

Pentecost

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

***“O, Holy Spirit,
Bend the stubborn heart and will,
Melt the frozen, warm the chill,
Guide the steps that go astray.”***

Pentecost Sequence

“The Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.”



Confirming what Jesus taught, the Spirit will testify to God's enduring love and mercy, and all the fruits and blessings that flow from it.

I remember once talking with a friend who was so convinced she had received the gift of the Spirit because she could speak in “tongues” that nobody else understood. She has identified the gifts of the Spirit as “privileged things or presents” that set those receiving them apart from the rest of the Christian community. Little connection was made between the gifts and the purpose for which these gifts were given, i.e., to serve the needs of the community of believers. The gift of “mercy” reminds us that the gifts of the Spirit are for uniting rather than dividing, for mending the broken pieces of our relationships and building up our individual and communal identity.

For reflection:

How has the gift you received from God (talents, abilities, skills) been put to use for the benefit of other persons?

Go forth to bring the gifts of the Spirit to our world!

Lent to Pentecost 2016

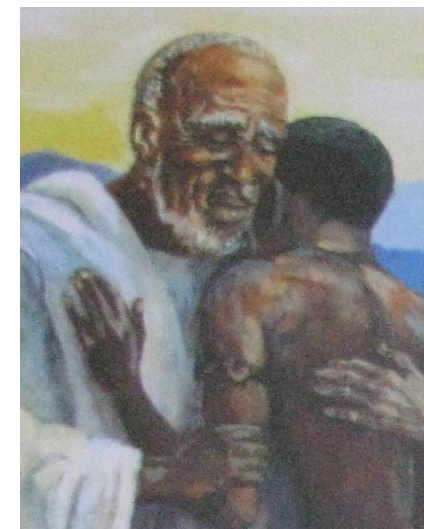
In the Jubilee of Mercy

Some words from Pope Francis to introduce the Year of Mercy

Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth... his words, his actions and his entire person reveals the mercy of God. Mercy is the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to a hope of being loved forever.
No 1-2

I desire that the year will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God! May the balm of mercy reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present in our midst. No 5

Let us live this Year of Mercy by being the living witness of what Christ called us to be, a loving presence even in the midst of uncertainty, sometimes chaos. Let us unite in bringing a spirit of love and mercy wherever we are in Sudan and South Sudan. In this way, let us create the country we desire, with God our merciful Father, let us work together in bringing about the Kingdom that Christ showed us where there is forgiveness, healing, giving food to the hungry, justice for the oppressed, prisoners set free, the eyes of the blind opened, those bowed down lifted up, the broken-hearted healed.



1st Sunday of Lent

The Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. Then we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 26: 6-8

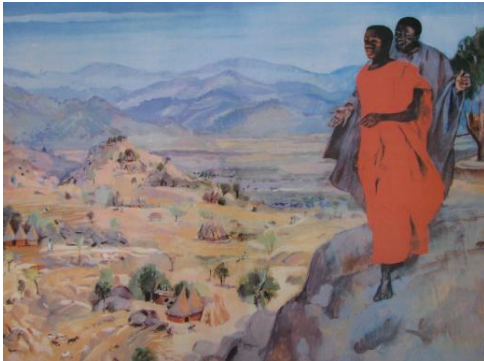
Be with me O Lord, when I am in distress.

Psalms 91

From the *Face of Mercy* – Letter of Pope Francis

No 8

Jesus seeing the crowds of people who followed him, realized that they were tired and exhausted, lost and without a guide, and he felt deep compassion for them..... What moved Jesus in all these situations was nothing other than mercy, with which he read the hearts of those he encountered and responded to their deepest need.



Reflection

In many areas of Sudan and South Sudan, people are crying out in need. You too have needs. In the Gospel of the temptation of Jesus, the devil tried to twist Jesus' trust in the help promised. By being sincere and honest, God hears our real need. God calls us to work with Him in responding to each others' needs. How will you receive and bring God's mercy this week?

1. Tell God your deepest need, name it, call on God's mercy with all your heart. Trust in him.
2. Look around you. Who is in need? What can you do to respond to that need? Take one step to live the way of God's mercy.

The Ascension of Jesus into Heaven

You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; And you shall be my witnesses to the end of the earth.

