

# CHOICES

FROM THE CONGREGATION OF HOLY CROSS OFFICE OF VOCATIONS

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The Vocations Team: (left) Fr. Jarrod Waugh, C.S.C., and Fr. Neil Wack, C.S.C.

## Worthy of God's Call

When helping young men discern their call to religious life, oftentimes they ask the same question: Am I worthy enough to be a priest or consecrated religious? It's a question that I often heard in parish life when folks were considering an invitation to be a lector or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. And the answer, though a bit shocking, is always the same – no, you are not worthy, and neither am I! In fact, no one is worthy of his or her vocation, it is a gift freely given by God to help us in our baptismal call to holiness.

It's a common perception that one must be of a certain spiritual caliber before seeking perfection through Christ in our vocations. The reality is that we are all imperfect in a myriad of ways, yet perfectly worthy of the forgiveness of God's unconditional love, and thus worthy of seeking a life as a priest or brother. It will remain to be seen, of course – through prayer, reflection, conversation, and a mutual discernment process – if that life is meant to be lived in the Congregation of Holy Cross as we seek to deepen our relationship with Christ in His service.

As this issue of CHOICES brings to the fore, the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy that Pope Francis has called is an invitation to open our hearts to God's mercy, and to seek forgiveness, accepting His mercy and sharing it with others. The celebration of the Jubilee Year of Mercy is for all believers to seek and experience a true encounter with the mercy of God.

As you wrestle with questions of discernment know that it is our work in the Office of Vocations to help you tune in to God's call and seek such answers, even when the spiritual and natural "logistics" of pursuing the life of a priest or brother seem a mystery. Please pray for us, for *all* who are discerning God's call, and for those who find it difficult to open their hearts to God. May we be instruments of His mercy as we seek to grow in holiness. In His will is our peace.

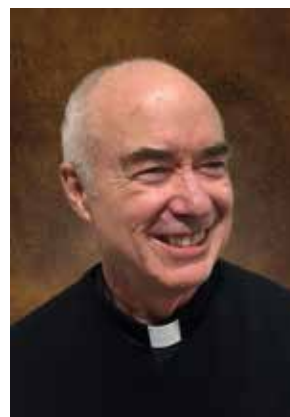
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Front cover photo by Bob Kerns.

## The Year of Mercy

A reflection by Fr. Hugh Cleary, C.S.C.



Pope Francis has seemingly captured the heart of much of the world. His warm and humble personality attracts people of all stripes across the broad spectrum of human exchange. He seems such a breath of fresh air – a man of such simple integrity that he cannot help but

stand out in a crowd, with no other agenda save proclaiming the Gospel in a world gone awry with seemingly unfettered self-serving pursuits of power, pleasure and wealth.

Our world has become so fragmented and polarized, fractured even, by ideologies that are growing more and more intolerant, angry and even violent. The new ethic seems to foster a belittlement and demonization of those who disagree with us. We, then, want to get the best of them before they possibly get something over on us. Fear is casting out love.

On this world stage, Pope Francis has appeared among us. He is not a savior, but perhaps a modern day prophet of the Savior who challenges us to live our lives within the realm of God's love. Surprisingly, it almost seems as though a good part of the world, like the people of Nineveh, are ready to pause and listen to him, so great is our desperation.

The overriding focus of the Pope's life is mercy. It has become the central theme of his papacy.



Pope Francis greets survivors of the typhoon in Tacloban, Philippines.



He is not the first modern pope to extol mercy. John Paul II and Benedict XVI have spoken vividly and clearly of mercy's unequalled role in promoting human salvation.

Pope Saint John Paul II was especially eloquent devoting his second encyclical, *"Dives In Misericordia."* Promulgating the encyclical on November 30, 1980, he wrote:

*"In Christ and through Christ, God also becomes especially visible in His mercy ... Christ Himself makes mercy incarnate and personifies it. He Himself, in a certain sense, is mercy. To the person who sees it in Him — and finds it in Him — God becomes "visible" in a particular way as the Father who is rich in mercy."*



Pope Saint John Paul II visits with Mehmet Ali Agca, the man who attempted to assassinate him. (Photo by L'Osservatore Romano.)

We and the whole Church, and much of the world, are eager to live the Jubilee Year of Mercy Pope Francis has called us to celebrate. Just as Saint John Paul II said of Jesus, Pope Francis reminds us that we, too, need to incarnate and personify the richness of God's mercy.

Given the sad reality of the enormous human misery in today's world, due in large measure to our sinfulness, we take heart trusting that, in spite of all, the Lord's mercy is stronger than any sin and death.

