



JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY – MARCH 2016
DISCOVERING WAYS TO LIVE THE YEAR OF MERCY

The Great Lent is the time when we focus on taking up our daily cross in imitation of Christ. The cross we bear is about more than suffering a serious disease or the death of a loved one or living without enough income to cover expenses. It means sacrificing our own will to that of the Father's—doing what He wants, not what we want. It's a paradox, though, that in sacrificing our own will, we find true freedom. This is what Jesus meant when he said "My yoke is easy, my burden light."

For the more we rely on others or others rely on us, the less free we are to go wherever we wish to go, pursue whatever we wish to pursue and do whatever we wish to do. Love constrains us. And in a society devoted to personal self-fulfillment, the cost of love often seems too high. For followers of Jesus, the "free" person is the one no longer plagued by the burdensome quest for money, pleasure, possessions, social status or political power—the very things that our culture says will satisfy our deepest wants and make us happy.

In proclaiming the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis invites us to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica or to one of the Holy Doors in cathedrals and designated churches throughout the world. There is another kind of pilgrimage we can make, one that doesn't involve travel. We can make a pilgrimage of the heart this year. We are now on Lenten journey, a kind of pilgrimage whose destination is the glorious resurrection of Christ. During such a pilgrimage, we endeavor to come closer to Christ. It happened to St. Paul during his now-famous journey to Damascus, where he had been planning to continue his persecution of Christians. But Christ caught him up short, and Saul was transformed to Paul—a new man.

Saint John Chrysostom says about Paul's conversion: "The most important thing was that he knew himself to be loved by Christ. Enjoying this love, he considered himself happier than anyone else." Our entire life, in fact, is a pilgrimage during which we seek to learn the ways of God. This why the Psalmist says: "When will I come to the end of my pilgrimage and enter the presence of God?"

Our prayer today: We thank you today, Lord, that in your merciful cross we find true freedom.