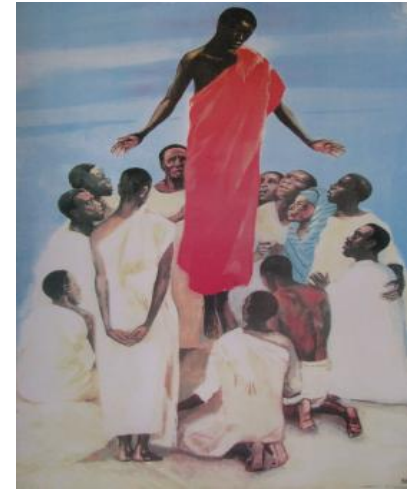
Acts 1: 1-11

From the *Face of Mercy* – Letter of Pope Francis

No 19

May the message of mercy reach everyone, and may no one be indifferent to the call to experience mercy. I direct this invitation to conversion even more fervently to those whose behaviour distances them from the grace of God ...

This is the opportune moment to change our lives! This is the time to allow our hearts to be touched! When confronted with evil deeds, even in the face of serious crimes, it is the time to listen to the cry of innocent people who are deprived of their property, their dignity, their feelings and even their very lives.



Reflection

This feast invites us to look to earth, to people among whom we are called to make present the work of Jesus. We are strengthened by the Holy Spirit. We can do things we never dreamed possible. It is you that God calls to do something for the good of other people. You can't wait for someone else. Start with one small action. Each day God's Spirit will lead you and if many do this, the spirit of South Sudan and Sudan will be different because the power of God's transforming love and mercy will be present among us.

Action

Look around you. Decide what could be different, better. Pray for courage and wisdom and do something to change the situation for the good of your environment and your community.

6th Sunday of Easter

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make a home in him. . . The Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have told you. My own peace I give you. This is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.'
John 14: 23 – 27

TRUE STORY

Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa reminds us that forgiveness is not about forgetting or condoning what has happened. In fact, it is important to remember so that something similar may not happen again. In addition, forgiveness means taking what has happened seriously, "drawing out the sting in the memory that threatens to poison our entire existence." When we do this we are ready to accompany others on the road that leads to peace.
(Patricia Murray IBVM, *101 Days Book*)

REFLECTION

READ JOHN 14 AGAIN! (above)
Hear Jesus, the Risen Christ saying this to YOU.



*If we have no peace,
It is because we have forgotten
that we belong
To each other.*

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

ACTION

1. Make a sign or poster of the words in John 14 that touch your heart. Share this message with a friend.
2. Explain what Bishop Tutu says about forgiveness to some others. We ask forgiveness of others. We also need to forgive ourselves when we make mistakes or do harm.

2nd Sunday of Lent

*God brought Abram outside and said,
"Look towards heaven and number the stars...so shall your descendants be."
And he believed the Lord.* Genesis 15: 5-6



Peter, James and John see how Jesus was totally transformed and heard, *"This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him."*

Luke 9:35

From the *Face of Mercy* – Letter of Pope Francis

No 6

The mercy of God reveals his love as that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child.. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy."

TRUE STORY

A Woman in Rwanda: Seventy-five members of my family were killed. I have so much hate in my heart and everyone is talking about reconciliation!

Jean Vanier: Do you want to kill those who killed your family.

Rwandan Woman No. Too many people have been killed already!

Jean Vanier: *The first step in the process of forgiveness is not to seek revenge. You are on the road to forgiveness.*

REFLECTION

We can know God in our hearts and understand that God wants us to be his people. God understands how much we have suffered. God is compassionate and waits. God stays with us no matter what we feel. God tells us, "This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him."

ACTION

1. God cannot stop loving you. Ask, "God, how are you with me when I do not even *want* to forgive?" Talk with God about how you feel deep in your heart. Talk over how you feel.
2. Tell your family and others the story of the Rwandan woman. Discuss how you can turn away from revenge.

3rd Sunday of Lent

I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint. Come now, I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.

Exodus: 3:1-8; 13-15

Reflection

Moses receives God's call to lead the people out of their slavery from the Egyptians. This was an act of mercy because the people suffered much under their control.



In order to get the attention of Moses, God spoke to him through a burning bush. It was an unusual bush because it never burned up. As Moses approached the burning bush, God said to him, "take off your shoes Moses, you are on holy ground".

