

**January 10, 2016**

**Baptism of Jesus**

**Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs,  
carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care (Is.)**

*When we enter into the chaos of another, we are able  
to gather the lambs to our bosom and lead the ewes with care*

I read an article this past week in the National Catholic Reporter, January 1, 2016. which is in line with the Year of Mercy proscribed by Pope Francis. It is titled, “*Enter into the Chaos of the Year of Mercy*” by Michael Jordan Laskey who is the director of Life & Justice Ministries for the diocese of Camden, NJ. The article begins :

**“Entering into the Chaos of Mercy”**

“Pope Francis announced the Jubilee Year of Mercy as a *‘time we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father’s action in our lives, as a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective.*”

“I don’t want to let Pope Francis down. I really want to gaze more attentively on mercy this Jubilee Year, and grow into a stronger witness. But first, I have some questions. Like, what is mercy, exactly? It is not a word I use a lot outside of the beginning of mass. It sounds to my modern ears like a weak surrender or cheap forgiveness. Or, even worse, the self-satisfied flinging of a coin to a beggar. Why not a Jubilee year of Justice or Solidarity or kinship or Encounter?”

“Thinking about this, I vaguely remember a pithy definition of mercy in Carrie Weber’s great book, *‘Mercy in the city: how to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, visit the imprisoned, and keep your day job.’* It is a quote from Jesuit Fr. James Keenan: *‘Mercy is the willingness to enter into the chaos of another.’* The willingness to enter into the chaos of another. This definition unlocked my imagination, and I was immediately flooded with images and stories.

**Mercy Is...**

“Mercy is the Holy Child Jesus Church community in Queens, New York. When a desperate mother left her newborn son in the church’s manger scene in late November, multiple parish families stepped forward to adopt him. *‘I think it is beautiful,’* Fr. Christopher Heanue, the church administrator, said, *‘A church is a home for those in need, and this woman felt in this stable - a place where Jesus will find his home, a home for her child.’* Parishioners have two name suggestions for the baby: John, because he came before Jesus to prepare the way; and Emanuel, which means *‘God is with us.’*”

“Mercy is the Intergenerational Learning Center at Providence Mt. St. Vincent in Seattle - a preschool inside a nursing home. Through planned and spontaneous activities, the kids and the seniors interact throughout the day, sharing in art projects, exercise, story time and more. Both youngsters and residents have a lot to offer one another, and a lot to receive.

“Mercy is the mother who sleeps on the floor of her three-year-old son’s room at 2 a.m. because he thinks there are monsters in there.

“Mercy is Oakland Athletics pitcher Sean Doolittle and his girlfriend, Eire-Sean Dolan, who partnered with Chicago city government officials to organize Thanksgiving dinner for the cities 17 families of Syrian refugees. And mercy is the nonprofit organizations – many of them Catholic – that have proclaimed, “*Refugees Welcome*” in states where elected officials have threatened to close their doors.

“Mercy is a person returning to the sacrament of reconciliation after decades, nervous as can be and embarrassed to have forgotten the Act of Contrition, and the confessor responds with warmth, gentleness and bit of good humor.

“Mercy is the hash tag, “*#Portland Open Door,*” that scores of Parisians used on the night of the terror attacks there to signal that they would open their homes to anyone who needed shelter.

“Mercy is Rosa’s Fresh Pizza in Philadelphia, where you can spend an extra dollar to have a Post-it put up on the wall. Homeless members of the community are then welcome to come into the shop and trade in a Post-it for a slice.

“Mercy is the gospel stories of the prodigal son, the woman caught in adultery, Matthew the unscrupulous text collector, and Peter the denier. The forgiveness they receive does not condone them in their selfishness. They are not condoned, but redeemed.”

### **Entering the Chaos of Another**

Michael Laskey continues: “These images of mercy share some things in common. Instead of avoiding or dismissing the chaos of another, these practitioners of mercy move toward the chaos with creativity and boldness. They make me wonder: if we Catholics were 10 times bolder and more creative in our practice of mercy than we are now, how different might things be. We’d probably have preschools in all our nursing homes and refugees at all our family parties for starters. The Jubilee Year of Mercy began December 8 and runs all the way until next November. How willing, bold and creative can we be?”

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Pope Francis has proclaimed this to be a Year of Mercy.

*Let us show mercy, not by avoiding the chaos of others, but by entering into it,  
gathering the lambs to our bosom, and leading the ewes with care?*