

The Net Worker

Fall 2016



JUBILEE
OF MERCY

Closing of the Mercy Door

By Andrew Golden

Our Holy Doors

I think that the best way to describe the Holy Doors of the Jubilee of Mercy is to quote Jesus when he says: "I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture." John 10:9

You see the Holy Door (or gate) is a symbol for Jesus who calls us to enter him through the sacrament and then, when we are refreshed, to go out into the world performing the eight Acts of Mercy (formerly seven) for our brothers and sisters.

St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City

Pope Francis will close the Jubilee Door at St. Peter's Basilica, on Sunday, November 20. With this gesture, the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy will end eleven months after it began.

A short time later, Vatican workers will begin to build a brick and masonry wall on the inside of the Basilica. It is expected that an urn containing a number of coins and a parchment document will be embedded in the brick wall. The urn, sort of like a time capsule, will be opened at the next Jubilee, which date has not been set.

The 20th of November is the last Sunday of Ordinary Time for 2016 and also the day that we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

St. Peter's, River Edge, NJ

At St. Peter's in River Edge, we do not have a Jubilee Door. Instead we have dedicated a Mercy Door at the main entrance to the Gathering Space. Our Mercy Door is adorned with garlands of flowers to denote its symbolism.

At all of our Masses on November 20, we will offer special prayers that will conclude the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. We will offer up to our Lord all of our parishioners' works that have been documented on our Wall of Mercy in the Gathering Space, our Virtual Work of Mercy <http://www.saint-peter.org/wall-of-mercy/>, and our Faith Formation Book of Mercy. These Works of Mercy will be placed in the sanctuary and incensed along with the gifts of bread and wine as an offering uplifted to the Lord

(Excerpted from Psalm 141).

Doors

Closing the Jubilee Doors of Mercy does not mean that we close our Corporal and Spiritual Acts of Mercy. It means, that having been refreshed with Grace we cross the threshold into a new journey of mercy.

To look at our doors means to look beyond them, to look for a different space and time, another dimension, a goal which lies beyond the limits of this world. It means, in other words, to seek God until our pilgrimage leads us to the door of heaven, which the Lord himself will open and invite us to enter the wedding feast in His company.

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To walk through a door of Mercy is to make ourselves more consciously aware of God's indulgent mercy and of the wonderful community of life within we live. It should be a sign of "true conversion of our heart."

"Pope Francis has called on Catholics around the world to use the ongoing Jubilee year of Mercy to "open wide" the doors of their hearts to forgive others and to work against social exclusion, even of those that may have caused them bother or upset."

He said, "... we must also ask: 'Lord, help me to open the doors of my heart!'"

Therefore, the doors to our heart must remain open to welcome God himself -- to be open to everyone and never to exclude anyone.

To Love Jesus

When we open the doors to our hearts, we are really saying our hearts are open to love Jesus and our neighbors.

- We love Jesus through the hungry and thirsty, to those who need clothes or are homeless.
- We love Jesus when we visit the sick or imprisoned or are suffering the loss of a loved one.
- We love Jesus when we forgive those who have wronged us and when we lovingly help those to find their way home who have strayed from the faith.
- We love Jesus when we care for our Common Home - that is the environment - as Pope Francis has proposed in the new Works of Mercy.

Conclusion

The motto for the Jubilee of Mercy is "Merciful Like the Father" Luke, 6:36. This serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of the Father who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to give love and forgiveness without measure.

We will conclude the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy at St. Peter's when the Deacon says,

"Be merciful, just as your heavenly Father is merciful. Go in peace."

This final instruction is to remind us to be a reflection of God's love to all of his Creation.

Works of Mercy

(including the new works of Mercy)

During the Jubilee of Mercy, Christians are called to reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy:

The Corporal Works of Mercy

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the sick
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the dead
- (New) **The care for our common home** requires "simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness" and "makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world." (For example: conserving water, recycling, and reducing emissions from our cars and homes.)

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

- Admonish the sinner
- Instruct the ignorant (guide/counsel those who are confused)
- Counsel the doubtful
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Bear wrongs patiently
- Forgive all injuries
- Pray for the living and the dead
- (New) Grateful contemplation and prayer for God's world. (For example: thanking God for His gift of the environment, for clean air, water and natural resources.)

PLEASE NOTE

Throughout the Year of Mercy, we ask you to document the Works of Mercy that you and your family perform. Post them on our Wall of Mercy in Gathering Space using the Work of Mercy card or to the Virtual Wall of Mercy page on our website. If you wish to include a picture, kindly do so.

Homeless Outreach: JoyJ Initiative at St. Peter's

By Pam Lobley and Dave Ashley

In a world where connections are increasingly superficial, the JoyJ Initiative is a homeless outreach program whose focus is to help the homeless, not just by giving them bags of food and supplies, but by talking and getting to know each person as the donations are delivered. JoyJ is already established in New York City, and now the program is being brought to St. Peter's and New Jersey by our own parish youth group.