From the *Face of Mercy* – Letter of Pope Francis No 17

The initiative of "24 Hours for the Lord" to be celebrated on the Friday and Saturday preceding the Fourth Week of Lent, should be implemented in every diocese. So many people including the youth, are returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation through this experience they are rediscovering a path back to the Lord, living a moment of intense prayer and finding meaning in their lives. Let us place the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the centre once more in such a way that it will enable people to touch the grandeur of God's mercy with their own hands. For every penitent it will be a source of true interior peace.

Action 1.

1. Gather the people together, make a fire. Ask them to take off their shoes and to listen as the priest or catechist tells the story of the call of Moses.
2. What can you do to help South Sudan and Sudan become a country of mercy?
3. Plan to experience God's mercy in the Sacrament of Penance.

5th Sunday or Easter

Paul and Barnabas traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. After proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch . . . When they arrived, they called the church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles
Acts 14:21-27

Love one another . . . By this love, everyone will know that you are my disciples.
John 13:34-35



From the *Face of Mercy* – Letter of Pope Francis No 23

I trust that this Jubilee year celebrating the mercy of God will foster an encounter with these religions (Islam) and with other noble religious traditions; may it open us to even more fervent dialogue so that we might know and understand one another better; may it eliminate every form of closed-mindedness and disrespect, and drive out every form of violence and discrimination.

Reflection

The stories of the early Christians are so full of inspiring details about how God has moved the hearts of those listening to Jesus' disciples. Surely the message these have brought included how God's mercy flows from God's immense love for all. For in the Risen Lord, God's mercy and faithfulness is shown in unmistakable form.

Questions for reflection:

1. In what concrete way have you experienced God's mercy for you, your family and friends?
2. Has your experience of God's mercy inspired you, strengthened the faith of others, or moved them towards specific action on behalf of other persons?

4th Sunday of Easter

There was a large number, impossible for anyone to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language. . . These are the people who have been through the great trial The Lamb will be their shepherd and will guide them to springs of living water. God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. Revelation 7: 9, 16-17

From the *Face of Mercy* – Letter of Pope Francis No 5

We ask Jesus Risen “to pour out his mercy upon us like the morning dew, so that everyone may work together to build a brighter future

TRUE STORY

A woman was put in prison because of a man’s false testimony. A Sister met her regularly to support her. Eventually, the Sister asked:

The Sister: Can you think about forgiving the man who gave the false testimony?

Women in Prison: No, I can’t forgive him because he has hurt me too much. But I pray for him each day that he may be free from all the evil in him.

The Sister: The *second step* in the process of forgiveness is to pray for those who consciously or unconsciously have hurt us.

A *third step* is to become conscious of who the person is who has hurt us, how he or she came to be as they are. What fears might *they* have? How did these fears come about? They too have been deeply hurt somewhere. Little by little, we begin to understand them.

REFLECTION

We are more one than we can ever imagine. When one suffers we all suffer. NO ONE wins in war. We hurt ourselves when we harm the Earth and others. When we turn away from revenge, we can start to find room for peace. We start to heal ourselves and our country.

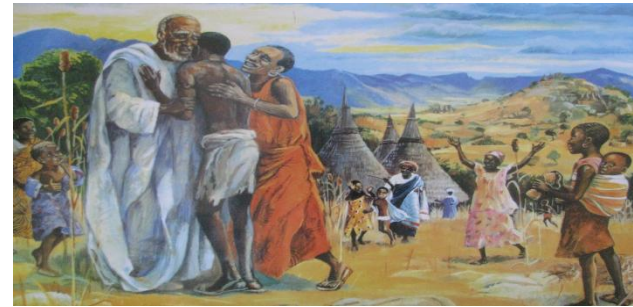
ACTION

1. Share with others the conversations about forgiveness.
2. Imagine people of all tribes in South Sudan as we stand together in God’s love. Imagine light and healing filling everyone. Imagine how God loves to heal us, gently, tenderly, totally.
3. Talk with God or someone you trust about how you feel.

4th Sunday of Lent

“The younger son left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery . . Then he came to his senses and went back to his father.