Our enthusiasm in celebrating the Year of Mercy stems from our being well aware of our own sinfulness and our own ongoing, daily need for great measures of God's forgiveness. We all share in Pope Francis' self-identification: "I am a sinner." We all share in the need for the Lord's merciful understanding of our frail humanity. And we all share in the great evangelical need to be merciful to others. The gift of mercy we have received from God is the great gift we are able to give to others.

It may be well for us to define what it is we mean by "mercy."



"Mary attests that the mercy of the Son of God knows no bounds and extends to everyone, without exception"

*Pope Francis*



Fr. Neil Wack, C.S.C., consoles a nervous infant during his Baptism.

"Mercy," Archbishop Fulton Sheen tells us, is something more than a sentimental, emotional tenderheartedness, though it often does have those ingredients.

The very word mercy, he says, is derived from the Latin *"miserum cor,"* "a sorrowful heart." Mercy is a compassionate understanding of another's sorrowful heart.

But it seems mercy is even more than that. Mercy takes on the burden of another's sorrowful heart as if the suffering of the other was our very own. The suffering of another becomes our sorrowful heart as well. It is part of the Golden Rule Pope Francis spoke of in his address to the United States Congress.

Thus mercy elicits from us not only feelings of sympathy, but mercy also embodies our personal intention to ease the suffering or misfortune of others, if possible.

One of the clearest definitions of God's mercy is expressed through His grace, His bestowal upon us of special favors of goodness, as expressed in the phrase "By the grace of God." God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Throughout this Year of Mercy we can all recommit ourselves to generous expressions and embodiments



Students holding hands during a Mass at the University of Portland.

of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy so as to be agents of grace — instruments of mercy for people who cannot do for themselves. Through the words and example of Pope Francis may we all be personifications of God's mercy for all, especially for those who need us the most.

## Mercy in a Manger

A reflection by Fr. Adam Booth, C.S.C.



I first became involved with the St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP) as a seminarian and so, when I was sent to Holy Cross Parish in South Bend, Indiana, for my first ordained assignment, I was very glad to learn that the parish already had a SVdP conference and that my pastor wanted me to take over as its

spiritual advisor.

No work of mercy is foreign to the society, but the heart of the activity of most conferences is parishioners making home visits, and bringing food to anyone in the parish boundaries who requests it.

Our Vincentians aren't meant to serve as anonymous delivery people, but to engage in authentic human interaction, fully transparent to the charity of Christ that urges us on to this practice of mercy. I've heard it said that my job as spiritual advisor was to feed the feeders, but this isn't really adequate. In our meetings, I would help them grow in reverence towards the presence of Christ they truly met in the poor they served.

Before Christmas of 2014, someone donated about 30



Fr. Adam Booth, C.S.C., and a parish volunteer prepare food for delivery through the parish chapter of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.



"I shall spend all my life in atoning for my sins and in glorifying and loving so good a God, so tender a father."

*Blessed Basil Moreau*

nativity scenes to our parish St. Vincent de Paul Society. We sold them at the craft fair and after morning Masses, making enough to fund the society for about a month, but still had several left over. If you're not familiar with this market: nativity sets undergo a rather sharp depreciation in late December. So, I decided I'd take the remaining ones and just give them away. While our parish was pretty diverse, the church was in the middle of a very poor neighborhood, and I must have looked quite a sight in my Roman collar and my winter jacket, with a dozen nativity sets in a shopping trolley, going door-to-door on the surrounding streets.

Our neighborhood is one where people open their doors with suspicion, maybe even with fear. The first man I talked to was warm. His sense of surprise that someone would present him with a spontaneous gift caught me off guard. As I left, I wished him a Merry Christmas, and he replied, "Merry Christmas!? You *made* my Christmas! I'm going to put this right up in the window here."

Who gave and who received in that exchange? What has God done for us in that scene? That nativity scene of His majesty, displayed in fragility, can mean so much. It can *make* Christmas. It can *make* that man's Christmas; make *my* Christmas. In January of 2014, I preached on Epiphany about being seekers, searching for the place to lay down the gifts God has given us, just like the magi. And there's truth to that. But this experience helped me find a deeper truth in this: we're seekers. Aquinas defined mercy as feeling pity towards the miserable (affective mercy) and then acting on it (effective mercy). Priesthood has given me a privileged position to encounter human misery and poverty, and to act. In doing that, my wonder and awe at Christ's action, at the poverty God took on for us in Christ, has been strengthened incalculably. By seeing mercy in a manger, I see more clearly my poverty, my need and I rejoice that God acts to, with, through and in me to extend that mercy to a waiting world.



