



*Introducing the Holy Year
of Mercy to Students*

INTRODUCING THE *Holy Year of Mercy* TO STUDENTS



Pope Francis announced an Extraordinary Jubilee, a Holy Year of Mercy, to highlight the importance of being merciful to one another as God is to us. In a beautiful statement, he reminded the faithful that in this coming year, we should spend time focusing on the fact that God is full of mercy. Announcing this special jubilee, Pope Francis said, “Let us not forget that God forgives and God forgives always.”

How can we, as catechists, take such a lofty, but crucial concept and bring it into our classrooms? Read on for some suggestions to use when introducing the Holy Year of Mercy to the students in your religious education program.



***Frequent the
Sacrament of
Penance and
Reconciliation.***

First, and perhaps most obviously, this Holy Year of Mercy points us as Catholics back to the grace found in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. If your students have already celebrated the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation for the first time, find a time to take them to celebrate the sacrament again. Spend time preparing the students, discussing what reconciliation means, and emphasizing that reconciliation shows God’s great love and mercy for us. If your students are younger and haven’t yet received the sacrament for the first time, spend time talking about God’s forgiveness and love using appropriate examples from Scripture.



***Let’s examine
our consciences!***

Participating in the Holy Year of Mercy entails knowing when to ask for forgiveness, ourselves! Help teach students how to examine their consciences to determine when they need to ask God and others for forgiveness. You may want to read 1 Corinthians 13 with students. As you read, ask them to replace the word “love” with their own name (i.e. “Joe is patient, Joe is kind...”). Encourage students to consider the times when these statements may not be true, when they may fail to love others. Help them realize that God always loves them even in spite of these missteps, and encourage them to seek forgiveness.



Once students grasp the mercy of God, ask them to consider what the world would look like if everyone were merciful as God is. Gather ideas and have students draw corresponding pictures. Then, have students list ways they can be peacemakers and encourage those around them to be more merciful to others.



Once students have considered what the world would look like if it were a more merciful place, have them brainstorm times when they could show mercy, even when it might be difficult. For example, perhaps a sister always takes toys without asking, or a friend often cuts in line. Have students create a coupon book of times when they will show mercy to others. Students can draw pictures to go with each of the actions they plan on doing and color them in. Children should keep the book as a reminder of their new determination to live a life of mercy!

