

# LECTIO DIVINA



## JUBILEE OF MERCY

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

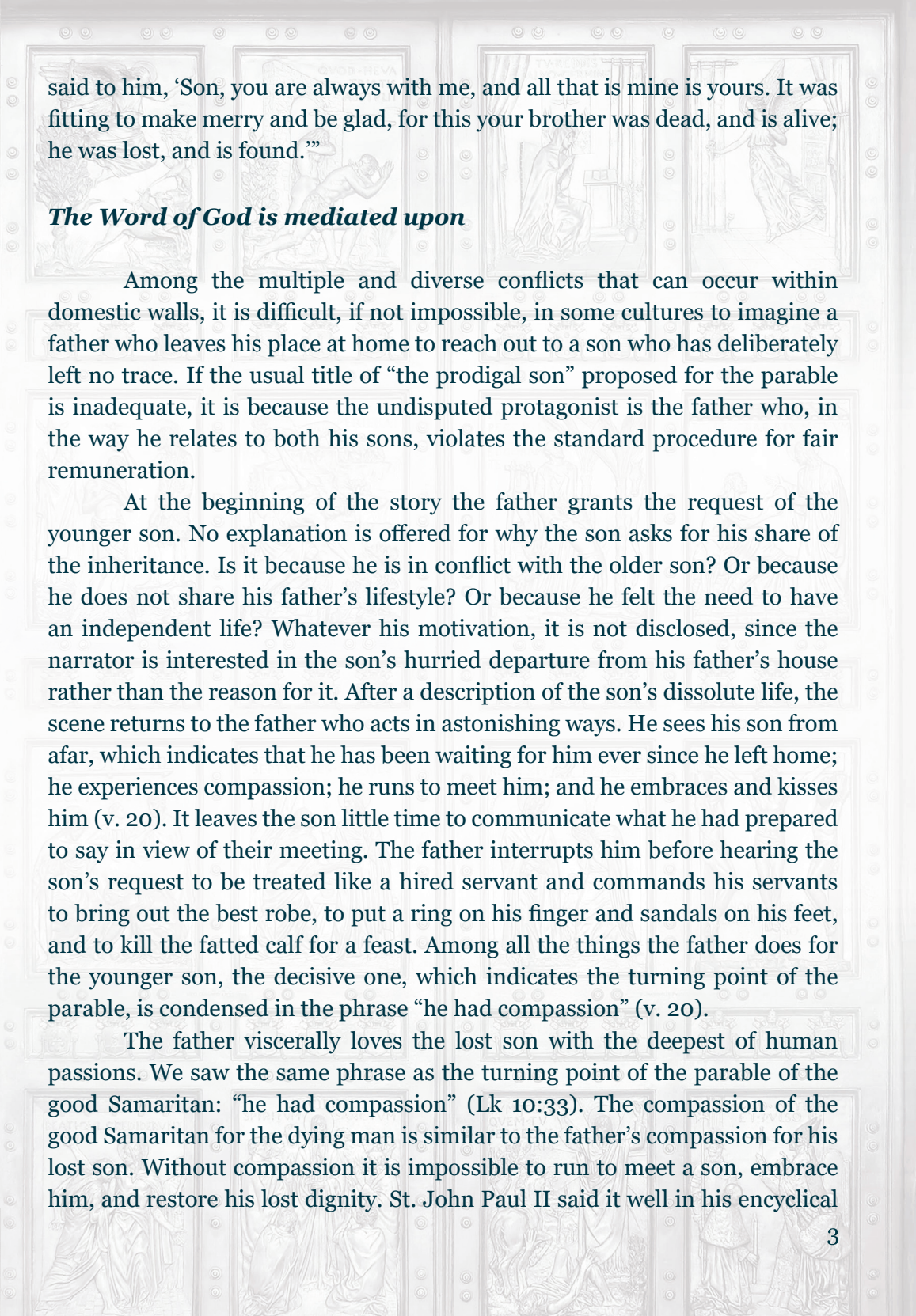
## Lectio Divina – Schema A

Extreme compassion: the merciful father (Lk 15:11-32)

### *The Word of God is heard*

And he said, “There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.’ And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.”’” And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to make merry.

“Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.’ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, ‘Behold, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!’ And he



said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

### ***The Word of God is mediated upon***

Among the multiple and diverse conflicts that can occur within domestic walls, it is difficult, if not impossible, in some cultures to imagine a father who leaves his place at home to reach out to a son who has deliberately left no trace. If the usual title of “the prodigal son” proposed for the parable is inadequate, it is because the undisputed protagonist is the father who, in the way he relates to both his sons, violates the standard procedure for fair remuneration.

At the beginning of the story the father grants the request of the younger son. No explanation is offered for why the son asks for his share of the inheritance. Is it because he is in conflict with the older son? Or because he does not share his father’s lifestyle? Or because he felt the need to have an independent life? Whatever his motivation, it is not disclosed, since the narrator is interested in the son’s hurried departure from his father’s house rather than the reason for it. After a description of the son’s dissolute life, the scene returns to the father who acts in astonishing ways. He sees his son from afar, which indicates that he has been waiting for him ever since he left home; he experiences compassion; he runs to meet him; and he embraces and kisses him (v. 20). It leaves the son little time to communicate what he had prepared to say in view of their meeting. The father interrupts him before hearing the son’s request to be treated like a hired servant and commands his servants to bring out the best robe, to put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet, and to kill the fatted calf for a feast. Among all the things the father does for the younger son, the decisive one, which indicates the turning point of the parable, is condensed in the phrase “he had compassion” (v. 20).

The father viscerally loves the lost son with the deepest of human passions. We saw the same phrase as the turning point of the parable of the good Samaritan: “he had compassion” (Lk 10:33). The compassion of the good Samaritan for the dying man is similar to the father’s compassion for his lost son. Without compassion it is impossible to run to meet a son, embrace him, and restore his lost dignity. St. John Paul II said it well in his encyclical

*Dives in misericordia*; where he discusses this parable: “The Father’s fidelity to himself is totally concentrated upon the humanity of the lost son, upon his dignity” (6). The father’s mercy, not his moral virtue, is at the center of the parable. His virtues are good character qualities, but mercy is an orientation that matures in the depths of one’s soul and is manifested in actions toward one’s neighbor.

His hardest test as a father is still to come. It occurs when the older brother’s way of thinking is exposed. The refusal of the older son to enter the house is dramatic; anger transfixes him at the very entrance he had crossed numerous times. So the father decides to go out of the house again to plead with him. This time the price is higher than the price paid for the younger son because the father has to undergo a rebuke that rips him apart! The older son accuses him of being stingy, of not being ready to give him a goat for a feast with his friends. A father seems to have failed in his role when he does not repay the son who is faithful to him but has the fatted calf killed for the son who had squandered his means. Anger leads the older son to distort the truth that he has known from the beginning: the father offered no resistance to the younger son’s request for his portion of the inheritance, and the major part of the family inheritance still belongs to the older son.

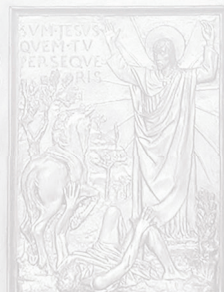
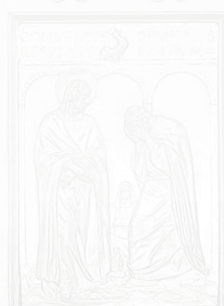
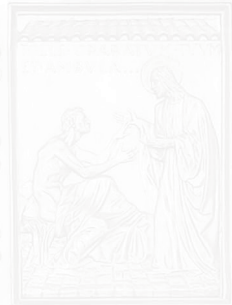
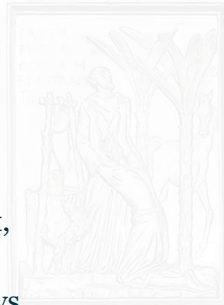
The father’s mercy is unlimited. He could have responded that he was in charge as long as the son lived in his house. According to the rules of inheritance, he could do whatever he wanted with his goods since he was still alive! Instead the father meets the older son on his level and encourages him to rethink his relationships. The tenderness with which he addresses the older son is immense. Even though the son never calls him “father,” he calls him “son” (*teknon*), a word denoting an intimate relationship. The father is aware that the remaining inheritance belongs to his older son, but that is not the issue. Instead, he is preoccupied and focused on wanting to transform “this son of yours”—which is a rebuke by the older son—into “this your brother” (v. 32). The deepest conversion the father is waiting for is not that of the younger son who has come home (initially because he would otherwise have died of hunger); rather it is the conversion of the older son who is incapable of recognizing his father and his brother.

(Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization,  
*The Parables of Mercy.*)

***The Word of God is prayed***

**Come, Creator Spirit**

Come, Holy Spirit, Creator come,  
From your bright heavenly throne!  
Come, take possession of our souls,  
And make them all your own.  
You who are called the Paraclete,  
Best gift of God above,  
The living spring, the living fire,  
Sweet unction, and true love!  
You who are sevenfold in your grace,  
Finger of God's right hand,  
His promise, teaching little ones  
To speak and understand!  
O guide our minds with your blessed light,  
With love our hearts inflame,  
And with your strength which never decays  
Confirm our mortal frame.  
Far from us drive our hellish foe  
True peace unto us bring,  
And through all perils guide us safe  
Beneath your sacred wing.  
Through you may we the Father know,  
Through you the eternal Son  
And you the Spirit of them both  
Thrice-blessed three in one.  
All glory to the Father be,  
And to the risen Son;  
The same to you, O Paraclete,  
While endless ages run.



## Lectio Divina – Schema B

The compassion for a stranger: the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37)

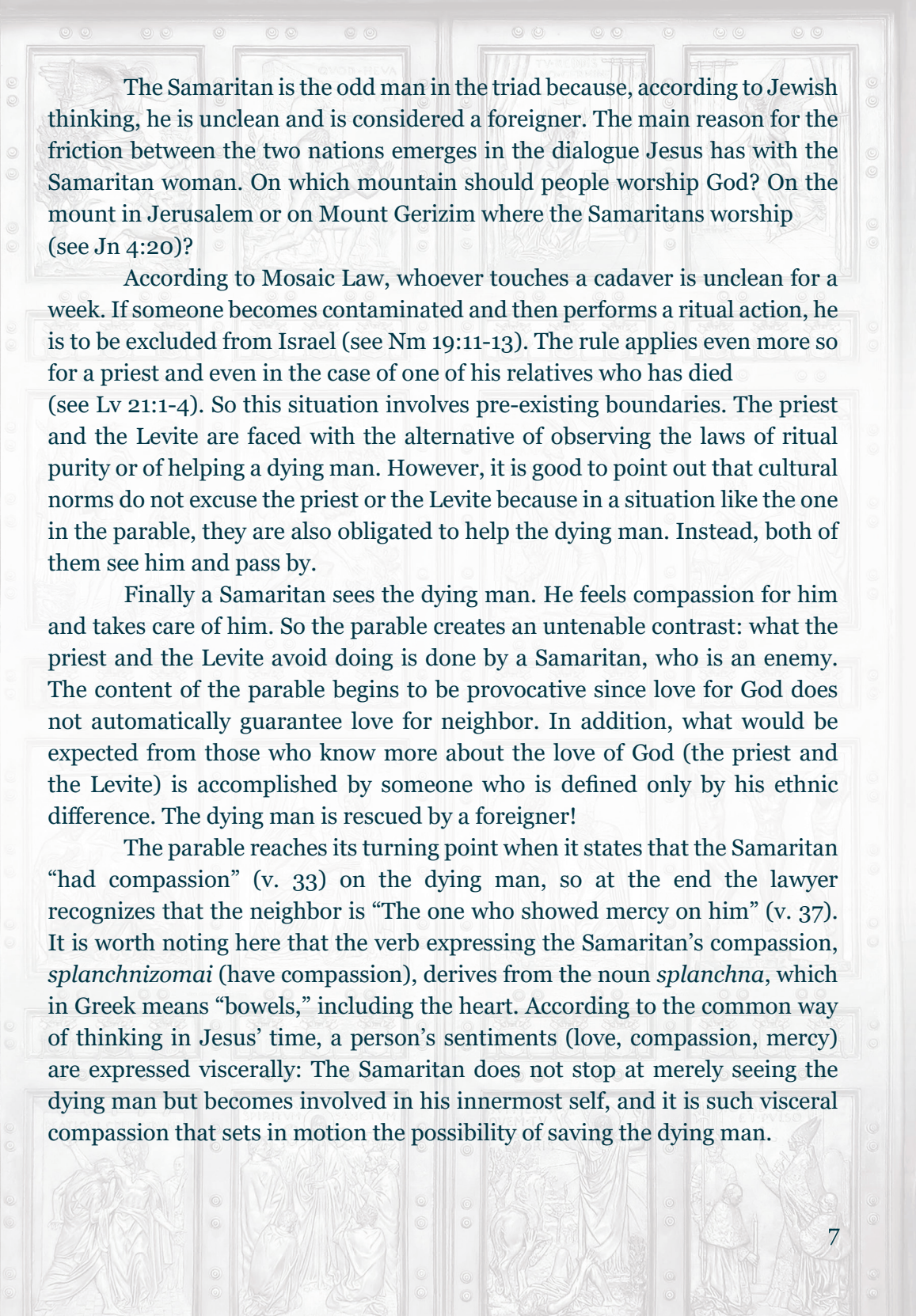
### ***The Word of God is heard***

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have answered right; do this, and you will live.”

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” And Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

### ***The Word of God is meditated upon***

It is not by chance that the three people who are selected in the parable are involved in the worship of the one God in various ways: a priest who is coming down from Jerusalem after performing his Temple service; a Levite who belongs to the priestly class but who does not perform temple service; and a Samaritan. And here things start not to add up because the normal triad should include a priest, a Levite, and an *Israelite* (see Dt 18:1; 27:9).

