

## ADVENT SESSION 3, Third Week, 2015 'Jubilee Year – The Face of Mercy'

**'The Lord your God is with you...will take delight in you and will give you new life'**  
**Zeph. 3:17**

In the spirit of Gaudete Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent, there is much to rejoice about. There is the Jubilee Year; the ongoing UN'COP21' talks on climate change in Paris (Laudate Si has influenced many participants); and the celebration of International Human Rights day.

**The Jubilee of Mercy** commenced December 8<sup>th</sup>, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, as a yearlong pilgrimage of mercy. In accordance with tradition it started with Pope Francis opening the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, a gesture rich in symbolism. The Pope is inviting everyone to go through a 'jubilee door' to '*cross the threshold of mercy and to experience the gift of reconciliation.*' It's a clarion call for each of us to come to this loving God whatever is going on in our lives; we just need to be '*open to God's mercy.*' Since he was elected Pope, 'mercy' is the constant theme of Francis' message to the world; which partly explains his global popularity and the positive influence he exerts as a moral leader.



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**'Merciful like the Father'** is the motto for the jubilee year. The inherent challenge to each of us is that in experiencing God's mercy, can I become a more merciful and compassionate person? In Africa just two weeks ago Pope Francis demonstrated his compassion everywhere he went but particularly in the Central African Republic, a war torn county. Seemingly oblivious to the danger, he stopped to reach out to the most vulnerable with love, especially people perceived as being 'at the margins' like the war wounded and those living with HIV.

See Jubilee Year: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6vvoQmvYrM>

**Few minutes to reflect** on the key points from the video clip.... Share in twos or threes.

**At the UN'COP21'** climate change talks currently going on in Paris, the concept of 'mercy' is being spoken of more commonly now as meaning mercy towards our natural environment. Behind this is the call for all of humanity to restrain itself, by not seeking to maximise short-term profit and power, at the expense of Earth, the vulnerable and of future generations.



United nations conference  
on climate change  
COP21/CMP11



**New insights gained from a COP21 civil-society presentation.** The results of a ground breaking study revealed links between human rights and rights of nature. By examining 100 incidents of co-violations of human rights and rights of nature, the report revealed a growing trend linking violations of the rights of people and rights of nature. This underscores the increased awareness that the well-being of humans and nature are inextricably linked!

<http://globalsistersreport.org/blog/capital-e-earth/environment/study-released-cop21>

**Question:** Is this a new understanding i.e. linking of human rights and the rights of nature?

The study also shows that more than 60 percent of the rights violations involved extractive or fossil fuels e.g. coal and oil, and energy production. It also revealed that in more than half the cases, the state was implicated as a perpetrator of rights co-violations, either alone or with the respective industry. According to one of the authors of the study, Linda Sheehan: "*Most of the cases are in the global south because that's where the race for extraction is occurring*" Alarmingly the report revealed that extractive industries also account for nearly 60 percent of the deaths of those who resist the industry in defence of Earth....

World leaders agreeing to a just and legally binding global agreement will necessitate acknowledging both human rights and the rights of nature. This will be very significant!

**On International Human Rights day**, December 10<sup>th</sup> the UN launched a year-long campaign: "*Our Rights. Our Freedoms. Always*" to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) and the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#). These covenants were adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 1966 and together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, comprise the International Bill of Human Rights. Essentially they set out the civil, political, cultural, economic, and social rights and freedoms that are the birth right of every human being. Not everyone realises s/he can claim these rights. See: [www.un.org/en/rights](http://www.un.org/en/rights)



'The Opened Baggot Street Doors' © MIA 2015. Photo: Anne Walsh

The door of Mercy International Centre, Baggot St. This is the same door where Catherine McCauley welcomed everyone who came through it with love and compassion. Significantly God's mercy was taken out through this door to a waiting world by Catherine herself, also each Mercy Sister and co-worker. They opened their hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society, especially those who were denied their dignity. See: [www.mercyworld.org](http://www.mercyworld.org)

**Personal challenge:** This Advent could I reach out to those living on the margins like the homeless, the elderly who are alone and asylum seekers...

Is there a concrete thing I could commit to?

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