



STORY BY
Sister Cecilia
Joseph, OP,
a member of
the Dominican
Sisters of St.
Cecilia and
principal of
St. Jude Catholic
School in Joliet

MERCY CALLED MY NAME

Twice a year, religious sisters from our mission houses across the country and from overseas return to our Motherhouse in Nashville. These days are filled with much joy as a community as we celebrate the liturgical feasts, professions, and community events while reconnecting with sisters we have not seen for months or even years. This Christmas was no different as I returned for a few days and was able to visit with sisters I had lived with on a previous mission. This annual visit is an occasion we look forward to and this year was no exception. This year, however, was different as God had something special in mind. Attentive to this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, we decided to pray about and share with one another God's mercies in our life over the past year. I was eager to "get to work" in reviewing the year and making my list of mercies.

On Christmas Eve, in the silent hours that precede Midnight Mass, I sat in the Motherhouse chapel reflecting on God's mercies in my life. I began to consider the meaning of the word "mercy." What is at the heart of mercy? How far does the reach of God's mercy extend? What exactly can be attributed to God's mercy? I wanted my list to be accurate, and I didn't want to sell the Lord short! In *Misericordiae Vultus*, Pope Francis' document announcing the Jubilee of Mercy, he writes, "Mercy is a key word that indicates God's action towards us. He does not limit Himself merely to affirming His love, but makes it visible and tangible ... something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviors that are shown in daily living. The mercy of God is His loving concern for each one of us." The more I prayed, I began to wonder what events, situations, and circumstances in my life didn't fall under the action of God's mercy. On that holy night, it was as if I heard Mercy call my name — as Matt Maher expresses so beautifully in his song, "Because He Lives (Amen)." The Lord was leading me by the hand to recognize His tender love in each event of my life.

As we journey through these final weeks of Lent, we approach the climax of God's mercy in the sacred events of the Easter Triduum. In the Office of Readings for Holy Saturday, the Church offers

us one of the most beautiful reflections on God's mercy. This ancient homily is the fruit of an anonymous author's meditation on Christ's descent into hell. "Something strange is happening," the homily begins, "there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness ... God has died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear." Hell trembles with fear? How is this possible? Mercy has entered into the chaos to rescue the lost man. The Sinless One who has become one of us, takes on our sin, and reaching out His hand,

him [Adam] by the hand and raised him up, saying: 'Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.' " I heard Mercy call my name, and He rolled the stone away ...

As we continue through Lent, we are called to open our hearts to give and receive mercy. Make your own list of God's mercies in these weeks. Recognizing God's mercy in our lives will powerfully aid us "to know and to believe in the love God has for us" (1 John 4:16). But we cannot stop there. Once the list is made, it must be shared with your spouse, family,



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He calls our name. "Such is the depth of his compassion and mercy," states Pope Francis, "self-abasement in order to become a companion at the service of wounded humanity" (*Misericordiae Vultus*). The homily continues, "Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, He [Christ] has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve ... The Lord approached them bearing the cross, the weapon that had won Him the victory ... He took

or friends, as a gift for others.

As I visited on Christmas day with the Sisters, this moment of mercy was "touched by glory" (1 Peter 1:8) as we delighted in God's tender love, guidance, protection, and compassion. Through this testimony of mercy, Christ revealed His divine friendship that is eternal. Mercy is calling our name and reaching out His hand to lead us to the place He has prepared for us, so that our song of His mercy can "join the one that never ends." Rise up!