While he was still a long way off his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. . . Then the father said: ‘Let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come back to life again; he was lost and has been found..’ Luke 15:1-3,11-32



From the *Face of Mercy* – Letter of Pope Francis No 12

Merciful like the Father, is the “motto” of this Holy Year. In mercy, we find proof of how God Loves us. He gives his entire self, always. Freely, asking nothing in return. He comes to our aid whenever we call upon him.

Reflection - *God’s mercy embraces all*

God’s mercy goes beyond the hurts, the faults, even the sins of his children. God’s mercy only wants us to experience the warmth of God’s embrace, and the joy God feels as we return to his love.

Question; for reflection:

1. Do you remember when you “came to your senses” and saw the error of your ways? What did you do then?
2. Have you at some time felt unrecognized like the elder son for the good you do and for being faithful to God?
3. Have you allowed God’s mercy to cover your whole self so that you are filled with gratitude and joy?

5th Sunday of Lent

Look, I am doing something new. Now it emerges. Can you not see it? Yes, I am making a road in the desert and rivers in wastelands.

Isaiah 43: 18

Let the one among you who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her. Jesus was left alone with the woman.

John 8: 1 – 11

From the *Face of Mercy* – Letter of Pope Francis

No 10



Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy... Perhaps we have long forgotten how to show and live the way of mercy.... It is time to return to the basics and to bear

the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instils in us the courage to look to the future with hope.

True Story from Rumbek

Two women who had been friends were fighting for some time. It affected the relationships of their families. Their husbands met. Thomas wanted to “reconcile” with his brother. However, the other man refused. Thomas prayed about it and asked God to help them. Then one night, the other man had a dream. He saw himself dead on the ground at the feet of Thomas and understood that he needed to reconcile. He went to Thomas' door and told him that he wanted to reconcile. He told Thomas about the dream. He wanted to come to life again. God had worked in the heart of his *enemy*.

Activity

Begin the path of forgiving in your heart. Become aware of who you need to forgive. Acknowledge that you have been hurt, name what happened to you. Struggle with your feelings of anger and grief. Fight the tendency to be resentful.

Choose not to want to hurt the person who caused you harm. Try to let go of the pain and memory when it comes.

3rd Sunday of Easter

Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the Lord's disciples, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogue in Damascus which would give him power to arrest and bring to Jerusalem anyone he might find, man or woman living according to the new way.

Acts 9: 1-6

What is this new way that St. Paul talks about? It is the way of MERCY

Reflection

God's mercy can make even the driest land become a garden, can restore life to dry bones (cf. Ez 37:1-14). ... Let us be renewed by God's mercy, let us be loved by Jesus, let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too; and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish”

For discussion:

How can we become agents of God's mercy? What can we do to leave the past behind and become the new way of mercy?

Action

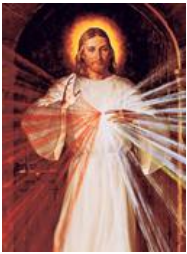
As a family, plant a small symbolic “garden of mercy”. Plant seeds of forgiveness, mercy and kindness in your hearts.

As in the miraculous catch of fish in the gospel, God will multiply your seeds of mercy and forgiveness. Ask Jesus to help you.

All through the night, they caught nothing. At daybreak, Jesus said to them, 'Have you any fish?' They answered him 'No'. He said to them, 'Cast your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' They cast it and now they were not able to haul it in. John 21:3-6



2nd Sunday of Easter Feast of the Divine Mercy



*Give praise to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.*

Psalm 118

Jesus came and stood among them "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them. "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

John 20: 21-23

From the *Face of Mercy* – Letter of Pope Francis

No 12

The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every persons.

Story from Bor – POC UN camp

At a Trauma-Healing workshop held in the UN POC camp a few months ago, one of the Nuer men addressed the parish representatives, mostly Dinka, who had come to join them from outside. He said, "We want you to come again with more people from the parish so that we can heal together, talk, find a way forward and begin to reconcile."

Reflection

The story from Bor brings us cause for rejoicing. A willingness to work through painful memories and come to reconciliation is a sign of God's kingdom in our midst. God, in his Divine Mercy is close to us. We, his followers are the ones who will reveal God's mercy to the world, to others, through our attitudes and actions. The risen Christ is alive within us. We have received his life in Baptism. The Holy Spirit helps us do things that we could not do by ourselves.

