



Bishop Gary Gordon



Closing of the Jubilee Year of Mercy St. Andrew's Cathedral November 13, 2016

Nice windows! Beautiful Cathedral! But the time is coming when it's all falling apart. Sorry to tell you, Fr. John. Earthquakes. Nation against nation. Are we here yet?

Yes! We are here! And the disciples, of course, asked the question that we all ask because we are curious, *When will this be, and what are the signs?*

Wrong question!

The truth is found at the end of the Gospel, when Jesus, perceiving the anxiety of his disciples and apostles, and their trepidation and fear, as the world that Jesus lived in was much like our own—gripped in fear of almost everything, with more insurance policies and ways of security than you can shake a stick at. And yet it does not quench the fear and the anxiety that grips our hearts.

This is why our Holy Father introduced the Jubilee Year of Mercy. A year in which he, and the Church, invited us to consider a way forward from fear and anxiety. A way to quell our agitated hearts and our restless minds with questions of *what* and *when*. Pope Francis said, *Mercy is the way*, and he pointed us to Jesus Christ, the face of God's mercy. He pointed us to the one person who can give peace, a peace the world cannot give. We are invited to hear clearly those words of Jesus at the end of the Gospel: every

hair of your head is counted. He knows you. He knows our name. And he has come to shepherd us home.

Home. A real home. As I look out upon this congregation here at the Cathedral, I, and many of you, are a whole lot closer to our real home than we are to the temporary landscape of this earth. If you doubt that fact, look in the mirror when you get home, and do the math!

“So yes, the Year of Mercy may be coming to an end, and the Doors of Mercy may look as though they have been closed, but I assure you, the Doors of Mercy of our Church can never again be closed.”

It should not cause us trepidation or fear, for the only response Jesus has to our sin, our weaknesses and our frailty, is mercy. And, in fact, he has counted every hair on your head (and for some of us, it doesn't take too long).

So what has happened in the Jubilee Year of Mercy? What has begun to be a completely new paradigm and life for the Church? What is irreversibly changed, and there is no looking back? It was ignited by Pope Francis and in these closing days of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, he celebrated Mass with the homeless.



Our Holy Father *apologized to the homeless* on behalf of all the Christians down through the centuries who have turned the other way and have not seen as God sees.

There's no going back. The preferential option for the poor has ignited the life of the Church, and just when we think we've got it all together, and our stained glass windows are in place, and our new doors are complete, and the pillars have been erected—it will fall down. Be assured. It will fall down as all nations, powers, and authorities will end—except the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, except the Kingdom of the poor—these will not come to an end. This is shocking, but let us look at some of the wonderful graces that our own Diocese has lived in this Jubilee Year, at some beautiful moments.

First: every parish community is, within themselves or with others, welcoming a refugee family. Some of our parishes are on family number two! They got up and they got going. But are we there yet? Not even close!

The roadblocks, the difficulties, the bureaucracy to saving people who are desperate, is, for your Bishop, maddening. But we have begun, and I would say that every parish in our Diocese, including our Cathedral parish, will be sponsoring refugees until the Lord's return in glory. Get used to it! But I am so pleased about what has begun. This is good news.

A second thing that has begun, and has happened in this beautiful Jubilee Year of Mercy, is that a brand-new hospice was built at St. Joseph's

Hospital in Comox, taking care of the weakest and the most vulnerable, and offering them the best palliative care, and not euthanasia. That has happened in our Diocese. It is good news.

Third: the Anawim Society here in Victoria, which offers housing and programming for men living on the streets, has embarked on trying to achieve a home for women who are also suffering in grave poverty on our streets. What an

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amazing grace for the Jubilee Year of Mercy. This is good news.

Fourth: the Oasis Society, which finds itself housed temporarily in the Fairmont Hotel, is looking for a place to call home, for our Indigenous brothers and sisters far away from their homes, and on our streets. An oasis of new life. It is initiated, and it is good news.

Fifth: in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, the Bill Mudge House for the reintegration for people coming out of prison, has embarked on a \$700,000 expansion to house those who are most poor: prisoners. For when you have a 'P'



on your forehead, you cannot get a job. *I want to work, Father, the Scripture says I should work, and if I don't work, I should not eat. But no one will give me a job.* So the Bill Mudge House, the Laren Society, in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, is expanding. This is good news for our city.

Sixth: Now, I've caused a few problems for our pastors in the Diocese—including Fr. John! Because when they put in a request for a building project, to expand, or to recreate, or to refurbish our buildings, I am asking, with the force of the Bishop, that they consider building for the poor and the vulnerable. I have asked that they figure out a way to embed, in our properties, housing for the poor. Yes, it is profoundly complex, and I know that. But I have asked for this. And if somebody says, "Well, I just don't want to do that," I usually respond, "Figure it out." So I have caused some problems, a little bit of a mess sometimes, but I am in pretty good stead, at least, with Pope Francis. Housing for the poor is good news.

These are challenging times, and the Year of Mercy, this Jubilee, has invited us as the Church to meet these challenges. We have done some wonderful things in our Diocese, but there is more to do. We have achieved some beautiful moments, revealing the mercy and the grace of Jesus Christ, and the power of forgiveness, but there is more to do.

So yes, the Year of Mercy may be coming to an end, and the Doors of Mercy may look as though they have been closed, but I assure you, the Doors of Mercy of our Church can never again be closed. We have been invited by the

grace of the Holy Spirit, and our Holy Father, Pope Francis, to a new way of being the Church. The way of mercy, the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, the way of answering with our own lives, the cry of the poor. We have begun.

Are we there yet?

No. But we have begun, and it is a beautiful beginning. Thank you for what this parish Church of St. Andrew's Cathedral has done, to begin a beautiful year, to begin a beautiful new life as the face of mercy, as the face of God's love for everyone. For yes, He has counted the hairs on every head, and He calls us by name to a home, a real home. So let us set off, into the deep, into new directions, to new possibilities so that everyone, here in Victoria, on Vancouver Island, in Canada, and around the world, can say that they know the mercy of God. So they have something to eat, they have a place to live, clothes on their back and real security in the love and the power and the mercy of our God. From the most vulnerable elderly to the unborn, let us live, and let us help everybody else live.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



"Go out and be a revolution of tenderness for the peace of Christ."

~ Bishop Gary Gordon