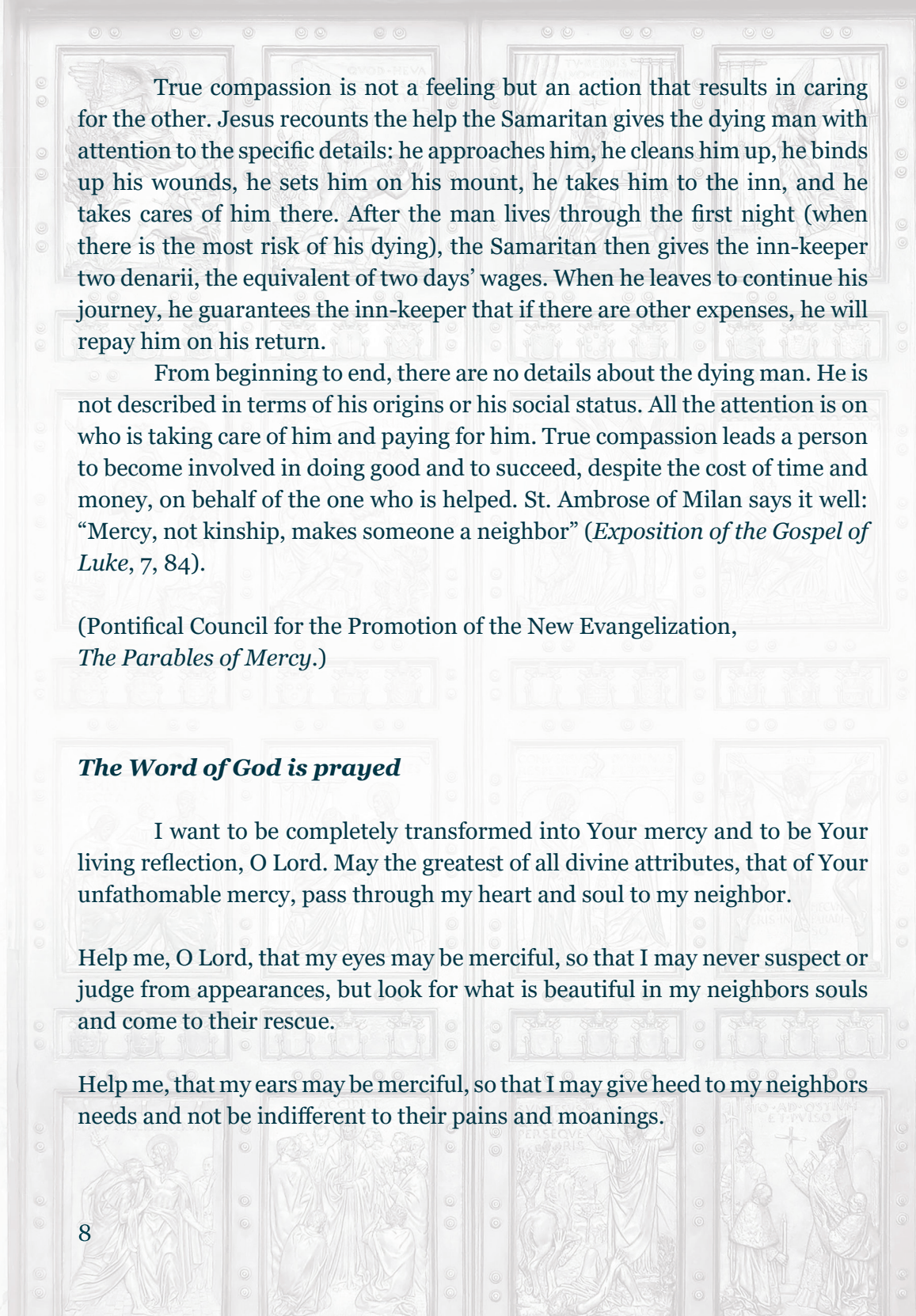


The Samaritan is the odd man in the triad because, according to Jewish thinking, he is unclean and is considered a foreigner. The main reason for the friction between the two nations emerges in the dialogue Jesus has with the Samaritan woman. On which mountain should people worship God? On the mount in Jerusalem or on Mount Gerizim where the Samaritans worship (see Jn 4:20)?

According to Mosaic Law, whoever touches a cadaver is unclean for a week. If someone becomes contaminated and then performs a ritual action, he is to be excluded from Israel (see Nm 19:11-13). The rule applies even more so for a priest and even in the case of one of his relatives who has died (see Lv 21:1-4). So this situation involves pre-existing boundaries. The priest and the Levite are faced with the alternative of observing the laws of ritual purity or of helping a dying man. However, it is good to point out that cultural norms do not excuse the priest or the Levite because in a situation like the one in the parable, they are also obligated to help the dying man. Instead, both of them see him and pass by.

Finally a Samaritan sees the dying man. He feels compassion for him and takes care of him. So the parable creates an untenable contrast: what the priest and the Levite avoid doing is done by a Samaritan, who is an enemy. The content of the parable begins to be provocative since love for God does not automatically guarantee love for neighbor. In addition, what would be expected from those who know more about the love of God (the priest and the Levite) is accomplished by someone who is defined only by his ethnic difference. The dying man is rescued by a foreigner!

