

Rejoice in the Lord

By Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark

Shining the Light of Christ, Making Mercy Visible through Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy



Occasionally I read or hear someone make the astonishing claim that Pope Francis represents a “radical break” from his predecessors. I call this “astonishing” because anyone who knows the teaching of former popes can hear their voices echoed (sometimes quite loudly) in the writing, homilies, and even off-the-cuff remarks of Pope Francis.

There are obvious differences in style between our current pope and his predecessors, but a “radical break”? No way. The substance is the same. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the teaching of the Church handed down to us from the apostles.

One powerful example is Pope Francis’ teaching on mercy which he says is “the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us ... the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness” (*The Face of Mercy*, #2). This is radical teaching, to be sure, but it is not a break from the teaching of earlier popes.

Pope Benedict XVI taught that “mercy 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” (*Regina Caeli* message on Divine Mercy Sunday, March 30, 2008).

St. John Paul II once wrote, “From divine mercy, which brings peace to hearts, arises authentic peace for the world, peace between peoples, and among various cultures and religions” (*Dives in Misericordia, On the Mercy of God*).

All three popes tell us that mercy begins with sharing our food and drink with those who are hungry and thirsty. Mercy compels us to clothe the naked and shelter the homeless, to visit the sick and

imprisoned, and to bury the dead. These very practical actions, which we call “corporal works of mercy,” reveal the fundamental fact of God’s love for us as it is manifested in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis challenges us to show Christ’s mercy both here at home and around the globe. We are called to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty as a fundamental requirement of our Christian discipleship. We cannot proclaim the Good News of our salvation unless we also share with our sisters and brothers the food and drink they need to live full and healthy lives.

What can we do? We can pray for an end to hunger and thirst wherever they are found—in our neighborhoods, in our state and nation, and throughout the world. We can support local food pantries, Catholic Charities ministries in our archdiocese, and the international Catholic Relief Services. We can advocate for laws and government policies that promote a just and equitable distribution of the world’s food and water, housing and healthcare.

In addition to the corporal works of mercy, the Church proposes for our reflection and action seven spiritual works of mercy. These are to: instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, admonish sinners, bear wrongs patiently, forgive offenses willingly, comfort the afflicted and pray for the living and the dead.

When we “instruct the ignorant” and “counsel the doubtful” we share Christ’s mercy with others. But we also receive it back a hundredfold so that the Lord’s mercy can fill our souls with His divine life. When we perform each of the spiritual works of mercy—admonishing sinners, bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving offenses willingly, comforting the afflicted and praying for the living and the dead—we become the face of Jesus, the face of mercy, to those we interact with daily.

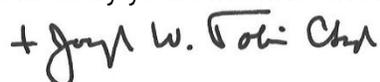
A spiritual work of mercy can also be very concrete and practical. If we help someone understand why all human life is sacred, we help prevent violence and inhumanity. When we counsel someone who is uncertain about the freedom that comes from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we affirm the beauty and truth of Christian discipleship. We help make it possible for someone who is “on the fence” to become fully engaged in the life of the Church.

When we admonish sinners, we tell them the truth in love. When we bear wrongs patiently and forgive others as the Father has forgiven us, we make love visible in the most powerful way possible. When we comfort the afflicted and pray for all our living and deceased sisters and brothers (including those who are close to us and those who are strangers), we act in the name of Jesus who prayed that we would all be one as he and the Father are one.

Spiritual and corporal works of mercy are necessary activities for Christians who aspire to be missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, the face of mercy. When we perform these acts of charity, we build up the Body of Christ first of all by growing in holiness ourselves and, secondly, by assisting our sisters and brothers in their efforts to live authentic spiritual lives.

Here in the Archdiocese of Newark, we perform works of mercy in many diverse ways including the programs and ministries that are funded by our annual appeal whose theme this year is **Shining the Light of Christ**. I invite you to join me in being “the face of mercy” to all our sisters and brothers here at home and throughout the world through your generous support for the essential works of mercy carried out in our Archdiocese.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark

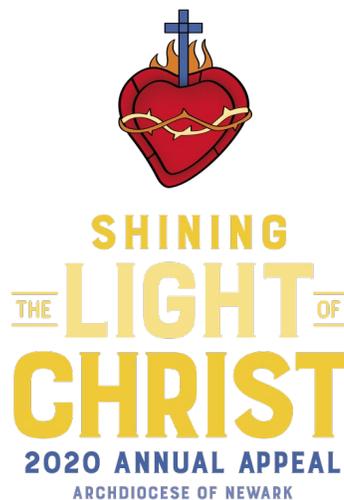
Shining the Light of Christ: 2020 Annual Appeal

The theme of the 2020 Annual Appeal is “Shining the Light of Christ.” As disciples, we are individually called to radiate the love of God in our work, our relationships, our service and our giving (cf. Mt. 5:16). As a Catholic faith community, our common worship, hospitality, pastoral care and ministry reflects this love to the wider community. By sharing our time, unique talents, and personal treasure, we participate in shining the light of Christ ever more brightly.

As members of the Catholic Church of Newark, we are united by a common mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ - to proclaim the Gospel, to pass on the faith to the next generation through the celebration of the sacraments, to care for the poor and vulnerable, and to form our future priests. The 2020 Annual Appeal binds us more closely to this mission through our stewardship of God’s many gifts.

Your support of this year’s Annual Appeal will have a direct impact on the lives of those served through the ministries and programs of this Archdiocese.

Will you prayerfully consider making a gift to the 2020 Annual Appeal? There are many ways to make a gift to the annual appeal including our website www.rcan.org/sharing. There you can also see the areas your gift will support and learn more about our programs and ministries.



Statement of Accountability

The Archdiocese of Newark must respond to the faithful’s need for increased transparency, careful stewardship, and accountability for their contributions of the mission of the Church. This Statement of Accountability represents an important step in our ongoing efforts to heal the Body of Christ.

This Archdiocese hereby restates its commitment to the faithful of this local Church:

- 1) To work tirelessly, with the support of God's people and in cooperation with civil authorities, to protect all those entrusted to our care, most especially the young and vulnerable, from all forms of abuse, by continuing our efforts to create safe and respectful environments for all.
- 2) To use funds from the **Annual Appeal** or **We Are Living Stones Capital Campaign** solely for the purposes originally intended - to proclaim the Good News, pass on the faith to the next generation, and care for the poor and marginalized - and not for any other purpose. Information regarding these campaigns may be obtained on our website, www.rcan.org.
- 3) To inform and communicate regularly with the faithful on how these funds are used to serve the needs of God's people throughout the Archdiocese of Newark.

I invoke the maternal protection and intercession of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. May Christ, our Redeemer, lead us to greater unity in faith, hope, and charity.

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope



An appeal to generosity. Generosity belongs to everyday life; it's something we should think: 'How can I be more generous, with the poor, the needy... How can I help more?' 'But Father, you know that we can barely get through the month.' 'But surely you have at least a couple of coins left over? Think about it: you can be generous with those...' Consider the little things. For example, look through your room or your wardrobe. How many pairs of shoes do I have? One, two, three, four, fifteen, twenty... Each of us knows. Maybe too many... I knew a monsignor who had 40... But if you have many pairs of shoes, give away half. How many clothes

do I not use or use only once a year? This is one way to be generous, to give what we have, and to share." (Vatican Media, Homily given in the Casa Santa Marta, November 26, 2018)

My Prayer for You

Lord, help us to be the face of mercy, the image of your Son, here in northern New Jersey and wherever our help is needed. May we give generously of our time, talent and treasure out of gratitude for all the gifts our generous God has given us. †

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

