

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KITUI



FROM THE BISHOP'S DESK Thanksgiving for the Year of Mercy

My dear Christians,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

May the Mercy of the Father, the Peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Shine on you!

“Alleluia! Give thanks to Yahweh for he is good, for his faithful love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods, for his faithful love (and mercy) endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his faithful love (and mercy) endures forever. He alone works wonders, for his faithful love endures forever.... Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his faithful love endures forever. (Ps 136 1-4)

We have just come to the end of the Holy Jubilee Year of Mercy. As we close the Door of Mercy in our Cathedral and begin the time of preparation for the birth of Our Saviour, I have decided to write you a pastoral letter in order to reflect on a few things.

The fruits of the Year of Mercy.

This Year of Mercy has truly been a year of many graces and blessings. Since the Holy Father Pope Francis announced this Jubilee Year, the whole Church, and we as a diocese, have been drinking from the “fountain of Mercy”, from the merciful heart of Christ. We thank God for all the blessings we have received and witnessed, and for the eagerness of the Christians, to benefit from this special Jubilee.

We as a diocese, parishes and many groups have made tremendous efforts to carry out the Corporal works of Mercy, as well as the Spiritual Works of Mercy. We have visited the prisoners in various prisons taking them some items, we have assisted some poor people by improving their houses or helping in their needs, we have accompanied the disabled and those mourning or suffering... In other words, we have tried to show the merciful face of Christ, to all those in great need. This is God's work and we thank Him for working through us, as we tried “to be merciful, just as our heavenly Father is merciful”. We also had many celebrations as a diocese for various groups, where we ourselves came to obtain God's Mercy and forgiveness, as we visited the Holy Door of Mercy, prayed together at our Shrines, and as we gathered to pray and receive the Sacrament of reconciliation. Even as we come to the end of this jubilee, I still invite you all specially to make an effort to forgive all those who have hurt us, forgive all past offences and forgive from the bottom of our heart, so that we can be forgiven. Let our hearts be opened!

My dear Christians, this is the time of the Lord, this has been a time of God's victory, this has been a time of being embraced by God our Father as prodigal children, and celebrate with Him. We have witnessed so many Weddings that have been celebrated, so many who have come back to the Sacraments through the granting of Sanatio, and many who for a long time had not come to confession, who have received this Sacrament of God's Mercy. The Lord forgives any sin that the sinner asks pardon for, without conditions.

With Our Lady, we sing the song of praise and thanksgiving to God for looking at his people with eyes of Mercy:

“My Soul Glorifies the Lord, and my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour...”

Pope Francis at the end of the Year of Mercy has written to us another letter called “Mercy and Misery”. In this title, the Pope seeks to convince us yet again, how in the encounter of Christ, who is God's Mercy (in the Church and in the Sacraments) with the misery of sin, (in the repentant sinner however grave), God's mercy changes the misery of our sins, and brings forgiveness, joy and hope. In this letter he asked us to reflect on what we must do after this year of Mercy ends. He urges us, now more than ever, to continue the spirit of Mercy that we have learnt during the past year. Let our hearts be opened!

Live Mercy after Year of Mercy.

As we close the Door of Mercy, we are invited to open the doors of our hearts and continue being springs of Mercy by continuing to show mercy, and to receive mercy. My heart, be opened!!

The Lord continues to seek us out in our sinfulness. Let us not fear to come to seek his forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Holy Father has decided to give the permission and authority to all priests from now on, to forgive the sin of abortion, as they were doing during the Year of Mercy. This facilitates many who wish to come back to Christ after this very grave offence to do so more easily.

We are all urged to return to the frequent reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation. The priests are urged to help all those who come to confession, to discover and hear the words of our merciful Father: “Your sins have been forgiven!” My dear sons and daughters, come in big numbers to confess your sins, and let us pray for a true revival of the sacrament of confession. I ask the priests to organize themselves in the parishes, thinking of the time tables of the Christians, so that as many people as possible can be able to receive this Sacrament.

We have seen how effective the Works of mercy are in transforming our society and giving witness to God's Love. My daughters and sons, we will be known to be truly sons and daughters of our merciful Father God, by the acts of mercy we do in our daily life. Mercy cannot be just something of a moment, it must become our daily habit and attitude. I therefore ask you to plan how to still make certain activities of mercy, a part of your yearly plan. Plan to visit prisons and hospitals, make some plans of helping specific poor families in the parish every year, plan to buy wheelchairs or crutches or blankets for the needy, plan to support the funeral or health bill of some poor whether catholic or not, and finally support our activities of our Kitui Caritas which try to improve the welfare of many living in deplorable conditions. This year, in the Caritas week, we are asking you all to contribute towards the support of our St John Eude's center, where we take care of former street children, who now need educational support and some basic needs. Please make sure you visit this center that is in Kitui town. We will also make an effort to support the other institutions assisting special needs children in the diocese.

Following the request of Pope Francis, we have decided to start a project of mercy to mark this jubilee year, called Maria Goretti care center. This center will assist young girls who become expectant and are been mistreated or pushed to have abortions, so that we take care of them during the time of pregnancy until they safely deliver the babies and are reunited with their families. We will also have a workshop to be used by very poor women, for a given period, to make garments for sale, to assist them reach self support. This will assist many women in difficult situations have an opportunity to regain their peace and have a meaningful financial base.

Dear Christians, as we celebrate the joy of God's Mercy in the Church, I also wish to talk to you about a very serious “virus” that is beginning to attack our innocent Christians.

