The name, *Cathedra*, selected for this publication, refers to the Latinized Greek for “archbishop’s chair.” Cathedral is a short form of the Latin, *ecclesia cathedralis* “church of a bishop’s seat.”

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This has been a year filled with very special graces for the Cathedral. We welcomed groups from dozens of parishes who traveled on pilgrimage, from various parts of the country, to walk through the Holy Doors of Mercy. These are the same doors that received His Holiness, Pope Francis, for that unforgettable evening of Vespers on his visit to New York in September of last year.

I had the honor of concelebrating Mass with the Holy Father this past September during a trip to Rome, almost a year to the day of his visit to the Cathedral. It brought back some wonderful memories. The parishioners of St. Patrick’s and our extended family of faith were all in my prayers on that remarkable day. With this year’s journey through the Jubilee of Mercy that we just shared in mind, we are dedicating this Advent issue to Divine Mercy. Our commemoration includes a photo essay, which begins with the Holy Father’s visit to St. Patrick’s and concludes with September’s Mass honoring the much anticipated canonization of Saint Teresa of Calcutta. We are also featuring a couple of articles, for reflection, which I hope you’ll enjoy.

Advent is a time to take inventory of where we have been, but it is also a time to look ahead in anticipation of the many gifts of the season. Looking ahead, I’d like to highlight a few events this month:

- Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Thursday, December 8th (Mass times will follow the schedule for the Holy Days of Obligation)
- Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Monday, December 12th with Masses in Spanish at 10:00 a.m & 7:00 p.m.
- Saint Patrick’s Cathedral Christmas Concert on Thursday, December 15 at 7:30 p.m.
- Saint Patrick’s Cathedral Children’s Christmas Mass on Saturday, December 24 at 5:30pm.

I look forward to seeing familiar faces and welcoming all our visitors who are visiting our great city for the holidays. May the graces of this Advent season prepare our hearts for the abundant blessings of Christmas!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Robert T. Ritchie, Rector

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

John 1:5
The Jubilee of Mercy, which just concluded on November 20, the Solemnity of Christ the King, began last year on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. These two dates on the liturgical calendar served as perfect bookends to the Jubilee. Through the perfect example of Our Blessed Mother, conceived without sin, we learn to receive the gift of her Son, Jesus, to say Yes! to God’s plan for our lives. Like Mary, we are called to bring Jesus into the world which is very much in need of His mercy. This is an appropriate place for us to pause and reflect as we, at Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, begin our Advent journey together, preparing to celebrate the mystery of the Incarnation, God made man, just a few weeks away.

During Advent, we wait in prayerful, vigilant anticipation of Our Lord. We clear our lives for God’s mercy so that, come Christmas, we may receive the fullness of his gift to us. How do we, at St. Patrick’s, help each other prepare for this living encounter with mercy that waits for us on Christmas? In his recent Apostolic Letter, Misericordia et misera, Pope Francis makes it clear that “mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the Church; it constitutes her very existence.” So we begin to prepare to receive the Lord’s mercy by prioritizing the One who prioritizes us. That can mean spending time before the Blessed Sacrament in the Chapel of Our Lady, where Eucharistic Adoration is available most weekdays from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. We can also choose to make a special effort to attend daily Mass, which affords us the opportunity to encounter our Lord in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The Holy Doors of Mercy, which you’ll read more about in this issue, may have closed, but the doors of mercy in the Sacrament of Confession are always open. Reconciliation Monday, which this year is December 19th, represents a wonderful opportunity to receive the gift of mercy that God longs to share with us.

In his closing letter of the Jubilee, Pope Francis also reminds us that “mercy is a concrete action of love that, by forgiving, transforms and changes our lives.” We also know these “concrete actions of love” as the corporal works of mercy, which include feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, and giving alms to the poor. They allow us to address the physical needs of our neighbors. Perhaps, some of us might be prompted to attend the informational session on December 7th at the Parish House, by the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, an organization whose purpose remains meeting the physical needs of the poor in our midst.

