



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
SIGNED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE CARDINAL PIETRO PAROLIN
FOR THE 67th NATIONAL LITURGICAL WEEK IN ITALY**

[GUBBIO, 22-25 AUGUST 2016]

Your Excellency,

On the occasion of the 67th National Liturgical Week, which is taking place this year in Gubbio, in the mystical and peaceful scenery of Umbria, the Holy Father is pleased to convey his best wishes to you, to the CAL collaborators and all those taking part in these important days of study.

The choice of this location, chosen in connection with the 1600th anniversary of the Letter of Pope Innocent I to Decentius, Bishop of Gubbio (cf. PL 20, 551-561), is particularly appropriate in the context of the Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy. The document, in which the Roman Pontiff offered clarifying responses to the questions asked by the Bishop of Gubbio, includes interesting information on specific aspects of the celebration of certain Sacraments at that particular time in history. Among the many issues addressed, there is one in particular that requires our attention: the reconciliation of penitents in the light of Easter (cf. c. VII, 10).

The National Liturgical Week has, therefore, decided to return to a theme that has been discussed before, reflecting on “Liturgy as a place of Mercy”, with the explicit intention of offering, in the context of the Jubilee Year, a special contribution to the journey of the Church in Italy. When we strive to live each liturgical event “with our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze, we experience the love of the Most Holy Trinity.... This love has now been made visible and tangible in Jesus’ entire life.... Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, n. 8). These words bring to mind those of St Pope Leo the Great, who in a homily dedicated to the Ascension affirmed: “that which till then was visible [and tangible] of our Redeemer was changed into a sacramental presence” (PL 54, 398). Such an approach helps us to perceive the entire liturgy as a place of mercy encountered and received in order to be given; a

place where the great mystery of reconciliation is rendered present, announced, celebrated and communicated. The specific celebrations of Sacraments or sacramentals contain the one great gift of divine mercy according to the various circumstances of life.

The gift of Mercy, however, shines in a particular way through the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation. One is reconciled in order to reconcile. The Father's mercy cannot be locked in intimistic and self-comforting attitudes, because it proves itself powerful in renewing people, enabling them to offer others the living experience of the same gift. Based on the awareness that one is forgiven in order to forgive, one must bear witness to mercy in every environment, arousing the desire and capacity for forgiveness.

This is a task to which we are all called, especially in the face of the resentment in which too many people are trapped, who need to rediscover the joy of inner serenity and the feeling of peace.

The Rite of the Sacrament of Penance should therefore be perceived as an expression of a "Church that goes forth" as a "door", not only to be re-entered after having been far away, but also as an open "threshold" to the various peripheries of a humanity that is ever more in need of compassion. Indeed, it is here that the encounter with the recreating mercy of God takes place, from which come forth new men and women to proclaim the good life of the Gospel through a life reconciled and reconciling.

His Holiness hopes that the reflections and celebrations of this Liturgical Week will increasingly mature understanding as the *fons et culmen* of ecclesial and personal life, full of mercy and compassion, due to being constantly formed at the school of the Gospel. He entrusts the work and expectations of this important national liturgical event to the maternal intercession of Mary, *Mater Misericordiae*. As he asks you to pray for him and for his service to the Church, he extends his heartfelt Apostolic Blessing to Your Excellency, to Bishop Mario Ceccobelli of Gubbio, to the prelates and priests, to the relators and to all those attending.

Pietro Card. Parolin
Secretary of State