



Diocese
of Toledo

Memorandum

TO: Priests, Deacons & Pastoral Leaders

FROM: Mr. David McCutchen
Chairperson, Toledo Diocesan Year of Mercy Committee

Rev. Msgr. Charles Singler
Director of Worship

RE: Resource Materials Pertinent to the Topic of Matrimony, Divorce and Remarriage for the Weekend of September 17 -18, 2016

DATE: 6 September 2016

As you recall in his letter dated 7 June announcing the diocesan-wide conference, *Reflecting the Face of Mercy*, Bishop Thomas also indicated that three designated weekends would be devoted to pastoral outreach to: 1) separated, divorced and remarried Catholics; 2) those involved in or affected by abortion; 3) individuals and families impacted by same-sex attraction. Following upon that leadership conference, attended by over 360 participants, he relayed that materials would be forthcoming to assist in focusing our outreach through the weekend liturgies this fall season. This comes to relay those materials which will be helpful in your planning for the following weekends:

Weekend of September 17 – 18, 2016

Focus: *Mercy toward the separated, divorced and remarried Catholics*

Weekend of October 1 – 2, 2016

Focus: *Mercy toward those involved in or affected by abortion*

Weekend of November 12 – 13, 2016

Focus: *Mercy toward individuals and families impacted by same-sex attraction*

To assist parish leaders in this diocesan-wide effort for the first designated weekend on September 17 – 18, 2016, you will find attached to this memorandum a re-printable parish bulletin insert (color or black and white) for the designated weekend, a pre-Mass pulpit announcement to be read before all Masses on the designated weekend, homiletic talking points for those who will be preaching and a specific intercession to be included with the Universal Prayer. Materials for the remaining two weekends will be forthcoming.

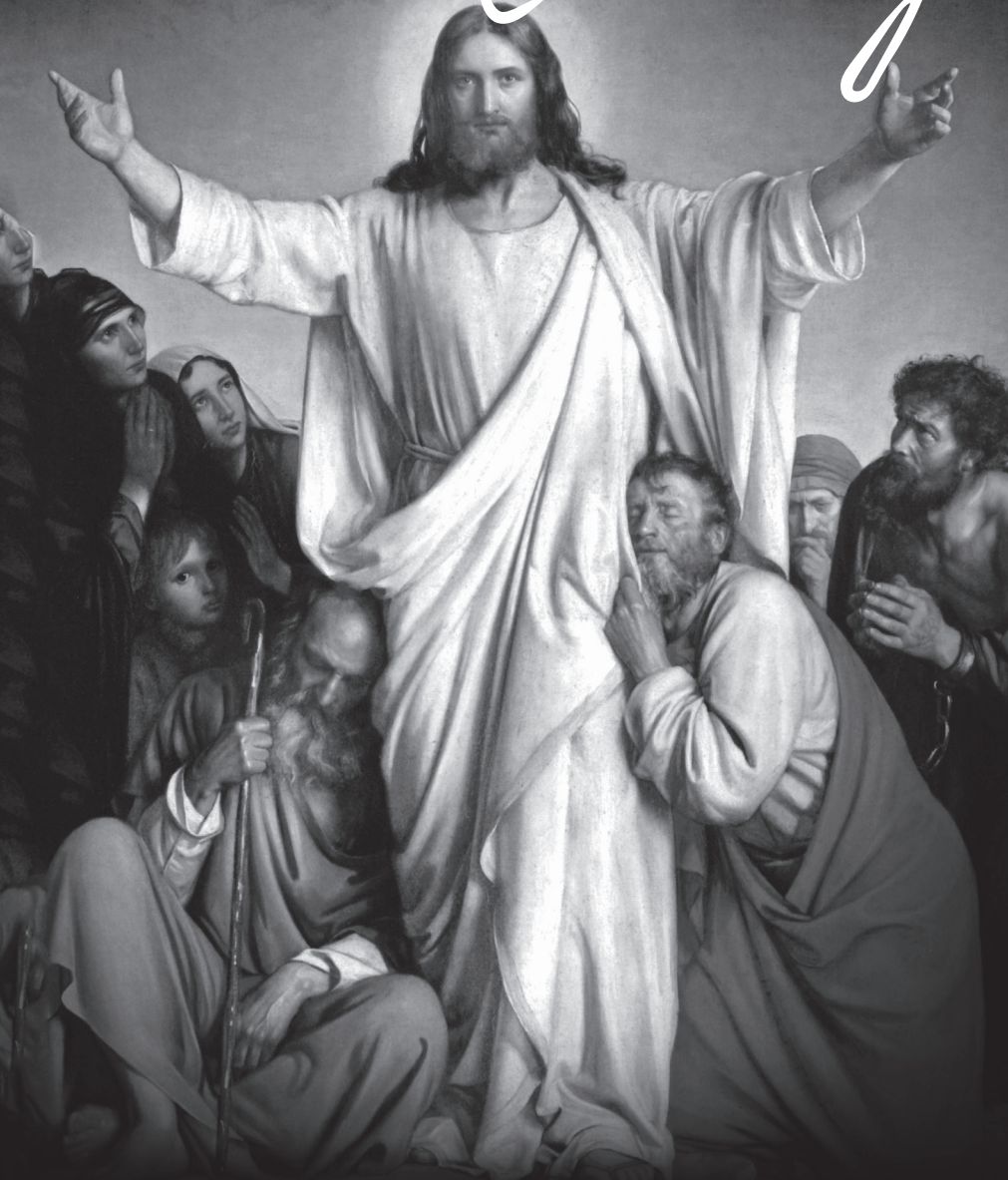
Thank you so much for your cooperation regarding this diocesan-wide effort which is hopefully just the beginning of ongoing merciful outreach in all of our parishes throughout the diocese.



