples of the Risen Christ.