The parable reaches its turning point when it states that the Samaritan “had compassion” (v. 33) on the dying man, so at the end the lawyer recognizes that the neighbor is “The one who showed mercy on him” (v. 37). It is worth noting here that the verb expressing the Samaritan’s compassion, *splanchnizomai* (have compassion), derives from the noun *splanchna*, which in Greek means “bowels,” including the heart. According to the common way of thinking in Jesus’ time, a person’s sentiments (love, compassion, mercy) are expressed viscerally: The Samaritan does not stop at merely seeing the dying man but becomes involved in his innermost self, and it is such visceral compassion that sets in motion the possibility of saving the dying man.



True compassion is not a feeling but an action that results in caring for the other. Jesus recounts the help the Samaritan gives the dying man with attention to the specific details: he approaches him, he cleans him up, he binds up his wounds, he sets him on his mount, he takes him to the inn, and he takes care of him there. After the man lives through the first night (when there is the most risk of his dying), the Samaritan then gives the inn-keeper two denarii, the equivalent of two days' wages. When he leaves to continue his journey, he guarantees the inn-keeper that if there are other expenses, he will repay him on his return.

From beginning to end, there are no details about the dying man. He is not described in terms of his origins or his social status. All the attention is on who is taking care of him and paying for him. True compassion leads a person to become involved in doing good and to succeed, despite the cost of time and money, on behalf of the one who is helped. St. Ambrose of Milan says it well: "Mercy, not kinship, makes someone a neighbor" (*Exposition of the Gospel of Luke*, 7, 84).

(Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization,  
*The Parables of Mercy.*)

