



## A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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**16 December 2016, 10:16 AM**

### **Archbishop's Christmas Message 2016**

In the familiar prayer “Hail Holy Queen” Mary is addressed as mother of mercy. One way to understand that title is in reference to Mary as the mother of Jesus.

When the eternal Son of God was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man, Jesus gave flesh and blood to divine mercy, enabling others to hear, see, touch, and be touched by it.

Mercy is the attribute considered as the essence of divinity. Consider what is revealed in Exodus 34:6 about who God is: “Merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness and truth.”

Jesus is mercy incarnate. Consider what he reveals about himself in Luke 10:25-37, identifying himself as the good Samaritan, who showed extravagant mercy to someone in need. Or consider his death and resurrection to redeem us, even while we were yet sinners.

This is what we celebrate on Christmas: the birth of God as man, Jesus putting flesh and blood on divine mercy, teaching it to others, showing how it is practiced, and exhorting his followers to go and do likewise.

This Jesus taught at the end of the above-mentioned parable: Go and do likewise, show mercy. Jesus is not the only one to give flesh and blood to divine mercy; we are supposed to as well.

Mercy exacts less than what justice imposes. It gives more than what justice calls for. It inspires repentance and reconciliation. It pardons even when the offender isn't sorry. And it deals kindly with others.

How can we put flesh and blood on mercy? Maybe talking to others, instead of about them. Or treating others gently, instead of harshly. Or saying sorry for an offense, instead of being aloof. Or offering pardon, instead of wanting the other to ask for it first. Or recognizing people in need as having a claim on me, instead of insisting it isn't my concern.

This all corresponds to another way to understand the title of Mary as mother of mercy, as the first and model disciple of Jesus, Mary herself going and doing likewise, giving flesh and blood to divine mercy.

The very same is the calling for all Christians. And what better complement to our celebration of the birth of Jesus — our teacher, our good example, our savior — than to go and do likewise? That will make our Christmas merry and our New Year happy.

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