

Dear Everyone,

Pope Francis has declared a **Jubilee Year of Mercy** (from Dec 8<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> November 2016).

It will be **celebrated in every Diocese** of the world, which means in every country bar three!

A Jubilee Year is an extraordinary event – spiritually and practically – for you and your family, for the Church and for our society. Echoing Francis' wish, **I am calling everyone to take part** no matter how close or distant you feel from Jesus and his Church.

**Jubilee Years are an ancient tradition yet their purpose remains ever needed.** They are a year focused on justice and forgiveness, and right relationship with God, with each other, and with the land. You might be surprised to learn that Jubilee Years bring God's expectations of us into the nitty gritty of farming practices, the property market, wages and salaries, debt relief, and the settling of invoices and bills (see chapters 25 and 26 of the book of Leviticus).

Into this mix Pope Francis has added mercy. He has done this because **being merciful is a sure way of being and acting like God, like Jesus, and like the saints.** Pope Francis is acutely aware, as we all are, that mercy is what our world needs today and what we Christians can offer. In the face of callousness, bullying, greed, excessive profit making, excessive rents and substandard housing etc the power of mercy stands out as a great gift for the world. I too am convinced that in a practical Kiwi way we can

give people a break, give them another chance, give them a hand up. In this way we will bring hope into our neighbourhoods and places of work in the Manawatu, Whanganui, Taranaki, Tararua and Hawke's Bay. Perhaps too we will venture into communities we have previously chosen to avoid.

**Central to the Jubilee Year is the experience of being a pilgrim and passing through a Holy Door** (every Cathedral in the world will have one). During the year, school and parish pilgrim groups will come to our magnificent Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Palmerston North. It is your holy place. You will be spiritually renewed and inspired by your visit.

**Some ask what difference will this make?** In one sense that is over to you. But if you step through the holy door with a desire to be renewed and to realign your life – especially your attitudes towards those who struggle – with God's vision for us, you will indeed leave strengthened in your resolve to give a hand, your hand, to those in need.

May this great privilege to live a Jubilee Year be met with enthusiasm, and **may we together as a diocesan family make a turn in our lives towards the merciful Father and so reach out to others with forgiveness, justice and mercy.**

See you at the Cathedral!

+ Charles

+Charles Drennan

Bishop of Palmerston North.