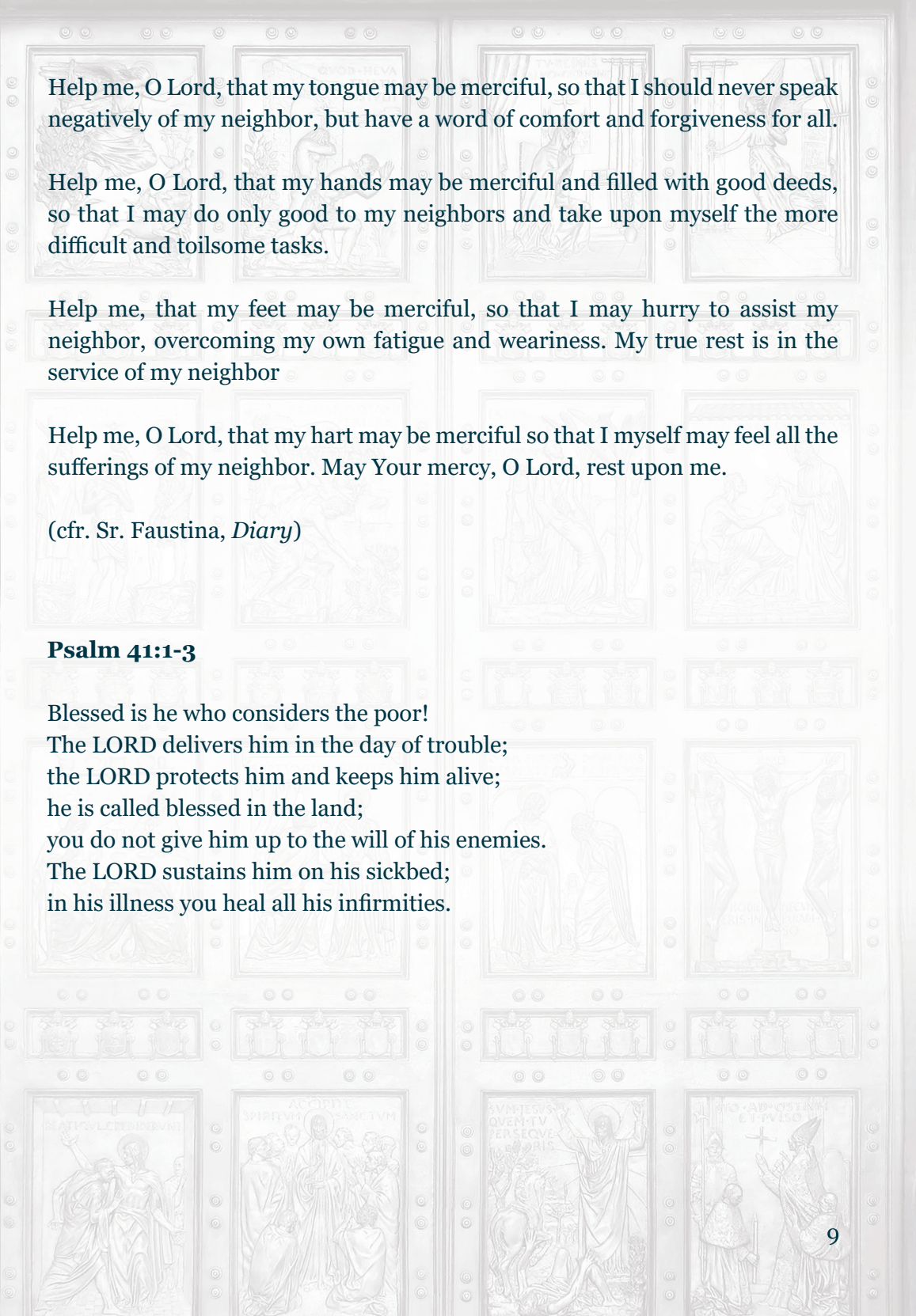
### ***The Word of God is prayed***

I want to be completely transformed into Your mercy and to be Your living reflection, O Lord. May the greatest of all divine attributes, that of Your unfathomable mercy, pass through my heart and soul to my neighbor.

Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful, so that I may never suspect or judge from appearances, but look for what is beautiful in my neighbors souls and come to their rescue.

Help me, that my ears may be merciful, so that I may give heed to my neighbors needs and not be indifferent to their pains and moanings.





Help me, O Lord, that my tongue may be merciful, so that I should never speak negatively of my neighbor, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all.

Help me, O Lord, that my hands may be merciful and filled with good deeds, so that I may do only good to my neighbors and take upon myself the more difficult and toilsome tasks.

Help me, that my feet may be merciful, so that I may hurry to assist my neighbor, overcoming my own fatigue and weariness. My true rest is in the service of my neighbor

Help me, O Lord, that my hart may be merciful so that I myself may feel all the sufferings of my neighbor. May Your mercy, O Lord, rest upon me.