Finally, more personally, the spiritual works of mercy call us to minister directly to the heart of another. When we make the time to counsel the doubtful, to instruct the ignorant, admonish the sinner, comfort the sorrowful, to forgive and bear wrongs patiently, and to pray for the deceased, we become bearers of Christ in the world. We model a standard of communication that brings healing to the giver and receiver. In this spirit of self-giving, we conclude the Jubilee of Mercy and begin Advent. Together, as a community of faith, we prepare to receive the gift of mercy and pray that we are led to find new ways of sharing this precious gift with the world.
On September 24, 2015, Pope Francis entered a newly renovated St. Patrick’s Cathedral, for the first time, to lead the eagerly assembled crowd in evening prayer. It was his first visit to the United States, as Pope, and that evening he became the fourth pontiff to visit and bless ‘America’s Parish Church.’ Earlier in the year, the Holy Father announced an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, and on December 8, 2015, with the opening of the Holy Doors of St. Peter’s Basilica, the Jubilee was underway.

Holy Doors were designated throughout the world at most Cathedrals, select churches, and shrines, in honor of the Jubilee Year. Pilgrims were offered the opportunity to gain a plenary indulgence, cleansing them of sin, when they passed through the Holy Doors of Mercy. There were other conditions to be met in addition to walking through the Holy Doors for the full remission of sins, including going to confession, receiving the Holy Eucharist, praying for the intentions of the Holy Father, and having the disposition of detachment from sin. This centuries old practice represents a spiritual renewal for those who make their way through the penitential passage into the interior of the church or Cathedral, a place of healing and rest.

The concept of “Holy Doors” is biblically rooted in New Testament scripture and originally referred to the Holy Doors of Rome’s Basilicas, which remained sealed until they were ceremoniously opened for Jubilee Years in the early sixteenth century. Recalling the Gospel of John, the Holy Doors may be seen to represent Jesus as the Gate or threshold through which we engage the mercy of God. To cross the threshold is an act of faith: a turning away from sin and looking forward to the promises of grace.

The newly restored doors of St. Patrick’s Cathedral were New York’s most visited Holy Doors. While the Jubilee is over and all of the Holy Doors in Rome and throughout the world have been closed, we are able to appreciate the symbolic power of this practice. Perhaps more significant for us, the Cathedral doors on Fifth Avenue remain open and invite each of us, every day, into the majestic sanctuary of the Cathedral where the richness of God’s mercy is available to all who visit.
Our Year of Mercy
During a visit to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., I saw a young woman artist painting. She was reproducing a masterpiece on exhibit. I was immediately struck by the beauty of her reproduction. I sat down, watched, and admired her skill. It could only have come from years of practice. She fixed her gaze upon the masterpiece, studied it very slowly, captured a detail; turned, fixed her gaze on her palette, carefully colored her brush; then turned, fixed her gaze upon the canvas, and painted. In all the motion, she never really lost sight of the masterpiece. It was fixed in her memory. Its beauty transferred to her canvas through her will, the grace of her talent, and a very steady hand. She truly painted an image and likeness of that masterpiece, and gave honor to the master.

When we began the Year of Mercy, our Holy Father, Pope Francis, asked us to contemplate constantly the mystery of mercy. He invited us to “gaze more attentively on mercy, so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father’s action in our lives.” Why? Because mercy is the means by which the goodness and wisdom of God establish justice and wipe out evil and injustice. What is mercy? Frankly, mercy seems a rather unsettling thought to many. Nowadays it seems to mean turning a blind eye. Not so. Honestly, there is no mercy without opened eyes.

God is love (1 John). The mystery of Divine love in Hebrew is described as hesed. Bible translators have difficulty finding an exact English equivalent for hesed. That makes sense. After all, God is mystery. So, the translators render hesed as “kindness,” “faithfulness,” “goodness,” “loyalty,” “mercy,” and, my favorite, “steadfast love.” Why do I prefer steadfast love? An adjective makes all the difference to me. Mercy is steadfast love. Steadfast means unchanging, firm, unwavering, deserving of trust. We all need the God who is steadfast love. It is the love that establishes justice and wipes out evil and injustice. It is a love that suffers to see the suffering we experience on account of sin and evil. It is the same love that refused to abandon us that tragic day in Eden. Contemplating this steadfast love in the Life and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, we can come to a deeper understanding of justice.