Volunteers provide the homeless with comfort bags containing physical supplies such as food, gloves & hats, and information regarding resources where individuals may find shelter, showers, and a hot meal. What makes JoyJ stand out among other programs like it is that it encourages personal connection with homeless. With each bag that is handed out, the giver approaches the individual, asks their name and shakes their hand. They may end up having a conversation, and those who would otherwise be invisible are now given a small amount of dignity.

The JoyJ Initiative was incorporated in 2014. It was founded on the vision that the Golden Rule is a fundamental law of the human condition, one that transcends age, gender, religion, and culture. JoyJ aims to infuse this concept back into modern society. It does this by offering "spontaneous philanthropy" programs where groups and individuals provide food and necessities to the homeless population in their communities through direct outreach.

Where did they get the name JoyJ? The origin of the name JoyJ comes directly from scripture. In the book of John, Jesus said, "*if you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His love. I have told you these things so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I loved you...*"

The meaning of JoyJ is the Joy of Jesus.

Dave Ashley was one of the first parishioners to participate in the program through St. Peter's. He shares here some of his experience...

On Saturday morning, Nov 7th, 2015 our day started in St. Peter's parking lot at 8:30. There I joined our amazing Youth group leaders, Nick & Liz Belfiore and about a dozen of our Youth Group along with a few parents. Off we headed to the Church of St. Thomas More on E 89th St. in the city, where we joined with about 150 or so volunteers. Lining the hall were Green Comfort Bags containing the gifts of mercy we would be delivering to the homeless and hungry in an hour.

Three JoyJ leaders came to the front, introduced themselves and the orientation began. They welcomed us and told us we would be divided up into groups that would be sent to different parts of the city. We each received 2 or 3 of the Green "comfort" bags which contained items for survival on the street... a sandwich, bottle of water, a juice box, a cup of applesauce, an energy bar, a packet of cookies and a fruit snack.

Then came the piece de resistance... a \$25 McDonald's gift certificate. Not much to rid the world of hunger & homelessness, but the words of Mother, St. Teresa of Calcutta... ***if you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one.***

Along with this simple feast there was a knit hat & gloves, a plastic rain-poncho, a hand towel, a plastic bag with toiletries, and a pamphlet entitled *Neighborhood Guide to Food & Assistance*.

These contents were important but what the day is really about is the Human Connection. As we walked up to the people, and before we handed these bags out, we introduced ourselves by name and asked theirs, made eye contact and waited for an answer. We shook their hands and engaged them in conversation. Some were apprehensive as for many, this would be the first time in a while that someone had taken the time to do these simple acts.

It was a bit disconcerting at first to approach and engage, but quickly everyone began to feel more comfortable. My first contact came with a homeless man who was having a loud conversation with a construction worker who was working in front of the man's belongings. The homeless man was on a rant telling the worker how to use the heavy equipment and do the job properly. The homeless man's name was Walter, and as it turned out, he knew exactly what he was talking about. Walter was a 14 year Vet whose career was primarily in the Seabees working with heavy land moving equipment. I asked Walter if we could sit and talk some more, I told him we had some things for him. Walter guided me toward his possessions and we sat on the sidewalk. As I handed him the comfort bag, I began describing the contents, eventually asking how long he had been on the street. He told me he wasn't sure but about 3 or 4 years. He owned a home in Bayside, Queens and hadn't been there for at least that long, he just couldn't remember. He said it was a beautiful house. Then suddenly his eyes welled up with tears as he told me that his wife passed away suddenly from an illness, and after that he just walked out and could never go back there again. We spent some more time talking. I told him I would pray for him and have kept that promise.

Mother Teresa said...

"We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty."

JoyJ has become a passion of the St. Peter's Youth Group. After experiencing it first hand in 2015, youth group member Devon Link turned leader Nick Belfiore, and announced, "We're bringing this to St. Peter's." Her enthusiasm was shared by the whole group, and on October 22, St. Peter's had its first outreach into Newark. They had over 40 people help assemble comfort bags in the parish center the night before. The following morning 26 parishioners, ages 11+, came for the actual outreach. They went down to the city of Newark and gave all of the 80 comfort bags. Then, as Nick tells it "A bystander who saw what we were doing spontaneously gave us a \$100 cash donation! We were able to quickly pick up McDonald's gift cards with that and help another 20 people! All of our volunteers came back with phenomenal stories of talking with the people they met. It was truly a blessed day."

Though the Youth Group spearheads this initiative, anyone is welcome to participate: adults and teens are welcome, families are welcome, too; younger children must be accompanied by a parent. Teens are sent out in groups, and always have an adult with them. They distribute the bags in safe neighborhoods during daylight hours.

