



**World Youth Day 2016 (Poland)**  
**Special Holy Hour**  
**Homily**

**By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB**  
**Archbishop of Perth**

Our Lady of Mercy Parafia Rzymskokatolicka NMP Matki Miłosierdzia  
Warsaw, Poland  
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When a number of interviews given by Pope Francis were gathered together and published, the title given to the book was *The Name of God is Mercy*. Previously, when Pope Francis proclaimed the Year of Mercy, he began his formal announcement by stating with great clarity a profound truth of our Catholic faith: that Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy.

Tonight, as we gather in this beautiful church dedicated to Mary, the Mother of Mercy, we do so in the Eucharistic presence of Jesus who is soon to be exposed on the altar for our adoration and for our praise and thanksgiving. It is the same altar on which, every day, His great sacrifice of love is re-presented for us so that we can enter into communion with Him and, in this way, allow Him to draw us into a closer bond of communion, of friendship and love, with each other. Tonight, once again, we have the chance to do what Pope John Paul II so often encouraged us to do: to contemplate the face of Christ.

It is, I believe, absolutely vital for our own faith, and for the future of the Church, that we do so. As some of you have heard me say so often in the past, it is important for us to remember that our faith, before it is about rules to follow or doctrines to believe or moral values to defend, is about a person, Jesus, who calls us to come to Him, especially when we are weary and overburdened, and allow Him to give us rest.

Rules which are followed simply because they are rules, or moral values which are defended because we are frightened of the consequences if we fail to uphold them, or doctrines which are believed simply because we are told that we have to believe them, will never bring us life and never bring us rest. But the rules, and the values, and the teachings of our Church which are respected and integrated willingly and joyfully into our lives because we recognise that they are ways of showing our love for the Lord can, as Bishop Don said this morning when speaking about Mary Magdalene, actually set us free to grow into the people God has created us to be.

The truth is that we are made for this kind of freedom. It is the power of evil, and the sins which bring that evil alive in our own lives and in the lives of others, which bind us up, imprison us, and make our lives so much less than they could be and should be. There is in all of us, but perhaps in young people more powerfully than in many others, a great desire for authenticity, a great desire to be, as we would say in Australia, *fair dinkum*, a great desire just to be able to be our best selves.



It is this which Jesus promises us. We see it all the time in the Gospels. There are so many stories in which Jesus reaches into the lives of people who, in one way or another, are anything but free, and brings them the gift of life. Sometimes, it is a freeing from physical suffering. A great example is the story of Jesus curing a man who was blind from birth. At other times, it is freedom from sin as when, for example, the woman washes the feet of Jesus with her tears and dries them with her hair.

On that occasion, Jesus speaks of the great love the woman shows Him because her many sins had been forgiven. At other times, again, it is freedom from failure and shame. We see this, for example, when Jesus gives St Peter three chances to redeem his three denials: Peter, do you love me? Do you really love me? Do you love me more than all the others? On every single occasion, we might say on every page of the Gospels, Jesus shows Himself to be exactly what Pope Francis calls him: the face of the Father's mercy.

All of this is an invitation to the kind of faith about which St Paul so often speaks. It is not a mechanical or purely intellectual faith or a faith which fails to engage every part of our lives. It is a faith which, at its heart, is really an act of trust. It is the kind of faith which characterises the Divine Mercy devotion, which was born here in Poland and which is expressed in the simple words which accompany every version of the image of Divine Mercy: Jesus, I trust in you. It is the same faith which we find in the story of Abraham in the first reading.

That story is not so much about Abraham's willingness to kill his son at God's command as it is about his extraordinary trust in God, even in the face of what seemed an impossible situation. Abraham took the risk of faith, putting everything, and especially that which was most precious to him, into God's hands. And God did not let him down. The story is echoed, of course, in the final words of Jesus on the cross: "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit". And, as we know, God did not let his only Son down. Instead, he turned what appeared to be total disaster into an extraordinary victory of love over hatred and over death.

Tonight, I think we are being invited to pray for that same gift of trusting faith - to pray for it for ourselves and for each other. Some of us here will already have had to face great suffering, confusion and sorrow in our lives. Some of us here, perhaps unknown to the rest of us, may be struggling with great challenges and battling with real difficulties at this very moment. For others, life at the moment may be relatively serene and uncomplicated. But, for all of us, life will, at times, lead us to think that, like the disciples caught in the midst of the storm while they were out in a boat on the Sea of Galilee, we, too, have been forgotten by Jesus, or at least that we have lost sight of him. We must try not to lose heart and we must try, too, to be ready to support each other and encourage each other at such times - that is what a Christian community is meant to be all about. And, just as he did with the disciples, so will Jesus, eventually and in his own time, come to us in the midst of our particular storm and say to us, "have courage, do not be afraid, I am with you".

As we sit or kneel in prayer here in the Church this evening, and as we gaze on Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament, listening to him say to us, "Don't be afraid, I am with you", perhaps we might repeat over and over, in our minds and in our hearts, these simple words: Jesus, I trust in you.