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REFLECTING THE FACE OF

Mercy



THE observance of the Jubilee Year of Mercy has offered the Church's members and all people of goodwill worldwide the opportunity to reflect upon the Lord's compassion and mercy. Just as these gifts are offered to every human being by God, we, too, are charged in this exchange to be ambassadors of God's mercy to others. Ours must be the attitude of Jesus in our own thoughts, words and actions, if we are to become the agents of welcoming the lost members, those estranged from the Catholic faith for one reason or another, those who feel hurt by the Church, and those whose actions have alienated them from the Lord and from the community of faith. Like Jesus, we are called neither to condemn the individual nor to condone the sin, to accompany all with compassion; charged to find those who are lost. Some have been separated from the Church due to a misunderstanding of Church teaching; others perhaps due to limited knowledge or a negative experience; still others due to a life situation acted upon out of fear or embarrassment.

It is time to set the record straight. It is time to act in charity and truth, in the knowledge of the way God wishes us to live as His children. While there are numerous experiences that have kept many from active membership in the Church, three particular groups of our family of faith feel distanced from Christ and his Church: 1) separated, divorced and remarried Catholics, 2) those involved in or affected by abortion, 3) individuals and families impacted by same-sex attraction. As believers in the redemption offered to all who wish to follow Jesus Christ as authentic disciples, the Diocese of Toledo recently sponsored a leadership conference, *Reflecting the Face of Mercy*, for parish and school leadership teams to equip all the faithful to be instruments of mercy. Following upon that conference, the diocese will embrace a Mission of Mercy during the Fall season of 2016 as the Jubilee Year of Mercy draws to a close. All the Catholic faithful are invited and encouraged to join the cause of outreach for healing, welcome and reconciliation in Christ and His Church, for our brothers and sisters who have been estranged from the Church. Our Catholic faith urges us to accompany them in love to rediscover the beauty of new life in Christ and the beauty of the truth of our Catholic faith.

Pastors and leadership teams from the parishes and schools of the diocese will offer their good counsel and guidance in ways that we might better welcome home our hurting brothers and sisters during this Mission of Mercy. On the weekends of September 17-18, October 1-2 and November 12-13, we will be encouraged through pulpit and bulletin announcements, intentions in the Universal Prayer, and homiletic reflection to promote this effort of extending compassion and mercy to those who are separated from the faith community. Our prayers as a diocese on these designated weekends will seek the Lord's assistance in bringing the lost back to Him, in helping the faithful to accompany the estranged with compassion and to welcome them back to their spiritual home.

Join the cause. We are on a Mission of Mercy, to reflect the face of mercy: Jesus himself.



Reflecting the Face of Mercy

Diocese of Toledo

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 17 – 18, 2016

Pulpit Announcement before Mass Begins

Good afternoon/morning. The Jubilee Year of Mercy calls all of us to be ambassadors of the Lord's mercy and compassion. Jesus Christ invites us to help those estranged from the Church to know they are loved, welcomed and cared for. We are invited today to become instruments of His mercy. In all the parishes of the Diocese of Toledo this weekend our prayers and reflection are focused on and offered for all those who have experienced the pain of marital separation, divorce and remarriage. We desire our family of faith to be united again for the Lord's mercy and compassion are offered to us all. Jesus' attitude must be our own: we are neither to condemn individuals nor condone sin. Join us in this effort, our diocesan Mission of Mercy, so that all of us may reflect the face of the Father's mercy: Jesus himself, by inviting home and accompanying our estranged brothers and sisters.

Intention for the Universal Prayer

For couples and families suffering the pain of separation and divorce; that they may realize the love and mercy of God and know they are loved, welcomed and cared for by the Church; may they be supported by the outreach and prayers of our parish community, let us pray to the Lord.