Action

1. Ask God, in his Divine Mercy, to change our hearts with willingness to forgive and begin anew in our broken society.
2. Take courage, reach out in a gesture of peace to someone who has hurt you.

Passion Sunday

Father, forgive them for they do not know what they're doing"

Luke 22: 14–23:56

***Face of Mercy* – Letter of Pope Francis**

No 24

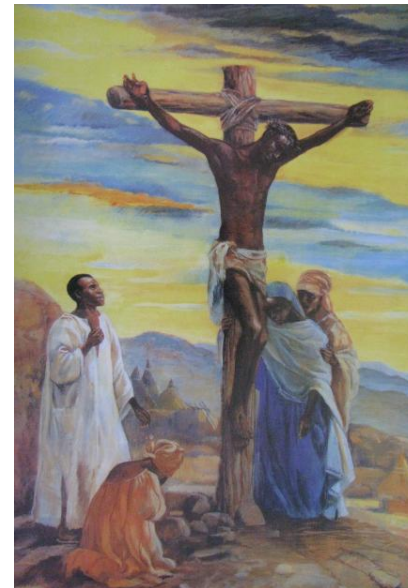
At the foot of the cross, Mary, together with John, the disciple of love, witnessed the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus. This supreme expression of mercy towards those who crucified him show us the point to which the mercy of God can reach. Mary attests that the mercy of the Son of God knows no bounds and extends to everyone, without exception.

Reflection

The evil in people's hearts – the wickedness we heap upon each other, including on many innocent victims . . . all this will never overpower nor erase God's tender and forgiving mercy. No matter the evil we do, in the end it is God's mercy that will be victorious.

On the night of June 17, 2015, a gunman opened fire in the basement of a Mother Emanuel church in Charleston, North Carolina (USA).

Nine people died, all of them members of a Bible-study group. The killer confessed to a racist motive for the 'massacre.'



But something happened later. John Huey, a writer for Time magazine, describes it. 'Then came the stunning transformational moment, a totally unexpected act of grace: families of the Emanuel victims stood before a public bond hearing to offer their forgiveness and the Lord's mercy for the killer. Everyone else was calling for the death penalty, and here were these families, who were suffering deeply, offering forgiveness.'

(Time Magazine, 23 November 2015, p. 40)

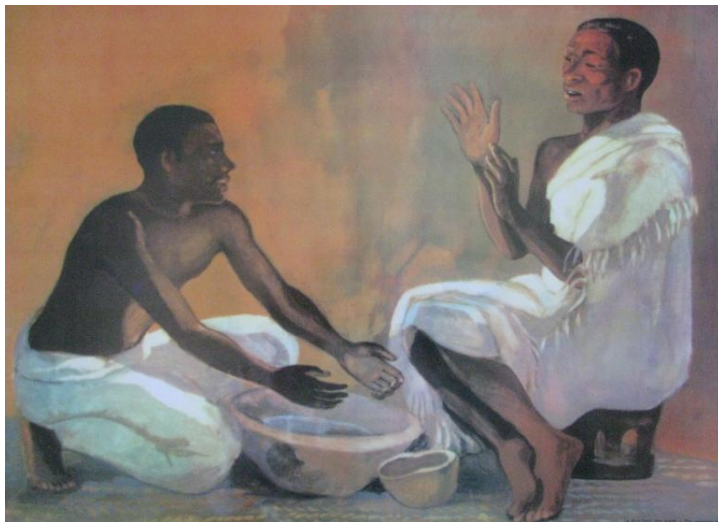
The Triduum

THE GREATEST CHRISTIAN FEAST

HOLY THURSDAY, GOOD FRIDAY, EASTER SUNDAY AND SEVEN WEEKS UNTIL PENTECOST

For six weeks, we prepared for the greatest feast in the lives of Christians: Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. These days are called Passover, the Paschal Mystery because we remember how God led the people from slavery to freedom and how Jesus passed from death to RISEN LIFE. God invites us to live this mystery every day. Through all our suffering and death, we pass from death to life.

Jesus washed his disciples' feet to show them that they are to serve. He tells us that he is present whenever we bless, break and share the bread and cup in his name. Jesus actually lived this on Good Friday when his body was broken.



