Preparing for the National Celebration of the 31st World Youth Day:
“Blessed are the Merciful for they Shall Obtain Mercy” Mt. 5:7
By Susan Searle

Purpose
In 1985, Saint John Paul II invited young people across the world to join him in Rome to observe the United Nations International Year of Youth. Since that momentous occasion, young people from every continent have gathered to celebrate the global church and their Catholic unity. The theme for World Youth Day 2016 as set by the Holy Father, Pope Francis, comes from the great commission that is known as the Beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew. At a meeting with young Argentinians in Rio, Pope Francis advised: ‘Read the Beatitudes, it will do you good.’ For three consecutive years, the Pope has chosen three out of the eight Beatitudes as the themes for the most recent World Youth Days. In 2014, the theme was “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” In 2015, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” This year, Pope Francis continues with the Beatitudes and reminds us “Blessed are the merciful.”

“The Word of God teaches us that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). That is why the fifth Beatitude declares that the merciful are blessed. We know that the Lord loved us first. But we will be truly blessed and happy only when we enter into the divine “logic” of gift and gracious love, when we discover that God has loved us infinitely in order to make us capable of loving like Him, without measure. Saint John says: “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love... In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another” (1 Jn 4:7-11).”

- Pope Francis, Message of His Holiness, Pope Francis for the Thirty-First World Youth Day, 2016

“In proclaiming the Beatitudes, Jesus asks us to follow him and to travel with him along the path of love, the path that alone leads to eternal life. It is not an easy journey, yet the Lord promises us his grace and he never abandons us. We face so many challenges in life: poverty, distress, humiliation, the struggle for justice, persecutions, the difficulty of daily conversion, the effort to remain faithful to our call to holiness, and many others. But if we open the door to Jesus and allow him to be part of our lives, if we share our joys and sorrows with him, then we will experience the peace and joy that only God, who is infinite love, can give.”

While traveling to attend a World Youth Day is possible for some, many U.S. young people and parishes are not able to make the pilgrimage. In honor of American youth and the distinctive gifts they share within our faith communities, our U.S. bishops declared that Catholic parishes and schools across America will observe World Youth Day annually on the 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time (October 23, 2016). This particular Sunday is intended to highlight the presence, energy, and diversity of youth and is an opportunity for the entire faith community to join in affirming the gifts of the young Catholic Church.

These materials provide Catholic parishes and schools with resources and recommendations for honoring young people locally in their home communities through the celebration of the Eucharist. In preparing for this annual event, young people are invited to collaborate with other parish leaders in the planning, preparing, and participation of the celebration of World Youth Day. Additionally, parish leaders are encouraged to provide training opportunities for youth to learn skills necessary to serve their communities in the various ministries of the liturgy.

**Prepare the Parish Community for Celebrating World Youth Day**

**Suggested Bulletin Announcement**

*Note to Leader:* Publish the announcement one or two weekends before U.S. Celebration of World Youth Day (October 23, 2016)

Please join our faith community in celebrating the young people of our parish/school on World Youth Day! Next weekend (or date you will celebrate), in solidarity with Catholic communities across the United States, we will honor and celebrate the joy and gifts of all young people. This is an annual celebration instituted by Pope John Paul II in 1984 to affirm and recognize the energy, enthusiasm, and creativity that young people share with us. The theme for this year’s celebration is given to us by Pope Francis and is “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.”

[Add to this bulletin announcement any specific information what will occur before, at, or after your parish/school liturgy for World Youth Day.]

**Parish Youth Ministry**

The celebration of World Youth Day is a perfect time to advocate for and encourage the parish’s ministry with and for young people. The following suggestions may be used in the weeks leading up to the celebration to promote the parish’s youth ministry.

1. Post photographs of youth ministry events in a prominent area of your faith community such as in the church gathering space, parish offices, or community center. Highlight the ways young people may have volunteered in the parish and/or the greater community. Also include a written response from the following quote from each youth, “Ways I see God working in my life…” Note:
to protect youth’s privacy, do not advertise personal information such as the names of youth and where they go to school.

2. Host a learning session for your parish community on the *Renewing the Vision – A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* document (USCCB, 1997). This document provides the guiding vision for youth ministry in parishes in the United States. Introduce the parish community to the themes and components of comprehensive youth ministry presented in *Renewing the Vision*. Divide participants into smaller groups and ask them to create a vision statement for your parish’s ministry with young people.

3. Encourage the youth of your parish to design a social media marketing campaign to advertise World Youth Day and to invite people to come to the parish celebration.

4. Invite members of the pastoral council to present to the parish young people how youth ministry is a part of the overall parish pastoral plan. If your parish does not currently have a pastoral plan for youth ministry, encourage parish committees, youth, and the pastor to develop together a parish plan for youth ministry. This could be accomplished in a series of “town-hall” meetings or a parish retreat day.

