Pope Francis has declared an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy for 2016 and called upon the whole Church to take seriously Christ’s example and teaching to be merciful. The Jubilee of Mercy will begin when Pope Francis opens the Holy Door of St Peter’s Basilica on 8 December 2015 (the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council). It concludes when he closes that same door on 20 November 2016, the Feast of Christ the King. He has requested that every diocese in the world open a similar door to symbolize the Church opening its heart in mercy to all peoples. The motto for the year is ‘Merciful like the Father’. 

Sr Margaret Henderson has prepared an excellent summary of the Holy Father’s announcement of the Year of Mercy (Misericordiae Vultus) which can be obtained from the TCEO office. She explains that Pope Francis elaborates the theological understanding of God’s mercy, explaining the role of mercy in the life of people and of the Church, who are both the beneficiaries and the witnesses to God’s mercy in the world.

Pope Francis launched The Holy Year of Mercy on 11 April 2015 with these words:
'I have decided to announce an Extraordinary Jubilee which has at its centre the mercy of God. It will be a Holy Year of Mercy. We want to live in the light of the word of the Lord: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (cf. Lk 6:36). And this especially applies to confessors! So much mercy!”

Some Pope Francis Jubilee of Mercy quotes

- "I have thought often about how the church can make more evident its mission of being a witness of mercy"
- "I am convinced that the whole church – that has much need to receive mercy because we are sinners — will find in this jubilee the joy to rediscover and render fruitful the mercy of God, with which we are all called to give consolation to every man and woman of our time."
- "Let us not forget that God pardons and God pardons always. Let us never tire of asking for forgiveness."

Some Jubilee of Mercy web resources for teachers

- YouTube, Pope Francis’ Jubilee Explained, Catholic News Services, (2:35)
- Vatican Home Page for the Jubilee of Mercy’ http://www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va/content/gdm/en.html
Prayer for Mercy circulated by Pope Francis

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us to be merciful like
the heavenly Father,
and have told us that
whoever sees you sees Him.
Show us your face and we will be saved.
Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and
Matthew from being enslaved by money;
the adulteress and Magdalene from
seeking happiness only in created things;
made Peter weep after his betrayal
and assured Paradise
to the repentant thief.
Let us hear, as if addressed to each one
of us, the words that you spoke to the
Samaritan woman:
“If you knew the gift of God!”
You are the visible face
of the invisible Father,
of the God who manifests his power
above all by forgiveness and mercy:
let the Church be your visible face in the
world, its Lord risen and glorified.
You willed that your ministers would also
be clothed in weakness
in order that they may feel compassion
for those in ignorance and error:
let everyone who approaches them feel
sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.
Send your Spirit and consecrate every
one of us with its anointing,
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a
year of grace from the Lord,
and your Church,
with renewed enthusiasm,
may bring good news to the poor,
proclaim liberty to captives and the
oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.
We ask this through the intercession of
Mary, Mother of Mercy,
you who live and reign
With the Father and the Holy Spirit
for ever and ever.
Amen

The Jubilee Year of Mercy at a glance

Quick Facts

• ‘Mercy’ is the major focus of the Catholic Church for 2016
• the motto of the Jubilee is ‘Merciful like the Father’
• a new major priority for the Church is the Pope Francis’s
  urging to promote the Sacrament of Reconciliation;
• Pope Francis has given all priests during the Year of Mercy
  ‘the discretion to absolve of the sin of abortion (for) those
  who have procured it and who, with contrite heart, seek
  forgiveness for it’. Note that this has long been the
  pastoral practice by the Australian Catholic Church;
• Go to the Vatican website and download the full text of its
  announcement Misericordiae Vultus (in Latin ‘the face of
  mercy’).

Pope Francis quotes from The Church of Mercy: a vision for the Church

Collected from Pope Francis’s speeches, homilies, and
papers presented during the first year of his papacy, The
Church of Mercy is the first Vatican-authorized book
detailing his vision for the Catholic Church, published by

• “What a beautiful truth of faith this is for our lives: the
  mercy of God! God’s love for us is so great, so deep; it is
  an unfailing love, one which always takes us by the hand
  and supports us, lifts us up and leads us on.”
• “But I am telling you: I would prefer a thousand times
  over a bruised Church to an ill Church!”
• “This is what it means to be close to Christ. Abide in
  Jesus! This means remaining attached to him, in him,
  talking to him. Abide in Jesus!”

Staff Meeting Dialogue Questions

1. What would ‘mercy’ look like amongst a staff of a Catholic
  school? In what ways can we lack mercy towards each other?
2. How can we support more merciful encounters amongst our
  students? … our students’ parents? … our wider community?