Notre Dame students volunteering at the St. Vincent de Paul Society in South Bend, Indiana.



## Mercy

A reflection by Fr. William Wack, C.S.C.



I must confess, I never really spent a lot of time thinking about the concept of “mercy.” To be true, I, like all Catholics, have recited that word many times in Mass and in other liturgies and litanies (“Lord, have mercy,” “Christ, have mercy,” “Have mercy on us”), but until recently, I haven’t reflected on

that word very much. I took it for granted that I knew what it meant – I mean, how difficult a concept can it be?



Fr. William Wack, C.S.C., with students from St. Ignatius Martyr School in Austin, Texas.

But then I started to question how mercy is different from forgiveness, and how more profound is God’s forgiveness than ours. Forgiveness is something that we do for one another. We ask the person we have hurt to consider our wrongdoing and be satisfied with our contrition; satisfied enough to put it behind them. Mercy, on the other hand, is when the other person (or God) not only overlooks the sin, they withhold any anger or judgment (that we may deserve) and give us love in return. I don’t know if that is an official definition of the word, but it is how I make sense of it. When Pope Francis declared that we will soon begin a Year of Mercy, my heart instantly said, “Yes!” and I knew that I needed to focus more of my attention on it. Since then, I have been thinking about it all the time, and it seems as though we are constantly surrounded by mercy.

A friend recently reminded me of a quote from Thomas Merton: God is “mercy within mercy within



“I am a priest to be father to the orphan, the consolation of the widow, the support of the poor and the friend of the suffering ”

*Father Jacques Dujarie*

mercy.” In telling me about it, my friend added several more “within mercys,” and then said to me, “Think about it.” I think also of Psalm 136, which so many Jews and Christians pray again and again with its constant refrain, “For His mercy endures forever” (26 times in 26 verses).

It’s almost as though simply repeating the word “mercy” will drive it home for us and make it happen. Is that why we say the word so many times in our prayers?

Praise the LORD, for He is good;  
for His mercy endures forever;  
Praise the God of gods;  
for His mercy endures forever;  
Praise the Lord of lords;  
for His mercy endures forever;  
Who alone has done great wonders,  
for His mercy endures forever;  
Who skillfully made the heavens,  
for His mercy endures forever;  
Who spread the earth upon the waters,  
for His mercy endures forever;  
Who made the great lights,  
for His mercy endures forever;  
The sun to rule the day,  
for His mercy endures forever;  
The moon and stars to rule the night  
for His mercy endures forever;

Psalm 136:1-9

I actually don’t think that we can overstate our need for mercy. Jesus himself set the bar high when He told us that we must forgive one another “seven times seventy times.” Perhaps we have been frugal in asking for and offering mercy? A Year of Mercy seems well-suited, then, as God’s mercy is never exhausted. “God waits and also God forgives,” the Pope said in a homily in March 2015. “He is the God of mercy: He does not tire of forgiving us. It is we who are tired of asking for forgiveness, but He never gets tired.” I still do not fully understand the depth of the word “mercy.” I know that it is akin to forgiveness, compassion, pity, and love; but there is even more

to it than that. God's mercy – given to us without measure and without our deserving it – is God's greatest attribute. It is ours for the taking. So let us ask for it again and again (and again and again....). Lord Jesus, Son of the Living God, have mercy on us.



Pope Francis takes advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation at a confessional in the Vatican. (Photo by L'Osservatore Romano.)

## Tools for Discernment

**Prayer:** Spending time with God helps you to know His will. Develop a routine of daily prayer and regular participation in the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

**Service:** Whether it is working with the poor, volunteering in your parish, or participating in activities with campus ministry, getting involved can help you see God's activity in your life more clearly.

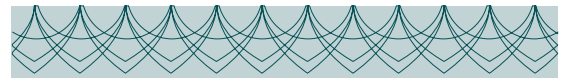
**Conversations:** Insight from others will help you understand how you are called. Talk with those who know you. Talk with priests, brothers, and sisters – they have walked the path, they know the way.



"[M]ercy is the central nucleus of the Gospel message; it is the very name of God, the Face with which He revealed Himself in the Old Covenant and fully in Jesus Christ, the incarnation of creative and redemptive Love."

*Pope Emeritus  
Benedict XVI*

*Photo by L'Osservatore  
Romano*



Old College Undergraduate Seminary on the campus of the University of Notre Dame.



Holy Cross Community Cemetery



Seminarians waiting for the new Postulants in front of the Moreau Seminary Building.