5. Invite the pastor of your community to write an open letter to the youth of the parish describing why they are important ambassadors of faith to the rest of the community. Share this letter in your church bulletin, at the liturgy, on your webpage, or present a printed copy directly to each youth.

6. Host a “Meet the Youth Night” and invite the parish community to meet and mingle with the youth of their church. Encourage youth to prepare a video or power point presentation of all the activities from the past year. Invite families to bring potluck dinner items to share. Be sure to include information about how adults can volunteer to help with youth ministry.

7. Create a youth ministry video that includes interviews of parish young people. Capture youth vocalizing the importance of belonging to their faith community and how their participation at church helps them grow in their Catholic identity and spirituality. In keeping with the theme for World Youth Day, have youth answer this question: “What does it mean to be a merciful person?” Post this video to your parish website, youth ministry Facebook page, or upload it to YouTube. If possible, show the video before or after Masses for the entire community to see.

8. All year long, invite members of the parish youth ministry to nominate a “Youth Disciple of the Month” from among their peers in the parish. Post youth’s pictures in a prominent place in either the parish center or in the weekly bulletin along with “why” the youth was nominated by their peers. (Example: the disciple youth gave a faith-sharing witness talk on our fall retreat.)

9. Parish-wide pray for youth month. Invite parishioners to “adopt” a youth to pray for that entire month of October. On the day of your parish World Youth Day celebration, host a “Meet-N-Greet” where youth can meet the adults who...
have been praying for them. If you have a Twitter or other social media account, post a daily prayer for the young people of your parish.

10. Since World Youth Day is about celebrating all youth, contact the other parish youth ministers in your area to create a city-wide event. This could be a special liturgy, praise and worship concert, or a day at your local amusement park. If you live in a rural area, invite several other parishes to pilgrimage to a particular site such as the diocesan cathedral, retreat center, or a holy shrine to meet and pray together.

11. If possible, download recordings of Pope Francis celebrating World Youth Day in Poland. Show these videos to the entire parish during a youth ministry event.

Preparing for the Sunday Liturgical Celebration of World Youth Day
Gather a liturgy preparation team that includes your pastor, liturgy director, music ministers, youth ministry leadership team, parents, and several of the parish youth. Identify adults for this committee who are youth-friendly and desire to empower young people to be liturgical leaders. Together, reflect on the scripture readings for the day of the celebration, keeping in mind the entire faith community and the significance the readings may have for young people. Use Resource 1, Lectionary Readings and Commentary to help prepare the liturgy. Once your committee has met and is familiar with the readings, begin to discern smaller task groups based on the skills and interest of the group members.

Possible groups might include the following:
- Word (includes lectors)
- Music
- Art and Environment
- Hospitality

Assign the various tasks groups to work on the following:

Word Group
- Works directly with the pastor or provides suggestions for connecting the Scripture readings; especially the Gospel, with the lives and events of the parish young people.
- Discerns who will be the lectors for Mass. Those proclaiming the Word need to arrange a time to practice the readings from the ambo (using the microphone) before the actual liturgy.
- Writes the Prayers of the Faithful for the celebration or uses the ones suggested in Resource 2, Prayers of the Faithful and Music Suggestions
Music Group
- Collaborates with the parish music minister to choose appropriate songs for the Liturgy: suggestions in Resource 2, Prayers of the Faithful and Music Suggestions.
- Attends the necessary practices or rehearsals to prepare for the liturgy
- Assists in preparing a worship aid if necessary

Art and Environment Group
- Collaborates with the parish liturgy director or art and environment team to give input for creating a liturgical space that represents the character of youth and the theme for World Youth Day; Environment should incorporate the theme of “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”
- Helps to set-up and display any flowers, banners, photographs of young people, etc. prior to the liturgies
- Cleans and returns the sanctuary back to its original order after the celebration

Hospitality Group
- Works with the music group to create a worship aid for the liturgy
- Discerns which youth will be ministers of hospitality (greeters) to welcome people to the liturgy
- Delegates a team of parents to plan and provide a reception after the Mass. Since the theme for the celebration is about social justice, consider holding a canned food drive or another way for participants to give back to the community
- Invites youth to bring the forward the gifts during the liturgy
- Asks the presider or youth minister to welcome the community and give a brief description of the annual celebration of World Youth Day

Other Suggestions for the Liturgy Preparation Team
1. Consult with the parish liturgy director to schedule commissioned youth to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion for this special liturgy.
2. Discuss the theme with the presider and consider asking him to invite a young person to offer a witness reflection on the Gospel message before or after the homily.
3. Include a special World Youth Day blessing for all youth present at the liturgy. In consultation with the pastor, write your own blessing, use the one included in this resource, or adapt a blessing from the Book of Blessings (The Liturgical Press, 1989).
4. Invite the young people to bring their Bible to the liturgy for a special blessing. Some parishes may also choose to present each young person with a Bible (or other gift such as a cross, rosary, etc.) to be blessed by the pastor during the
liturgy. Please note, the Center for Ministry Development has both English and Spanish Bibles available for sale in our online bookstore at www.cmdnet.org.

5. October is the month of the rosary. Perhaps in the weeks leading up to the World Youth Day celebration, have youth lead a living rosary for the parish. Other sessions and resources on the rosary available on Youth Ministry Access. Some titles include:
   - The Luminous Mysteries: A One-Day Retreat
   - The Joyful Mysteries: A Reflection on the Rosary
   - The Rosary: Familiar Friends Lead Us to Discover the Mysteries
   - A Living Rosary: Honoring Mary

6. Because October is also National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the Word Group should consider prayers for those family members, friends, and community members suffering from this illness and how might they be included in the celebration.
Resource 1

Lectionary Readings and Commentary
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 23, 2016

Reading 1  Sirach 35:12-14,16-18
Responsorial Psalm  Psalm 34:2-3,17-18,19,23
Reading 2  2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18
Gospel  Luke 18:9-14

Commentary on the Readings

Sir. 35:12-14,16-18
In the first reading, we hear that God is a God of justice and we are assured that God’s love is for everyone. But we are also reminded that God especially hears the cry of the poor and in need.

Psalm 34:2-3,17-18,19,23
This Psalm of thanksgiving is written in acrostic form with each line beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The Psalm combines petition and praise with a promise that God will listen especially for the cries of the poor. The Psalm teaches that those who are most in need are to trust in God.

2 Tim. 4:6-8, 16-18
In this letter written by Paul, we come to understand that he felt alone and exhausted from trying to always do the right thing. At this point he knows his death is near and that he will be martyred for his belief in Christ. Paul’s strength to continue comes from his faith and trust in God.

Luke 18:9-14
In this Gospel, Jesus shares a parable about a Pharisee and a Tax Collector. In his story, the Pharisee uses his prayer as a way to let other know he is a religious and righteous man. He uses his public prayer as a way to get attention and make others feel not worthy. The Tax Collector, on the other hand, comes to God with great humility asking for mercy and forgiveness. This Gospel prompts us to examine our own motives for prayer and to come to God with pure intentions of honoring God. The story is a lesson to the disciples that they are to depend on God rather than themselves. The Pharisee does not need God free gift of justification because he has justified himself. Jesus teaches that his disciples should approach God with child-like humility and wonder.
Opportunities to Connect the World Youth Day theme to the Sunday Readings

1. Ask if any of the youth present attended any of the previous global World Youth Days. If so, invite young people to share about their experiences.
2. Ask youth to reflect on why they think the Pope chose the Beatitudes for the world youth day celebrations for this moment in time?
3. Invite youth to reflect on who they think are the “merciful” in our world today?
4. The first reading reminds us that God is a God of justice. Invite youth to share what they believe the meaning of justice is in our world today.
5. The Psalm speaks of trusting in God even when times are difficult in our lives. Invite youth to reflect on an experience where they had to let go and trust that God will take care of them.
6. The second reading provides an opportunity for youth to consider what Paul must have been thinking knowing that he would soon be put to death. Invite youth to reflect on the amount of courage Paul must have had to stand up for his belief.
7. In the Gospel reading, we discover that when we pray, Jesus asks us to be “real.” Ask youth to discuss what it means to be authentic in their prayers?
8. The tax collector came to God with great humility. Why is being humble something we all struggle with?

Putting It All Together: Preparing for the Liturgy

After spending time reflecting and praying with the sacred readings for the liturgy, discuss how the scriptures might speak most compellingly to the youth in the community. How might the liturgy connect the Good News of the Scriptures to the parish young people’s faith, culture, and life experiences? As a liturgy preparation committee, discuss the common thoughts, ideas, and the theme of World Youth Sunday in light of the readings.

Other important events to keep in mind when preparing the liturgy:

- October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Are there any young people in your community who may have family members or friends who are suffering from this illness?
- October 30 is the Sunday before Halloween, All Souls, and All Saints Days. How might these special days influence your celebration of World Youth Day?
- October 23 is World Mission Sunday. Make the connection that we are all called to be missionaries – we are all called to go out and be disciples to people of all nations.
- What other important local, national, or global events have recently occurred that may be important to recognize and pray about through the liturgy?

