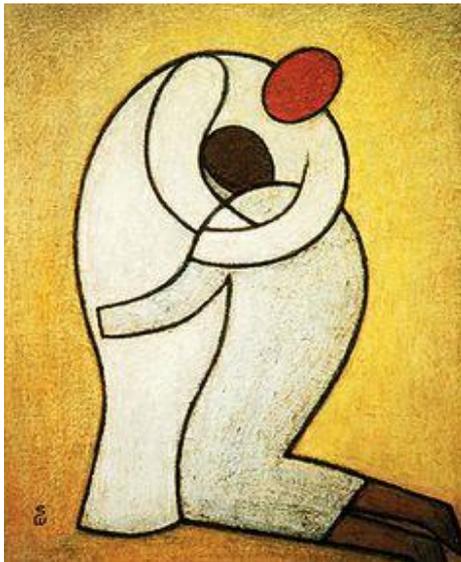


As the Year of Consecrated Life was just coming to an end, Pope Francis came up with the inspiration of declaring a year of Extra Ordinary Jubilee of Mercy. For almost two months they overlapped with one another. While we have ended with the former, the latter began on December 8, 2015, the feast of the Immaculate Conception and the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council. This will close on November 20, 2016, the Feast of Christ the King.



First of all, it is important for us to differentiate between ‘a Jubilee Year’ and other ‘Years’ like the ‘Year of Consecrated Life’ or ‘Year of the Family’ or ‘Year of Priests’ and so on. Jubilee Year is a Biblical Event described in the Book of Leviticus. Referring to the current Holy Year of Mercy, the Pope explained that the Jubilee is a time “for conversion, so that our

hearts can become bigger, more generous, more like a child of God, with more love.”According to the rules of the Jubilee, the year served as a “kind of general amnesty” in which persons who had been forced to sell their goods or property could regain possession of them.

The Pope also said that in that time, requirements such as the Jubilee were used to combat poverty and inequality, guaranteeing a life of dignity for all and an equal distribution of land on which to live and from which to draw sustenance.

In addition to this Jubilee Year of Mercy, we are also now in Lent, a sacred space in the life of the Church. Lent is a time for reconsidering our feelings and letting our eyes be opened to the truth that “we are the beloved daughters and sons of the Father”. A lot is expected of Christians during this time and what about us? It is a time to “unmask”: While most of us are fasting, abstaining and praying, there are a few things that we could still reflect upon, to improve our personal spiritual life, in the communities that we are assigned, and to live out and witness to what we have professed before the Church and the Lord. We may not be called to distribute land, to grant equality to the poor etc., but we are probably expected to do much simpler things.

So what are some of those simple things that we could especially focus on, during this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy?

Dear sisters, I sometimes wonder, as to why in many of our communities, sisters are not able to look beyond the petty issues that put them in a bind. Why do we get caught and often stuck, with seemingly silly issues? Could we ask ourselves as to why we find it difficult to relate well with some of the sisters of our community? Some of us go into a silent mode or worse still, show resistance and an attitude of indifference to community living and our mission. Some are not prepared to forgive or to be the first to take a step forward, in such matters.

May be our 'egos' are to be blamed. But to whom have we entrusted the managing of our egos?

I recently read this, "We are all impatient. Sometimes that impatience shows in feeling that we are getting stuck in life. For many younger people, impatience is seen in being dissatisfied in whatever life has to offer, an inability to make long-term commitments, or looking always to see what is around the next corner. Relationships can be seen as a series of short-term happenings. One result of these short-term happenings over time is that our lives "are like chaff that the wind drives away." (Psalm 1:4)

We have a choice. We could dwell with our impatient attitudes and return to the slavery of our individual desires, or, we could choose life and hold fast to the teachings of God. Jesus also calls us to choose life. We can dwell in impatience, thinking that we are making free choices. But that will always draw us into the latest fad. On the other hand, if we will take up the cross every day - meaning that we will live for God and others rather than just for ourselves - that will lead to the joy only God can give. In this joy we will flourish.

Sisters, could we then sit before the Lord and ask ourselves "To what extent are we aware of the above in our personal lives?" (Read meditatively the Scripture text: Lk.15: 11 – 32)

-What are the things that weigh us down and hinder us from experiencing the Merciful love of the Father and sharing the same with others?

