On April 11, 2015, Pope Francis proclaimed that between December 8, 2015, and November 20, 2016, the Church would celebrate a Jubilee Year of Mercy. He chose those dates because they have significant meaning for the Church. Besides December 8th being the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, it is also the date of the closing of Vatican Council II, and November 20th is the Feast of Christ the King.

Pope Francis tells us in the document Misericordiae Vultus that “…I have proclaimed an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy as a special time for the Church, a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective.” (3) Likewise, he states that “Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are. In short, we are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown us”….because “Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life.” (9, 10)

The word "jubilee" is derived from the Hebrew word jobel, which means "ram's horn"; since it was precisely that horn which was used as a trumpet, whose sound indicated to everybody the beginning of the jubilee year. Leviticus 25:8-10 tells us what the jubilee year signifies: “And you shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall send abroad the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall send abroad the loud trumpet throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his family.” Here we see that this year should focus on the themes of liberation and consolation.

As we move into this Jubilee year of Mercy, let us reflect on deepening this virtue in our lives and making it the foundation of how we relate to every person that comes our way in our ministry. I wish you deep experiences of giving and receiving mercy in this special year, and that mercy will continue afterwards to enrich your life.
Catechetical Sunday, which is celebrated annually on the third Sunday in September in parishes across the United States, falls this year on the weekend of September 20, 2015, the Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time. The theme this year is “Safeguarding the Dignity of Every Human Person”. Dignity of the Human Person is the cornerstone of Catholic Social Teaching.

This year’s theme challenges us to examine our commitment to actively protect and support all aspects of human life and dignity. We are reminded in Genesis 1:26-27 how we are made in the image of God; created to reflect God’s language of love and mercy in all our relationships.

As catechists we can emphasize this into teaching tools as we plan for our learners. The USCCB website has resources both free and for purchase that can help in our planning. In particular, a good place to start is “The Fall Catechist In-Service” by Deacon Keith Davis, Ed.D. This free resource can assist catechists to recognize that Catholic Social Teaching is rooted in the Ten Commandments.

Catechetical Sunday is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the role that each person plays, by virtue of Baptism, in handing on the faith and being a witness to the Gospel. Catechetical Sunday is an opportunity for all to rededicate themselves to this mission as a community of faith.

Long Distance Mercy through the Internet

By: Scott Hoey, PCL, Saint Joseph, Livingston

On Thursday August 20th, we used software to attend a PCL Gathering in Beaumont remotely from my office here in Livingston, 75 miles away. Thanks largely to Joseph Blakeley for setting up the Zoom software, we were able to interact with the live meeting both with audio and visually. I was joined by Annette Faircloth, Letty Harris and Veronica Cuevas for our own small group discussion in between sessions of the Gathering put on by the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis. Dr. Lorraine DeLuca and Paul Thomas led the session with prayer and song while we discussed Christ's mercy as it pertains to our own lives and to our ministry as PCL of the parish. In our remote group, we were able to get to know each other better and share strengths and weaknesses to better serve each of our own parishes. There were seven attendants of the meeting both in Beaumont and in Livingston, six of them had not been able to attend a PCL Gathering previously. I'm sure we are all looking forward to the next one.
Learning to put people first when ministering to a person with a disability could make a world of difference.

“When you put people first instead of putting their disability first it’s less judgmental,” keynote speaker Charleen Katra, associate director, Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, said. “Spiritual understanding can be shown through that gesture.”

Katra spoke about the ways to minister to people with disabilities at the Catechetical Conference at St. Mary Parish, Fannett, Aug. 15. Her address was based on statements from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops from 1978 and 1995 that set guidelines for how the Catholic Church ministers to persons with disabilities.

The conference also featured a closing address on classroom management by Marcia Stevens, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Beaumont. Rita Ann Martinez spoke to Hispanic leaders about welcoming all students into church and responding to their needs.

**Keynote Feedback from the Catechetical Conference**

- I enjoyed all the new ideas for this year! Very informative!”
- “Excellent presentations. The topics were very relevant and helpful. Great conference!”

**Grade Level Round-table Feedback from the Catechetical Conference:**

- “It is so wonderful to talk to other professionals in my field. Every conference needs this. THANK YOU!!!”
- “I’m a first-time catechist and this is great information to know before I begin. It helped getting ideas for teaching!”
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Resources

Books
The Bible Speaks Today, The Message of Lamentations
By: J.A. Motyer

Prayers from Around the World and Across the Ages
Compiled by: Victor A. Parachin

DVD
Jesus the Christ; Proclaiming the Gospel through Art and Music

Did You Know!
The Catholic Faith was spread by the Apostles and early Christian missionaries throughout the Roman Empire. The first language of Christian liturgy was Aramaic, the common language of the first Christians.

The common language of the Roman Empire was Latin, but in the East, Greek was the common tongue. In the Roman Rite, while both Greek and Latin were used as liturgical languages, the preference was eventually given to the use of Latin, with some use of Greek maintained.

The Second Vatican Council returned to the original instinct of Christianity that people worship in their common language.

Catechist's Prayer
Gracious and all-loving Father, out of love for all people you spoke your Word who became flesh for our salvation. May your Word transform me so that the message of your Son, our Lord, may be echoed through my teaching.

Allow me to guide the hearts of those whom I teach in such a way that they will enter more deeply into your way of truth and salvation.

Grant me the insight needed to lead them to know, love, and serve you. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may they become hearers and followers of your Word, so that they might help transform the world to follow the way of life to which your Son has called us all, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

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Upcoming Events

Next PCL Gatherings:
Round Tables on Sacraments
Thursday, September 17, 2015, 9:30 to noon and 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Liturgical Seasons - with Sharing
Rosalind Sanchez, Thursday, October 15th, 2015, 9:30 to noon and 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Age Appropriate Service Projects with Family Involvement
Paul Thomas and Anna Huth, CRS
Thursday, November 19th, 2015, 9:30 to noon and 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.