

Mercy Door Reflection

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis aligns the cry of Earth with the Cry of the Poor, emphasising that the destiny of the human community is inextricably linked to the destiny of the whole community of life and life support systems of Earth. They are one and the same cry.

In one of his reflections on the Jubilee Year of Mercy he further emphasises that the Church of the twenty first century must be a Church of Mercy. There is to be no pulling back from mercy in favour of pragmatic decisions and actions.

The Jubilee Year of Mercy, coincidentally began with a resounding merciful response to the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor. 195 Leaders from around the world, signed the historic Paris Climate Agreement committing to end the fossil fuel era, with the long term goal of reducing emissions to zero and to reviewing national commitments every five years. As we open the Mercy Door to our Institute Mercy Ecology Centre, we celebrate the Agreement's goal to keep global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees.

While there is much that is pragmatic about this Agreement, as is evident in the compromises and struggles of the Paris deliberations, it also serves to demonstrate that mercy is not something lightly achieved or easily or given. Mercy is not simply a weak or romantic response to the cry of Earth or the cry of the poor. More often than not, it's a strong, gutsy commitment to address head on, the root causes of suffering or need. It sometimes involves the often scary challenge to deal with injustice and violent opposition. It demands the discipline of analysing and researching a situation and considering the consequences of taking action. Mercy is definitely not for the faint-hearted.

Justice requires that we give to Earth and to Earth's creatures and to Earth's life support systems, that to which they have a right viz the dignity to exist, because of the value they have in themselves – not for some value derived from their usefulness for human existence. Mercy goes beyond justice, but cannot replace it, giving Earth and Earth's creatures even more than what they deserve or have a right too. Mercy is the abundance of the Divine, pressed down and flowing over.

Central to Mercy is forgiveness, triggered by but not restricted to apology for harm done or injury inflicted. Mercy is a gift to the evolving planet, visible in myriad species and human interactions. It is the spirit that underpins Rahamim's efforts to contribute to the building of life-giving relationships within a resilient Earth community. Every time we pass through this door, or any door dedicated to Mercy this year, let us remember with gratitude our capacity and privilege to give and receive Mercy.

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