- How will we in our individual lives, experience the equality, dignity and love of God, of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit in this Jubilee Year of Mercy?

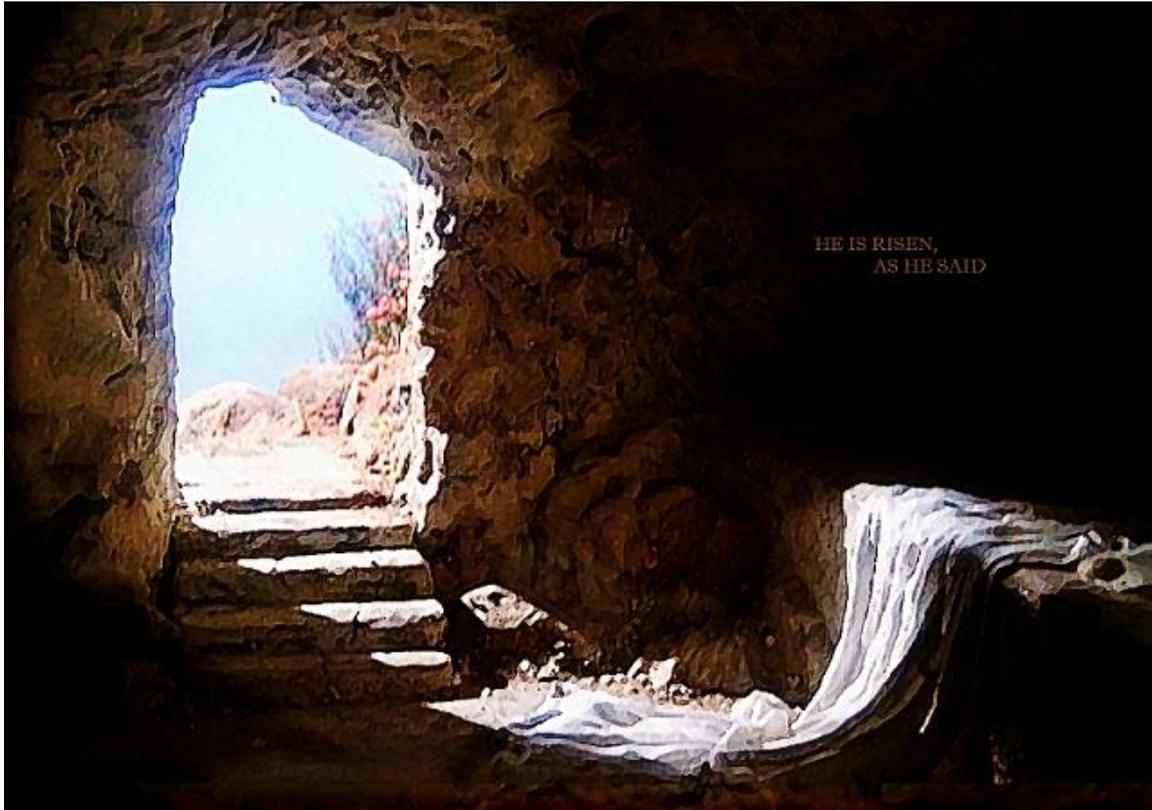
One small step would be, to sit with the sister or sisters with whom we have been crossed for days/months/years and sincerely dialogue, keeping before us the goal of the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

- As a community, is there something we could do concretely to remind us about our resolutions this Year?
- Let us spend a little time with the elderly and sick sisters of our community, giving life to them by our presence.
- What could we as a community, do for our workers or the poor in our surroundings?
- Are there people who have borrowed money from the community/institution and find it difficult to repay? – We shall, during this Year of Mercy, write off the loan of the needy person, to the tune of 20 - 25 thousand.

Pope Francis said to a group of Pilgrims on Ash Wednesday, "If Jubilee Doesn't, 'Come Out of Your Pockets' to Help the Needy, 'It's Not a Jubilee'."

I am sure the resurrection will be a personal experience of joy, when we have forgiven others, particularly those members of the community with whom we cannot see eye to eye and when we have been able to reach out to the poor and the neglected. Only then will we be truly an Easter people!

I wish you all, a very Happy Easter, dear sisters. May the Joy of the Risen Lord make us proclaim, "You are my God and in you I trust".



Sr. M. Nirmalini A.C.  
Provincial Superior