Solutions of Mercy are always in Christ and His Church.

Together with many joys that fill our lives, we are bound to meet certain difficulties in life that cause us sorrow, pain and sense of desperation. It could be unexplained calamities that come to us, through illnesses or accidents, or sudden deaths of our loved ones; It could also be when our human efforts do not meet success, like looking for work for long periods, seeking solutions to family or community disputes, or even the painful patient prayer for the spiritual and human conversion of those we love, without seeing results.

Through mercy the Church seeks to comfort and accompany those in such difficulties, praying for God's mercy, but without promising wealth, miracles or sudden solutions. These depend on God always. "Comfort, comfort my people" (Is 40:1) It is understandable that anyone in such conditions would look for any way that can solve their pain or problems, which leads many Catholics to start looking for human solutions away from the Mercy of Christ in his one, Holy and Catholic and Apostolic Church. This is the Church led by Pope Francis and has as Apostles the bishops of each diocese. Dear Christians, no matter what anyone tells you, there is no other Catholic Church other than the one headed by bishops united to Peter, to the Pope and to the bishop.

False Prophets and fake priests

St Paul also faced similar difficulties when some people pretending to be part of the shepherds, came to the Christians after Paul left, and begun pretending to be better than St Paul himself. I write to you what St Paul said of them:

"I am astonished that you are so promptly turning away from the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are going over to a different gospel, -not that it is another gospel; except that there are trouble-makers among you who are seeking to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we ourselves or an angel from heaven preaches to you a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let God's curse be on him. I repeat again what we declared before: anyone who preaches to you a gospel other than the one you were first given is to be under God's curse". (Gal 1, 6-9)

These are very serious words from St Paul, and would apply more especially to those who dare to abuse or pretend using the Eucharist. It does not matter if they claim to be priests, or wear clothes like priests, or even pretend to celebrate Mass.

My dear Christians, and especially many of you who have had serious problems, do not have anything to do with such persons who have put themselves on the path of God's wrath. Do not believe in the false prophets and fake priests and their empty promises for money.

St Peter even speaks of them:

"As there were false prophets in the past history of our people, so you too will have your false teachers, who will insinuate their own disruptive views and, by disowning the Lord who bought them freedom, will bring upon themselves speedy destruction. Many will copy their debauched behaviour, and the Way of Truth will be brought into disrepute on their account. In their greed they will try to make a profit out of you with untrue tales. But the judgement made upon them long ago is not idle, and the destruction awaiting them is forever on the watch." (1Peter 2, 1-3)

I have already warned you and repeat about two pretenders, who have come around using the name of "fathers" Fide and Daniel Mutunga claiming to be Catholic priests. If only you could listen to the voice of your shepherd to avoid being misled. They may have an appearance of Catholic priests, but they are not! Consequently they do not have the Eucharist nor the priesthood. My sons and daughters, I, as your Father tell you. You can choose who to believe. We entrust them to God who will deal with them as he sees fit, while we pray for their

conversion, and the conversion of those following them, so that they stop playing with the Eucharist which is sacrilege.

Please also beware of some priests who seek money by asking for special payments for prayers. Anyone who claims he has special spiritual powers and asks for payments for those powers is fake and a conman. The stipends for sacraments are all known and no more should be paid. Please open your eyes and see that these people only want your money. Again my daughters and sons, know what we have received in our Church and don't be so easily cheated.

Politicians in Churches and Prospective candidates.

Finally, I have some few words on the Politicians and Politics. As you may already know, the Catholics bishops of Kenya released a Press Statement to the Nation on 19th November 2016, addressing all Kenyans and especially the Catholics and all people of good will.

We agreed that we shall not be allowing politicians to address the congregations in our Churches. This means that they can come to Church, but they will not be given any chance to greet the people or even say anything at the sanctuary whether a priest is present or not. No one has the authority to allow them to use our prayer moment for politics. Let them address the people in barazas and we will attend. However we realize that in other public events like school harambees, outside our churches, the program may include the leaders. I would wish to ask you all, priests and church leaders, to observe this directive faithfully. With respect, we invite our current political leaders and those intending to vie, to join us in prayer, but that they respect the sacred places of worship.

Further to this, I would like to instruct that we will not invite politicians as guests of honour in any Church Harambee, in our parishes or stations, as from 1st January 2017 until the elections are over. We also ask all Leaders in our churches and church organs, who wish to vie for political office to resign from their positions by 1st January 2017.

As I conclude, I wish to encourage you, the young people, to remain strong in faith and not allow yourselves to be misused. I am proposing that in the coming year, we dedicate special attention to our young people. I am sure we will have more time to talk and share together.

My dear Christians, I know this letter has been a bit long. I ask you to join me thanking God for the fruits of the Year of Mercy. It is clear we have seen the face of God's mercy. For those who are still in difficulty and following wrong ways, God our Father is still waiting for your return.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is just about to be born. Let us prepare well, by avoiding all these false messiahs and welcoming the true Messiah who is Christ the Lord, the King of the Universe who comes in humility, in poverty and in suffering in Bethlehem. And yet the Joy fills the stable with the songs of the angels... "Glory be to God in the highest, and peace to men of good will". Our God of Mercy is close to all who suffer!! We ask Christ who will be born to make us messengers and apostles of his mercy. Suffering is not a curse!

I wish you all a very Happy and blessed Christmas with the blessings of the King that has been born in Bethlehem. Let us all go and adore him!!

Your loving shepherd,


✠ Anthony Muthera
Bishop of Kitui