

December 8, 2015

Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron  
Archbishop of Detroit  
12 State St.  
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Allen,

Today we celebrate, as you know, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the patroness of the United States. We also celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closing of Vatican II, of which Pope John XXIII said it would take 75 years to fully realize. And today Pope Francis celebrated the opening of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. Jubilee doors will be opened, one at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament on December 13, and the sacrament of reconciliation will be encouraged.

Pope Francis has reminded us in the formal document announcing the jubilee year, the Year of Mercy is not simply a time of prayerful meditation; it is a reminder of God's mercy, and it calls us outside of ourselves: it calls us to action. He said, "Jesus introduces us to these corporal works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy."

The Rev. Paolo Gentili, director of the Italian bishops conference's Office for the Pastoral Care of the Family, said that the Church has "always given, but is now called to give something even more concrete: to forgive debts, to give oxygen to families." This effort to forgive debt as an act of mercy is a reminder both of the true needs in our society and of our power to meet those needs with God's help and a willing community.

On the local level in the Archdiocese of Detroit, many parishes are struggling to pay off loans from the Archdiocesan Loan Deposit Program (LDP). Some parishes cannot even keep up with paying the interest, which is 83% higher than banks are currently charging. Some parishes have been reduced in membership to a point where the remaining members cannot reduce their debt. Other needed maintenance to the parish and support to the poor are constrained due to repayment of debt to the LDP. It seems unconscionable to close these parishes who are assisting the poor, and thus deny help to these poor.

So in this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, I call on you and the Archdiocese to forgive the debts of poor parishes to the LDP loans. If you cannot do that, at least apply the interest paid to date to these loans to the principle, thereby giving these parishes a reasonable chance to pay off these loans, and to be able to continue their good works of mercy to the poor.

Yours in Christ,

*Thomas J. Kyle*

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