

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle to Caritas bishops on the Holy Year of Mercy

Dear Brother Bishops,

On 8th December Pope Francis will open the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica. On that day, the door will become a *Door of Mercy* through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons and instils hope.

Pope Francis is repeatedly reminding us that God is mercy. This jubilee year calls us all to welcome and recognise God's mercy so that we can be agents of His mercy. Thomas Aquinas described mercy as a virtue and "the compassion in our hearts for another person's misery, a compassion which drives us to do what we can to help him".

Pope Francis said that Caritas is the caress of the Mother Church to her sons and daughters. Indeed, our very nature, as Caritas organisations, our "raison d'être" is to be instruments of God's mercy, sharing in the mission of the Church, called not only to announce the good news, but also to be the good news to all, in particular to the suffering and the marginalised.

Whether we are providing food to malnourished children, protecting abandoned mothers, defending victims of trafficking, helping rural families to grow their food, advocating for an equitable world, welcoming refugees, providing tarpaulins to typhoon victims or ensuring that those who die from ebola receive a decent burial, we alleviate the suffering of the body and we provide comfort to the spirit. In doing so, we testify that mercy is the bridge that connects us with God and with our brothers and sisters.

Through continued works of love and mercy, I encourage all Caritas organisations around the world to walk through their own "door of mercy" in order to receive the Lord's transformative grace. Our constant contemplation of mercy leads us on the road to salvation.

Pope Francis will open the Holy Door of Charity at a Caritas Rome hostel on 18th December. Through this gesture, the Bishop of Rome who presides over charity in his diocese is showing how Caritas' work is an essential part of evangelisation in his diocese. It is a compelling invitation to show compassion to the most needy in the Eternal City.

I invite you all, Brother Bishops, to imitate the symbolic gesture of Pope Francis by opening your own door of charity in your Caritas organisations as an invitation to the faithful to welcome this Jubilee Year of Mercy as a real Kairos, a moment of grace. May we share the healing properties of what Saint John XXIII called the "medicine of mercy" as opposed to the "arms of severity".

Pope Francis has given us the gift of the Holy Year of Mercy so that we might all drink of the wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. As the Holy Father said in his first Angelus, "A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just." It is our mission as Caritas to ignite the hearts of the world so that no one is left out in the dark.

Yours in Christ,

S.Em Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle