



OUR SOCIAL MISSION

BY CARITAS SINGAPORE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

How will you give, in this Year of Mercy?

As Catholics pray, fast and give alms during this season of Lent, we are called to focus on mercy and new life. This year is special because it is also the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

Mercy is the path to new life offered to us at Easter. Charity to the poor and the suffering is always based on the fact that God was first merciful to us.

God has forgiven our sins by Jesus Christ's death on the cross and given us new life in the Holy Spirit. Giving, therefore, must stem from a heart of gratitude.

St John says: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:10-12)

All that we have comes from the grace of God alone. Without His mercy and generosity, we too would have nothing. We have nothing to boast about except for His grace and mercy.

Having received the mercy of God in our lives, we are called to show mercy to others. When we respond in love, we become signs of God's mercy and God's love and mercy are perfected in us. We share in the life and love of God, His joy and peace.

An extraordinary Jubilee

The Year of Mercy called for by Pope Francis is the third "extraordinary" jubilee since the tradition started 700 years ago.

Jubilees, also called Holy Years, occur every 25 years and include special celebrations and pilgrimages, and calls for conversion and repentance.

Extraordinary holy years are more rare. The last extraordinary jubilee was called by St John Paul II in 1983 to mark the 1,950 years after the death of Jesus. John Paul II also led the last holy year, known as the "Great Jubilee", in 2000.

Pope Francis declared the Holy Year of Mercy unexpectedly, and it has a motto: "Merciful like the Father." It started on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception last Dec 8, and will end on the Solemnity of Christ the King on Nov 20, 2016.

Pope Francis has said that the Holy Year is a response to the global need for a "revolution of tenderness" from which "justice and all the rest derives".

"We are used to bad news, cruel news, and to even bigger atrocities, which offend the name and life of God," he said, adding that a spirit of mercy is required to put an end to such tragedies.



Your Charities Week donation will support Catholic charities including Boys' Town, which helps children from troubled backgrounds rise above their problems and get back on a firm footing.

New hope at Boys' Town

Boys' Town, a member organisation of Caritas Singapore, has long been serving children facing hardship and trouble in their lives.

For brothers Joe and Tom (not their real names), life was tough as their parents suffered from poor health, while juggling a few jobs.

The family of four lived on just \$60 a day, with mum and dad struggling to pay for essentials like housing and food, and unpaid bills threatened to drag the household under.

The stress led to marital conflict and unhappiness.

Joe, 15, and Tom, 12, were distressed by the quarrels at home. They neglected their homework and played truant to hang out with friends.

The boys' father had been through similar difficulties in his younger days and knew the value of having caring, supportive people around.

He made the difficult decision to enrol his sons in Boys' Town. This allowed him to focus on improving his relationship with his wife and earn money to provide for the family.

Being at Boys' Town has helped his sons. "I feared I would lose my parents. Seeing them fight was very painful for me," Joe says. "At Boys' Town, I was able to get financial help to go to school and that eased their worries. The staff also helped me and my brother with our studies and taught us how to cope better with our feelings."

Another boy at Boys' Town is Jerome (not his real name), whose family had been cared for by relatives since he was in kindergarten. It was hard for his mother to work for a long time because of her chronic ill health. Last year, his father died, leaving Jerome grieving.

Now 13, he says: "Since I came here, I've received food rations and help to buy school books. I was really happy when we found our new home in a one-room rental flat recently."

He plays football as part of Boys' Town's sports intervention programme, which helps youths learn self-control and teamwork. He wants to do well for his exams so he can take up a desktop publishing course at Assumption Pathway School.

Boys' Town receives some of its funding from Caritas Singapore.

Your donations during Charities Week 2016 will go towards helping children like Joe, Tom and Jerome, as well as many others in need who are served by the member organisations of Caritas Singapore.

The Charities Week call for donations is an annual affair, but Pope Francis has made 2016 a special year for Catholics to reflect and act to make the world a better place.

Lent, a time to show your love
During Lent, we are urged to renew our relationship with the Lord and with our brothers and sisters.

When Jesus was asked to name the most important commandment of all, He replied: "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:28-31)

In loving our brothers and sisters, especially those who are suffering emotionally, physically and financially, let us not respond like the rich man who was feeling an emptiness within him.

Jesus told him: "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." (Mark 10:21) "When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions." (Mark 10:22)

Do we want to go away sad and unfulfilled even though we may have everything we need?

Let the mercy and love of God fill us, by giving our time, talents, resources and money for the work of charity.

Let His mercy inspire us to reach out to the poor in our society by helping Caritas Singapore support Catholic charities to assist more than 50,000 beneficiaries of all races and religions.

Charities Week 2016 is an annual event organised by Caritas Singapore, the social and community arm of the Catholic Church in Singapore.

Donations to Charities Week 2016 will help Caritas Singapore's 24 member organisations and Agape Village to serve diverse and marginalised groups including low-income families, youths at risk, ex-prisoners, those with physical disabilities and those with mental health problems.



Charities Week 2016: How to give

Pick up a Charities Week 2016 appeal envelope from your parish.

If you require tax deduction, tick the box and provide your NRIC number. Donations without tax deduction allow Caritas Singapore more flexibility in allocating funds to Catholic charities without tax-exempt status.

Cash donations: Drop the appeal envelope in our parish offertory box.

Cheques: Write a cheque payable to "Caritas Singapore" and mail it to: 55 Waterloo Street #08-01 Catholic Centre Singapore 187954

Charities Week 2016 is organised by Caritas Singapore, the official social and community arm of the Catholic Church in Singapore, and the umbrella body for 24 Catholic charities that help more than 50,000 beneficiaries regardless of race or religion. It is also a member of Caritas Internationalis, a global confederation of 165 humanitarian organisations.