The next step will be to try and figure out how we can sustain a local chapter of JoyJ at our parish. A date for the next outreach has not yet been decided.

If you are interested in learning more or participating, please stay tuned to the parish website, bulletin, and to keep an ear out at mass announcements for more information!

The Dangers of Legalizing Assisted Suicide

By Maria Brockmeier

I felt like I was back in college again. There was my Georgetown professor, Father Robert Spitzer, up at the podium speaking while I took notes trying to absorb what this brilliant man was explaining.

However this was not a lecture hall in 1989 but a room at the NYU Catholic Center. I had made the trek over the river and through the woods to NYU to hear him speak about the dangers to our society of legalizing assisted suicide.

He started by asking why should the Catholic Church care? If it's not a Catholic who wants assisted suicide why should the Church bother to get involved? Because ... if assisted suicide becomes legal there will be victim classes that will exist that did not exist before. The Church is always concerned with the victims in our society. These victims will be the vulnerable ones, who will feel the pressure when the "option to die" becomes the "duty to die." There will be seriously ill patients who do not have loving families, and those less than caring relatives may opt for death for them. There will be a cultural decline arising from these laws that devalue human life.

There have already been cases of economic backgrounds affecting this issue.

An example is Barbara Wagner of Oregon, a cancer patient whose insurance told her that they wouldn't pay for her pain protocol pills but would pay for her death in an assisted suicide. She told The Seattle Times, "I was absolutely hurt that somebody could think that way. They won't pay me for me to live but they will pay for me to die."

Fr. Spitzer said "There will now be two classes of people—those who can afford an insurance plan to cover remedial and life-prolonging treatments for life-threatening illness—and those who cannot afford such plans. That second group will only be given one option—the option to die by their own hand. Needless to say, a single option is no option at all—a fait accompli".

Fr. Spitzer continued by saying that groups that advocate assisted suicide seem to be acting out of misguided compassion. They feel sorry for the person who has just learned that he/she has a terminal illness and will most certainly feel depressed and want to end it all. These groups feel like they should help them. There are those who think that pain will be unbearable. However, Fr. Spitzer quoted the 1992 manual of the Washington Medical Association which says "adequate interventions exist to control pain in 90 to 99% of patients."

Fr. Spitzer said that those who have depression after a terminal illness diagnosis can reverse the depression with counseling. The six

months that patient has left to live could be the most important of his/her life. He/she will seek forgiveness, give forgiveness, and enjoy time with their families. When pain and depression are adequately treated suicidal thoughts are reversed. We must just tend to the emotional, spiritual and physical comfort of the sick and dying.

Father Spitzer told us of an old expression in the philosophy of law: "What becomes the law becomes normal-- what becomes normal becomes moral." It will become glorified to end your life. Featured recently in the news was a young woman with ALS who threw herself an Assisted Suicide Party where people could say goodbye before she killed herself. And some glorify this as courageous! In the Netherlands, you can call a van to come to your house to help you die. Delivery service for death?

Father Spitzer asked us: "Do we want to tell our young people not to fight? Do we want to tell them that it is ok to give way to despair and malaise? Evil and darkness thrive in such a world." He spoke of "The Eros of Death." We need to counteract the darkness with light. We need to point out the intrinsic dignity of the handicapped and dying.

At the end, Father Spitzer reminded us that the early Christians championed the principles of protecting the most vulnerable in our society. He told us that immediately after the resurrection of Jesus, the Church started a healthcare system, a social welfare system and an educational system extending far beyond the Christian Communities. It reached out especially to the weak and vulnerable—particularly slaves -- which then led to the diminishment of Roman slavery.

This is a call to action and concern from all of us. Father Spitzer reminded us of the Edmund Burke statement "all that is required for evil to exist is for good people to remain silent."

There was another speaker at the event. A young man named J.J. Hanson who, two and a half years ago, received his death sentence of "four months to live" because of a brain tumor. This Marine Corps veteran decided to fight it and found a doctor who would do the surgery. It was not all sunshine and roses after. He had nine seizures after the surgery and had to relearn to eat, walk and talk. There were moments of despair where he said if he had been offered assisted suicide that he might have taken it. But then he beat it and came back to a normal life with his wife and young son. However, the very day he was speaking to us, he had just come back from Sloan Kettering and the tumor had come back. He was going to fight it again because every extra day he gets to spend with his wife and son is precious beyond measure.

This young man who knows better than anyone how precious our life on earth is ended his talk by saying that he had seen many highs and many lows but one thing remained a constant. He said slowly and deliberately to us: "Every single day is a gift."

Fr. Spitzer is currently the president of the Magis Center and The Spitzer Center in California. You can also catch him on EWTN on the segment titled "Father Spitzer's Universe."

J.J. Hanson is the President of the Patients' Rights Action Fund, the nation's leading organization protecting the rights of patients and people with disabilities by opposing assisted suicide legalization efforts.