



By Pat Haggerty

I recently had lunch with a dear friend of mine who happens to be a Sister of Mercy. Sister Joanne and I meet several times a year to catch up on each other's news, talk about acquaintances and discuss the Church. We have a wonderful relationship that began when I was a freshman in college and when Joanne was my writing instructor. God has a unique way of putting special people in our lives.

Since we hadn't gotten together at the holidays, Joanne had a belated Christmas gift for me. It was a Mercy candle---especially made for the Sisters of Mercy. I was so touched! Not only is this a beautiful candle but it sparked in me (no pun intended) the desire to be really aware of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. We hear so much about it, and we see its symbol in all of our churches. Even as I was driving home after my visit with Joanne, I passed several churches with huge banners outside with the words "Merciful Like the Father."

Now I am determined to be more engaged in the Year of Mercy. What can I do? What should I do? I don't want this year to simply wash over me like a soothing rain. I want to act like I am in a rain forest receiving sustenance and refreshment from the rains that are cascading over me. I want to be an active participant in the Year of Mercy and not a passive observer.

Perhaps you have already come to this realization for yourselves. Forgive me if I am being redundant. It's just that sometimes when things around us seem so obvious, we tend to ignore them. That mustn't be the case with the Year of Mercy.

I hope you are embracing it, absorbing it and allowing it to have an impact on your lives---and on those whose lives you touch. I think that is the intention of Pope Francis. We are being invited to let mercy be our focus this year, to let mercy be our guide. Like the star that guided the Wise Men to Jesus, mercy can be the lamplight that brings us to our Lord.

I've already begun my own quest. I went to our Church gift shop and purchased two books: *The Saints in Mercy* published by The Sunday Visitor Press and *The Church of Mercy* by Pope Francis and published by Loyola Press. This will be my starting point. I hope to use these books in a book club I am going to initiate.

That is enough about me. Now it is up to you! If you haven't already done so, please consider how you will be guided during this Year of Mercy. Let me leave you with the words from *The Merchant of Venice*, Act IV, Scene I: "The quality of mercy is not strained; it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blest; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes; Tis mightiest in the mightiest. . ."