



Diocese of Fall River
Office of the Bishop
Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.

December 8, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, the Church throughout the world celebrates the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the opening of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy proclaimed by our Holy Father, Pope Francis. The Holy Father shows us the appropriateness of choosing this day in his proclamation *Misericordiae Vultus*: "After the sin of Adam and Eve, God did not wish to leave humanity alone in the throes of evil. And so He turned his gaze to Mary, holy and immaculate in love (cf. Eph. 1:4), choosing her to be the Mother of man's Redeemer. When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy." (n.3)

And so today, the Holy Father will open the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome that it might become "a Door of Mercy through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons and instills hope." (ibid) He has also instructed that on Sunday, December 13, the Third Sunday of Advent, "Doors of Mercy" should be opened in Cathedral churches throughout the world to extend the opportunity for mercy to all who seek it and are unable to travel to Rome and as a visible sign of the Church's universal communion.

Accordingly, I am happy to announce that in our Diocese we will open a "Door of Mercy" at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption on Sunday, December 13. Taking advantage of the discretion given to local Bishops by the Holy Father, I also wish to announce the following other churches in our Diocese where "Doors of Mercy" will be opened to allow a greater opportunity for those who cannot travel to the Cathedral to make a pilgrimage to a church near them.

Saint Mary, Taunton
National Shrine of Our Lady of LaSalette, Attleboro
Our Lady of Mount Carmel, New Bedford
Corpus Christi, East Sandwich
Holy Trinity, West Harwich

The theme of this Holy Year is "Merciful like the Father". The Holy Father writes: "The Evangelist reminds us of the teaching of Jesus who says, 'Be merciful just as your Father is merciful' (Lk. 6:36). It is a program of life as demanding as it is rich in joy and peace. Jesus' command is directed to anyone willing to listen to His voice (cf. Lk. 6:27). In order to be capable of mercy, therefore, we must first dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God." (M.V. n. 13) As a local church in our Diocese, I encourage all to be attentive to God's Word as it calls us to be heralds of mercy.

Let us join with the Holy Father and all who heed his call to open our hearts to this Holy Year pilgrimage of Faith in fact or in recognition of our spiritual pilgrimage through prayer and works of mercy to the Father: "He comes to assist us in our weakness. And this help consists in helping us accept His presence and closeness to us. Day after day, touched by His compassion, we can also become compassionate towards one another." (M.V. n. 14)

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.
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