Justice can mean giving another his or her proper due. In Sacred Scripture, it can also mean right order, right arrangement, and right relationship. Evil and sin have put us out of right relationship with God. We are out of alignment. Having lost Life, we now suffer Death. Salvation brings us to justice and restores our relationship with God. What image of justice comes to your mind? As I said, an adjective makes all the difference to me. To understand divine justice I need two adjectives: retributive and restorative. These adjectives are two very important images that I became aware of as I took Pope Francis’s invitation to heart this past year and contemplated Divine Mercy.

Retributive justice means going through the legal processes of accusation, establishing guilt, and imposing punishment, most often in the form of imprisonment. It has been enshrined in the
familiar adage, “an eye for an eye.” Restorative justice, on the other hand, reflects a different way of approaching wrongdoing. It seeks to uproot the causes of sin, rather than focusing exclusively on its results. It is concerned with accepting responsibility, repenting, retrieving what was lost, and reestablishing well-being. Here I am indebted to A. Companion’s contribution “The Christian Call to Restorative Justice” in Contemplation in Action (Crossroad, 2006). Companion writes:

“The justice of God, upon which Christian faith and hope are dependent, is restorative justice. None of us has ever prayed, ‘Lord, give me what I deserve for my sins! Punish me to the full extent of the law!’ But, when it comes to how we think about and do justice in regards to others, many of us who call upon God for mercy and compassion for ourselves experience no qualms at demanding ‘an eye for any eye’ for ‘those who trespass against us.’ ‘Love one another as I have loved you,’ is the directive of the one who redeemed us from our sins—not because of our merit but because the justice of the cross is restorative.”

Divine Mercy, steadfast love, does not turn a blind eye. Instead, it faces evil, sin, and their consequences with open eyes and responds with love, forgiveness, accompaniment, and restorative healing. No surprise that Saint Mark tells us that Our Lord “set His eyes” fast in the direction of Jerusalem. Mercy and justice are not opposed. They are meant to embrace, as they did on the cross.

We are on the path of restorative justice brought about by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. A path offered to us because of God’s steadfast love for us. This love will not quit on humanity, His image and likeness. It will not let go. Instead, this love suffers all the infidelities and insults of humanity because it is steadfast. This steadfast love became incarnate, showed us the Father, sent His Holy Spirit among us, and now nourishes us through the Holy Sacraments when we are famished, faint, and failing along the way.

It is a long walk home and the journey comes with its struggles, setbacks, suffering, and sorrows. We are never abandoned, because God’s steadfast love, His mercy, His presence endures forever. He has promised to be with us, always, and He has called His disciples, you and I, to make His presence not only known by word, but felt through faithful witness:

“Love one another as I have loved you.”

Saint John of the Cross wrote: “At the evening of our lives we shall be judged on love.” This love is patient, kind, not jealous, not pompous, not inflated, not rude, not seeking its own interests, bears all things and more. It is a love that compassionately and steadfastly seeks to restore and build up God’s Kingdom. It is a love that endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

As we come to the conclusion of this “Year of Mercy” hopefully we have been gazing more attentively than ever on Jesus Christ, the face of the Father’s mercy. As we enter the season of Advent and begin our preparation to welcome the Gift of Steadfast Love Incarnate, let us heed the urging of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews: “Let us keep our gaze fixed on Jesus who inspires and perfects our faith.” Let us reproduce the masterpiece of Our Lord’s life and ministry as we demonstrate His steadfast love in spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Let’s live out the mercy which the Father extends uniquely to each of us. I will share steadfastly my experience of His love with others. What we have freely received, let us share freely. That will be “a message and a sign of pardon, strength, aid, and love” called for by the Holy Father. As our right relationship with God is restored, so are we able to encounter others in need and accompany them to restoration. Like the young woman artist, we can produce, by grace, an image and likeness of the masterpiece and give honor to the Master.
CATHEDRA
A publication of St. Patrick’s Cathedral,
America’s Parish Church
Reverend Monsignor Robert T. Ritchie, Rector
Reverend Andrew King, Master of Ceremonies
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Loulal Puliafito, Director of Development
Peter Fitton, Director of Volunteers

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Mass Times:
Monday through Friday: 7:00, 7:30, 8:00 am,
12 Noon, 1:00, 5:30 pm
Saturday: 8:00 am (in Lady Chapel)
12 Noon, Vigil Mass: 5:30 pm (Fulfills Sunday obligation)
Sunday: 7:00, 8:00, 9:00, 10:15 am (Choir)*,
12 Noon, 1:00, 4:00 (Spanish), and 5:30 pm
*Watch Mass live: saintpatrickscathedral.org/live/