Easter Sunday



Easter is the feast of the RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

The risen Christ transforms us to live in God's Spirit.. This is a great feast of hope. We celebrate the Easter season for seven weeks. Jesus the risen Christ, offers us peace beyond imagining.

We can be "fully confident that the strength of the Risen Lord, who constantly supports us on our pilgrim way, will sustain us. May the Holy Spirit . . . lead the way and support the People of God so that they may contemplate the face of mercy."

Pope Francis, *Jubilee of Mercy*, 4



**Booklet prepared by SCBC Pastoral Director's Team
Solidarity Pastoral Team**

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**SUDAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE (SCBC)
PASTORAL DEPARTMENT**

From: Fr Philip Bingo Gamanzu

To: Pastoral Coordinators, Priests, Catechists, Pastoral Leaders,

25 January 2016

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

Greetings and wishing you all God's blessing and mercy during this Holy season of Lent in preparation to celebrate the great feasts of Easter and Pentecost.

The Holy Father Pope Francis has declared this year 2016, the year of mercy. We are called to meditate on Christ, our saviour, as sign of God's mercy. God, in Christ reconciling us to himself and entrusting to us the noble message of mercy and love for us all. As we reflect on the word of God during the Holy season of Lent, Easter, Pentecost, it should yield fruits of mercy, love, forgiveness, reconciliation and lasting peace in our communities.

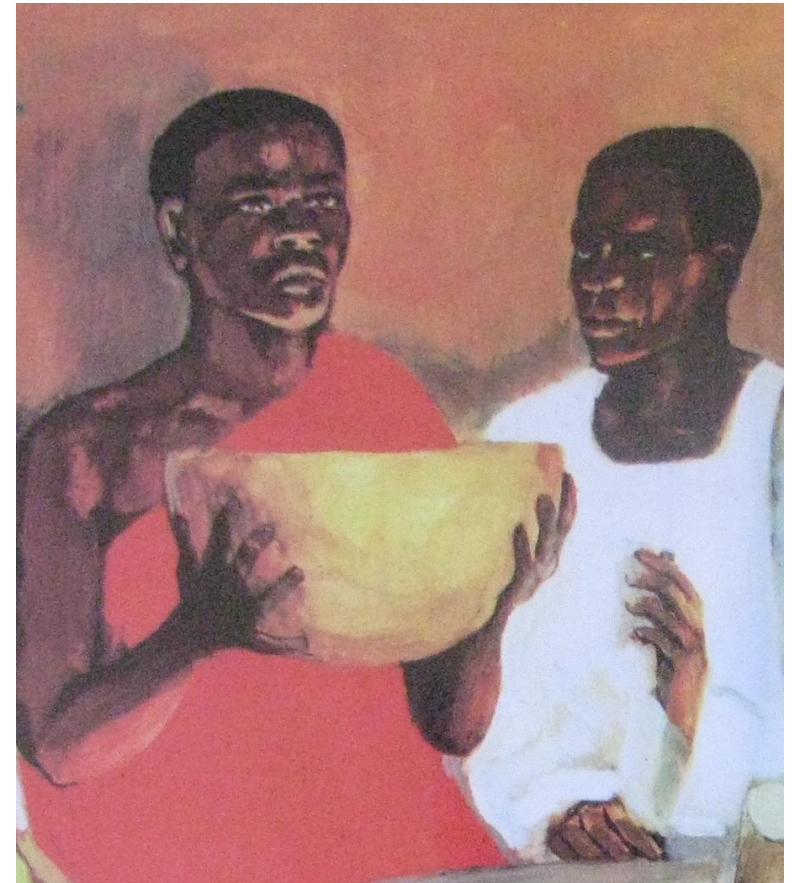
These booklets are meant to be used for Sunday services by priests, and catechists, SCCs, prayer groups. Also, we encourage use of the content of the booklet and other year of mercy programs to be used on local radio in your Diocese during the Holy seasons of Lent, Easter and Pentecost to reflect deeper on the Sunday readings and in a special way on the mercy of God for humanity. It is in sharing with communities we believe that the message of mercy, love, reconciliation and peace will reach homes and influence the lives of our Christian communities.

In Christ, I remain yours in service

Rev. Fr. Philip Bingo Gamanzu.

Pastoral Coordinator, SCBC Juba.

Merciful like the Father



Living the Jubilee of Mercy

Lent to Pentecost 2016