

Preparing for the Holy Year 2025 – Bishop Philip Egan writes: “As we embark on the new year 2024, the Holy Father has invited us to prepare for the Jubilee Year of 2025, entitled ‘Pilgrims of Hope’. In his letter promoting the Jubilee Year,

Pope Francis recalls the suffering and hardships that many of us experienced during the pandemic. In a time where many countries also suffer the effects of war and the climate crisis, Pope Francis sees the Jubilee Year 2025 as an opportunity to restore hope, a time of renewal and rebirth. The Jubilee Year will begin on **24th December 2024**, with the opening of the Holy Door at St Peter’s Basilica and will draw to a close on the **feast of Epiphany, January 2026**.

In preparation for the Jubilee Year, the Pope has proclaimed this **year 2024 to be a year of prayer in preparation**. It will focus on that prayer given to the disciples, the ‘Our Father.’ The Our Father not only reminds us that God is our Father but also reminds us of the union we share as brothers and sisters in Christ. During this coming year of prayer, let us also (re)consider the Spiritual Works of Mercy. Just as Jesus was attentive to the practical needs of those He encountered in His ministry, the spiritual works of mercy call us to reach out to our neighbour and attend to their spiritual needs too.

The seven spiritual works of mercy are: counselling the doubtful, instructing the ignorant, admonishing the sinner, comforting the sorrowful, forgiving injuries, bearing wrongs patiently, and praying for the living and the dead. In the parable of the sheep and goats,



Jesus commends the ones who show mercy to those who are suffering and marginalised (Matthew 25:31-46.) Mercy is a virtue in which one is called to have compassion for another, and if possible, to alleviate their suffering.

At a time when the Church focuses on forgiveness and reconciliation, the spiritual (and corporal) works of mercy are about helping those on the journey of faith and those who are searching to be reconciled with God, the Church and with others. So, as we begin this year of prayer in preparation for the Holy Year 2025, let us daily contemplate the ‘Our Father’ and extend that prayer in practice through performing the seven-spiritual works of mercy.