Confession Times:
Weekdays: After morning Mass and from Noon to 1:20 PM
Saturdays: Noon to 12:45 PM and 3:30 to 5:30 PM
Reconciliation is available in languages other than English.
For more information, please contact the priest on duty at:
St. Patrick’s Cathedral Parish House
14 East 51st Street
New York, NY 10022
212.753.2261

For any additional questions please call the Parish House: 212.753.2261

DIRECTIONS:
St. Patrick’s Cathedral
5th Avenue between 50th/51st Streets
New York, NY
Subway:
E or 6 trains to 5th Avenue/53rd Street
4 5 6 or NQR to 5th Avenue/59th Street
BDMF to Rockefeller Center

Gift Shop:
Visit Our Shop Online – www.stpatscathedralgiftshop.com
15 East 51st Street, between 5th Avenue and Madison Avenue
Hours: 8:30 am to 8:00 pm, Monday through Friday
10:00 am to 6:00 pm, Saturday and Sunday

Virtual Visit – saintpatrickscathedral.org/visit
St. Patrick’s Cathedral is the Mother Church of the
Archdiocese of New York and the seat of its Archbishop.
Built by contributions large and small, it remains emblematic
of the ascendance of religious freedom in the New World.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary of Guadalupe,
that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help, or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence,
I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.
To you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.
O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy, hear and answer me.
Amen.

Memorare Nuestra Señora...

Acordaos, O piadosísima Virgen María de Guadalupe,
que jamás se ha oído decir que ninguno de los que han acudido a
vuestra protección,
implorando vuestra asistencia, buscando vuestro socorro, haya sido
abandonado de Vos.

Animado por esta confianza a Vos
también acudo, O Madre, Virgen de las Virgenes,
y, aunque gimiendo bajo el peso de mis pecados, me atrevo a comparecer
ante vuestra presencia.

Oh Madre de Dios, no desprecies mis súplicas, antes bien, escuchadlas y
acogedlas benignamente.

Amén.
Charitable Bequests

There are several ways to name the Cathedral as a beneficiary of your will or living trust. You can make a cash bequest, leave a specific asset such as appreciated securities, or designate that the Cathedral will receive all or a percentage of the remainder of your estate, after your other beneficiaries are provided for.

Gifts of Retirement Plan Assets

Retirement plan assets could be the most heavily taxed of all your assets if left to heirs. With the income and estate taxes, more than half could be whittled away. You can preserve more of your estate for your heirs and meet your philanthropic goals by leaving your retirement plan assets to a tax-exempt charitable organization such as the Cathedral.

Gifts of Appreciated Securities

Giving appreciated securities is now more advantageous with the rise in the value of securities and higher tax rates. For securities held longer than one year, you can deduct their full market value (top federal rate 39.6%) regardless of what you originally paid for them. You also avoid paying capital gains tax (top federal rate 23.8%).

Charitable Gift Annuities

A charitable gift annuity is a simple contract that offers a tax-advantaged way to provide fixed guaranteed income to you and/or another individual. At the death of the last income beneficiary, the remaining principal is transferred to the Cathedral. You can begin to receive income when you need it most, either right away, or at a pre-determined future date such as retirement.

Charitable Remainder Trusts

You can donate a wide variety of assets to a charitable remainder trust, including cash, appreciated securities and real estate, and receive a percentage of the trust’s value as income. In years when the trust assets appreciate, the distribution will increase; if asset values decline, distributions are lower. At the death of the last income beneficiary, the remaining principal is transferred to the Cathedral.

Contact Us

We would be most grateful for the opportunity to discuss these gift arrangements and other giving ideas with you, your family and your professional advisers.

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CHRISTMAS EVE MASS
CHILDREN’S MASS 5:30PM

CHRISTMAS DAY MASS
MIDNIGHT MASS 12:00AM
TICKETS REQUIRED
7:00AM, 8:00AM, 9:00AM,
10:15AM, 12:00PM, 4:00PM (EN ESPAÑOL),
5:30PM

SheenCenter.org

www.saintpatrickscathedral.org