## Online Tour

Did you know that the University of Notre Dame has an online tour? Moreau Seminary and the Holy Cross Community Cemetery have recently been added to this beautiful virtual tour of the entire campus. See it for yourself at [tour.nd.edu](http://tour.nd.edu).







## The Spirit of a Missionary

The path of Blessed Basil Moreau's life is intrinsically linked to the identity of the Congregation of Holy Cross even up to the present day. Born into a Catholic family in France during the ravages of the French Revolution, Fr. Moreau's life was marked by adversity. But these key ingredients, adversity combined with absolute confidence in Divine Providence, set the tone for Moreau's life. He was blessed with great intelligence, and a knack for administration. He might have settled for a quiet life in France as a seminary professor, but in his heart he longed to spread the word of God much further than that.

His motto, "The mind will not be cultivated at the expense of the heart," permeated his administrative approach to the governance of the schools he founded, and he achieved great success. In time, he began to receive requests from bishops in other parts of the world to send teachers and priests, first to Algeria and then to the United States. By now, the story of Fr. Sorin and the founding of the University of Notre Dame has passed into legend, but it was the great missionary spirit of both Fr. Sorin and Fr. Moreau that made it possible.

- In 1943, the Congregation of Holy Cross accepted the invitation of the archbishop of Santiago to take over administration of St. George's College in Chile. Within three years, Holy Cross expanded into parish ministry as well. During the military government of Augusto Pinochet, the Chilean government took over St. George's, but the school was restored to Holy Cross in 1976. In the meantime, Holy Cross continued to serve in Colegio Nuestra Señora de Andacollo in Central Santiago. Today, Holy Cross still serves both St. George's and Nuestra Señora de Andacollo schools, as well as in the parishes of San Roque and Nuestra Señora de Andacollo. In addition, Holy Cross serves abandoned children in Santiago through Fundación Moreau.
- In 1958, Fr. Vincent McCauley, C.S.C., responded to his superior's request to investigate the expansion of Holy Cross missionary efforts in Africa. Fr. McCauley spearheaded the mission that set about to strengthen and revitalize the parishes and schools throughout Western Uganda. In 1961, the Holy See established the Diocese of Fort Portal, Uganda, and named McCauley as the bishop of the northern part. Today, Holy Cross is responsible for two schools and two parishes in Uganda as well as several other schools and health care apostolates in Kenya and Tanzania.
- In 1963, several Holy Cross priests from the United States traveled to Perú to assume pastoral care of the workers at a sugar plantation. From there they moved

to Chimbote, and finally to Lima in 1977. Today, Holy Cross ministers to over 200,000 people through the church and chapels associated with Canto Grande Parish in Lima, Perú. Holy Cross is also responsible for Yancana Huasy, a health care outreach serving impoverished children with developmental disabilities.

- In 1987, Fr. Pete Logsdon, C.S.C., petitioned the superior general to accept responsibility for a parish in Monterrey, México. Fr. Jack O'Keefe, C.S.C., was then named pastor of Santo Tomás Moro Parish in Guadalupe, México. Again, the Holy Cross priests became pastors of thriving Catholic communities that rapidly outgrew their accommodations, and in 1996, a new parish – Nuestra Madre Santísima de la Luz – was born. Today, the church and chapels of la Luz serve over 45,000 Catholics.

It was the missionary spirit of Blessed Basil Moreau that has continued to animate the work of Holy Cross since its founding. Never content to rest on challenges that had already been met, Holy Cross priests continued to respond to the call, and go wherever the need was most dire. Fr. Edward Sorin, C.S.C., Bishop Vincent McCauley, Fr. Pete Logsdon, C.S.C., Fr. Jack O'Keefe, C.S.C.; these men not only responded generously to God's call, they did so in a manner that allowed Blessed Moreau's missionary spirit to endure. Today, many intrepid Holy Cross priests carry on this great missionary work. As part of their formation, Holy Cross seminarians often have the opportunity to visit the missions and meet the people that Holy Cross serves. Blessed Moreau himself would be too humble to acknowledge this great legacy for himself, but if it gives glory to God, he would also, most certainly, rejoice in it.



Seminarian Brogan Ryan poses with some students during his 2015 summer trip to Uganda in Africa.

Discerning God's will is not something to do on your own. You can pray and research on your own, but finding the right next step often only comes by reaching out to a vocations director. Our role is not to convince you to join our community; it is to help you hear and answer God's call. In hearing and answering God's call you will find something greater than what you might uncover on your own. Drop us a line and we will help you to discover how God's call is leading to the fulfillment of your deepest longing.



United States Province of Priests  
and Brothers

Office of Vocations  
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**[holycrossvocations.org](http://holycrossvocations.org)**