Homiletic Talking Points for the Church's Mission of Mercy

Regarding Matrimony, Divorce, and Remarriage

for the weekend of September 17 – 18, 2016

- Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love. (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 10)
- It is our mission, as the local church in the Diocese of Toledo, to reflect the face of the Father's mercy especially to those who are most in need. The members of our family of faith who have been affected by separation, divorce and remarriage deserve a greater experience of compassion and a renewed sense of welcome from their brothers and sisters in Christ.
- To further these goals of compassion and welcome, we must seek a deeper mutual understanding—a better understanding of the experience of divorced Catholics as well as a better understanding of the teachings of the Church. We are to accompany others in love in whatever situation they find themselves, so that they may encounter His love and be drawn by His grace back to full communion with the Church.
- The well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family. (*Gaudium et Spes*, 47)
- God himself is the author of marriage. The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator. Despite variations throughout centuries and across cultures, these differences still maintain certain common and permanent characteristics. (CCC 1603)
- Being that the institution of marriage existed from the beginning, that is to say, before the Fall, it too was subject to the consequences of that original sin. Humanity and indeed the whole of creation fell into disorder and disarray as a consequence of sin. (Cf. "Marriage under the regime of sin," CCC 1606)
- Since Marriage was subject to the Fall, it is also an object of Christ's work of Redemption. Christ came to restore what had been lost due to sin, which includes the glory of man and woman, made in the Image and Likeness of God, united in a one-flesh union of Love.
- We must recognize the sufferings and wounds endured because of the increased phenomenon of divorce in our culture today.
- Divorced Christians must be cared for in the field hospital of the Church—they must be accepted, loved, respected, and healed by the grace of Christ and his Sacraments. Divorce, no matter what motivates such a separation, is always a source of pain and sorrow for those touched by it. To support Divorced Catholics is truly a Work of Mercy—to comfort the sorrowful.
- The Church is a family of faith. This family of faith ought to be a particular source of welcome and support for those whose families have been affected by separation and divorce. Divorced Catholics are not excommunicated and they must not be treated as such. With open arms of mercy, they should be welcomed in our parish families as the brothers and sisters that they truly are by virtue of their baptism. (Cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, 243)
- Pastors and the whole community of the faithful [are called] to help the divorced, and with solicitous care to make sure that they do not consider themselves as separated from the Church, for as baptized persons they can, and indeed must, share in her life. (*Familiaris Consortio*, 84)

- Divorced Catholics should be encouraged to listen to the word of God, to attend the Sacrifice of the Mass, to persevere in prayer, to contribute to works of charity and to community efforts in favor of justice, to bring up their children in the Christian faith, to cultivate the spirit and practice of penance and thus implore, day by day, God's grace. Let the Church pray for them, encourage them and show herself a merciful mother, and thus sustain them in faith and hope. (*Familiaris Consortio*, 84)
- Despite the reality of civil divorce, Jesus taught unequivocally the original meaning of marriage. Namely, that the matrimonial union of man and woman is indissoluble: God himself has determined "what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder." (Mt 19:6 and CCC 1614) We must recognize the truth of this reality—namely, that the real union of matrimony persists regardless of civil divorce or separation.
- Thus, special care is needed to address the irregular situation of divorced Christians who have entered into a new civil union. The Catechism clearly teaches the truth of the matter: "Contracting a new union, even if it is recognized by civil law, adds to the gravity of [divorce]: the remarried spouse is then in a situation of public and permanent adultery." (CCC 2384)
- Great pastoral care and sensitivity must be exercised in communicating the truth of this reality to divorced and remarried Catholics, who are already wounded from the rupture of divorce. Nevertheless, those charged with the pastoral care of the faithful must keep in mind that, though difficult, it is a true Work of Mercy to admonish the sinner.
- "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)
- The truth about marriage will set the People of God free. It must be acknowledge that in our present situation, many people are indeed unaware of the teachings of the Church in regard to marriage or at least are unaware of the truth of these teachings. To instruct the ignorant is a Work of Mercy.
- Many who know the truth about marriage nevertheless feel captive to their sins, the sins of those they love, and seemingly irrevocable choices that have been made. It is a Work of Mercy to set the captive free—free from the slavery to sin, even adultery.
- The ministry of our Diocesan Tribunal, including those members of the clergy and lay faithful who act as field advocates, is a ministry of Justice, Mercy, and Healing.
- The process of examining a union to determine the validity of marital consent is not only a canonical process, but is in fact a journey toward understanding and healing. This journey takes time, compassion, and accompaniment.
- The Church, which was set up to lead to salvation all people and especially the baptized, cannot abandon to their own devices those who have been previously bound by sacramental marriage and who have attempted a second marriage. The Church will therefore make untiring efforts to put at their disposal her means of salvation. (*Familiaris Consortio*, 84)
- It is an act of evangelization—of proclaiming the Good News of liberty to captives, knowledge to the ignorant, and joy to the sorrowful—to assist the faithful in their understanding of the process of seeking a declaration of nullity.