(cfr. Sr. Faustina, *Diary*)

### **Psalm 41:1-3**

Blessed is he who considers the poor!

The LORD delivers him in the day of trouble;

the LORD protects him and keeps him alive;

he is called blessed in the land;

you do not give him up to the will of his enemies.

The LORD sustains him on his sickbed;

in his illness you heal all his infirmities.

## Lectio Divina – Schema C

Who is justified by God?

The Pharisee and the Publican in the Temple (Lk 18:9-14)

### *The Word of God is heard*

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

### *The Word of God is mediated upon*

The scene takes place in the temple where two protagonists who remain anonymous have gone to pray. The two men are chosen not to condemn or privilege the two groups they belong to but to convey an idea of the personalities in the parable. The first is not to be considered proud because he belongs to the Pharisee movement, nor is the other to be considered humble because he is a tax collector. It is not their origins that make them justified or sinful but their manner of relating to God and their neighbor.

The temple in Jerusalem is the setting for this scene. Until it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, it was one of the landmarks for Jewish piety and, among other things, it was the place to expiate sins and have them forgiven. As usual the parable presents a triangular relationship: a Pharisee, a publican, and God whom they are addressing. God as the third person of the triad is important in relation to the two men because both men’s prayers begin with “God” (Lk 18:11, 13), and in the end the publican is justified but not the Pharisee (see Lk 18:14). However, the attitudes and the prayers of

the two protagonists are in contrast. Both turn to the same God, but they have opposite ideas and attitudes. The Pharisee prays standing up while the publican does not even have the courage to lift up his eyes to heaven, and he is beating his breast. The contents of their prayers are even more contrasting. In the Greek language of this Gospel the Pharisee uses twenty-nine words, while the publican says only six words.

Despite his long prayer the Pharisee is not justified while the tax collector's brief prayer is sufficient for him to go home justified.

What determined the reversal in the situation? Since two representative characters are chosen, the parable is focused around two turning points. In the first part, the turning point in the Pharisee's prayer is that it is not enough for him to exalt himself before God, he also has to compare himself to others and despise them. The focal point occurs in the phrase "or even like this tax collector" (v. 11). The rest of his prayer is not wrong; on the contrary he is a man who is zealous for the law and for Jewish traditions. What sends him home not justified is his disdain for the publican. He judges him, unaware of his repentance and prayer because of the distance that separates the two men in the temple.

The turning point in the second part is in the tax collector's prayer: "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (v. 13). The publican does not attempt to add extenuating circumstances like "Since my job is considered defiling, I am trying to make only a minor profit," or, "I have a family to support and I cannot change my job." Instead he presents himself before God with his heart laid bare. In a very short prayer he expresses what is pleasing to God: his acknowledgement of wrong-doing and his hope of forgiveness. Acknowledging oneself as a sinner before God is the necessary condition for being justified; the arrogance of people who think they are sinless does not prevail in this situation.

(Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization,  
*The Parables of Mercy.*)

## *The Word of God prayed*

### **Psalm 103**

Bless the LORD, O my soul;  
and all that is within me, bless his holy name!  
Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits,  
who forgives all your iniquity,  
who heals all your diseases,  
who redeems your life from the Pit,  
who crowns you with mercy and the compassion,  
who satisfies you with good as long as you live  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The LORD works vindication  
and justice for all who are oppressed.  
He made known his ways to Moses,  
his acts to the people of Israel.  
The LORD is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in mercy.  
He will not always chide,  
nor will he keep his anger for ever.  
<sup>10</sup>He does not deal with us according to our sins,  
nor repay us according to our iniquities.  
For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
so great is his mercy toward those who fear him;  
as far as the east is from the west,  
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.  
As a father pities his children,  
so the LORD pities those who fear him.  
For he knows our frame;  
he remembers that we are dust.  
As for man, his days are like grass;  
he flourishes like a flower of the field;  
for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,  
and its place knows it no more.

But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting  
upon those who fear him,  
and his righteousness to children's children,  
to those who keep his covenant  
and remember to do his commandments.

The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,  
and his kingdom rules over all.

Bless the LORD, O you his angels,  
you mighty ones who do his word,  
hearkening to the voice of his word!

Bless the LORD, all his hosts,  
his ministers that do his will!

Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul!

# PRAYER OF POPE FRANCIS FOR THE JUBILEE OF MERCY

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,  
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.

Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew  
from being enslaved by money;

the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things;  
made Peter weep after his betrayal,  
and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us,  
the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman:

“If you knew the gift of God!”

You are the visible face of the invisible Father,  
of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy:  
let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.

You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness  
in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error:  
let everyone who approaches them feel sought after,  
loved, and forgiven by God.

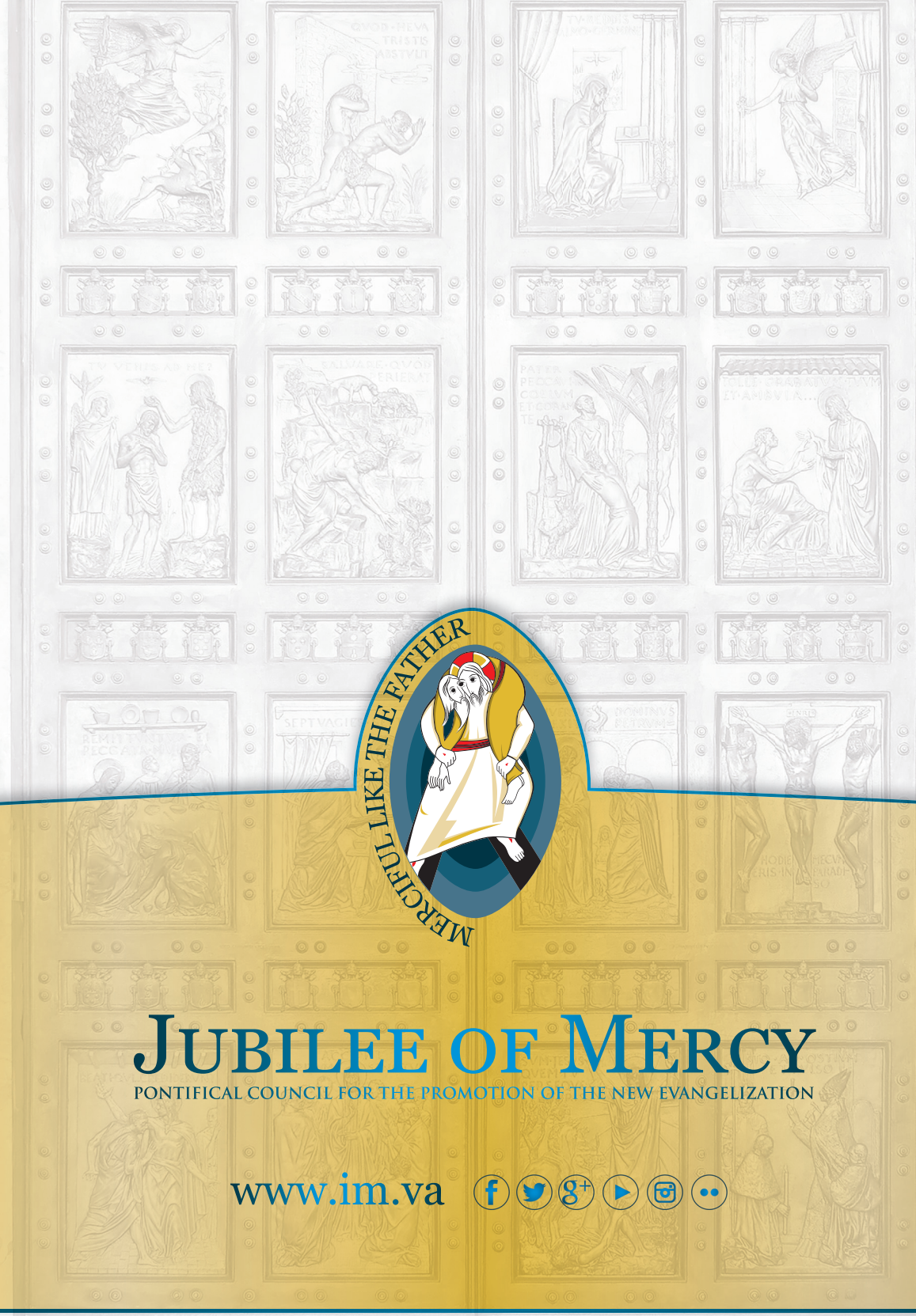
Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,  
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,  
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm,  
may bring good news to the poor,  
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed,  
and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus,  
through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy;  
you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.

*Francis*





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