Pope’s Official Message for World Youth Day 2016

Preparing for the National Celebration of the 31st World Youth Day
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Resource 2

Prayers of the Faithful and Music Suggestions

Suggestions for the Prayers of the Faithful or Universal Prayer

Suggested response: “Blessed are the merciful.”

For the many adult volunteers who give of their time and energy to share their faith with the youth of this parish. We pray…

For the young people of our parish, may they trust in God and look with eyes of faith. We pray…

For our faith community gathered here, may we be examples of hope so that all will see God through our words and actions. We pray…

For those who feel alienated, excluded, or alone, especially any young people in our community. May they come to know that our Savior God always welcomes them home. We pray…

For families, friends, and loved ones who are experiencing the pain of cancer or any other illness. May they be comforted by God’s healing grace. We pray…

For our brothers and sisters who are missionaries around the globe. May they enthusiastically spread the Gospel message and bring hope to the hopeless and God’s grace to all. We Pray…

Note to Leader: The liturgical planning team should also write some petitions that are relevant to the needs of the local community. Consider important local, national, or global events that have recently occurred to include them in the intercessions.
Suggestions for Liturgical Music

Gathering
“Come Now is the Time to Worship” by Brian Doerksen (Cross Generation, GIA)
“All are Welcome” by Marty Haugen (Cross Generation, GIA)
“We Have Come” by Steve Angrisano (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“Celebrate Youth” by Steve Angrisano (Spirit & Song, OCP)

Psalm Response
“Psalm 34: Taste and See” by Steve Angrisano (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“Blessed Are They” by Tom Tomaszek (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“Lord, Have Mercy” by Tom Booth (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“I Am Blest” by Chris Muglia, (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“I Love You, Lord” by Matt Maher, (Spirit and Song, OCP)

Preparation of the Gifts
“Cry of Mercy” by Michael Avolicino (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“With this Bread” by Kate Cuddy, (Cross Generation, GIA)
“It’s More than Wine and Bread” by Vince Nims, (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“Like the Bread” by Tom Booth (Spirit & Song, OCP)

Communion
“Eyes to You” by Trevor Thompson (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“Grateful” by Tom Tomaszek (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“Lord, I Need You” by Matt Maher (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“With All Our Hearts” by Jesse Manibusan (Spirit & Song, OCP)

Sending Forth
“Never Too Young” by Carey Landry (Choose Christ Spirit and Song, OCP)
“Greater Will Be the Future” by Chris Muglia (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“Go Forth” by Trevor Thomson (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“We Will Follow” by Ken Canedo, Jesse Manibusan, Dan Brennan (Spirit & Song, OCP)
“With One Voice” by Ricky Manalo (Spirit & Song, OCP)

Official Youth Day Song 2016
“Blessed are the Merciful” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0B63AXgvPu0

Other Youth Day Videos
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dul-nRpivYA
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwqUi1fcUrs
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6m4WNYu4IU
Resource 3

Prayers and Blessings

World Youth Day 2016 - Official Prayer

God, merciful Father,
in your Son, Jesus Christ,
you have revealed your love
and poured it out upon us
in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter,

We entrust to you today
the destiny of the world
and of every man and woman.

We entrust to you, in a special way
young people of every language, people and nation:
guide and protect them as they walk
the complex paths of the world today
and give them the grace to reap abundant fruits
from their experience of the Krakow World Youth Day.

Heavenly Father, grant that we
may bear witness to your mercy.
Teach us how to convey
the faith to those in doubt,
hope to those who are discouraged,
love to those who feel indifferent,
forgiveness to those who have done wrong
and joy to those who are unhappy.

Allow the spark of merciful love
that you have enkindled within us
become a fire that can transform hearts
and renew the face of the earth.

Mary, Mother of Mercy, pray for us.
St. John Paul II, pray for us.

Amen.

Source: [http://www.usccb.org/about/world-youth-day/krakow-news-and-updates.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/world-youth-day/krakow-news-and-updates.cfm)
Blessing for Youth during a World Youth Day Celebration
 Invite youth to stand in a prominent place in the worship space. Presider asks the community to extend their hands as a sign of blessing over the gathered youth.

Merciful God,
Today, we come together to celebrate the gift of youth in our faith community. Help us to see your holy presence within their smiles, enthusiasm and energy. May we always welcome, support and encourage your young people to become all you envisioned them to be. Guide us that we might teach by example how to be merciful and compassionate. May the youth gathered here always believe in you and follow you as faithful missionary disciples. Bless all the youth and may they strive to be humble people who show God’s mercy to others. We pray this prayer for our youth in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

Blessing for Parish Youth Minister and Ministry Team on World Youth Day Celebration
 Invite youth to extend their hands toward the adult leaders.

God who calls us each by name, 
Today on this special celebration of World Youth Day, we give thanks for the adults who minister to the young people of our parish. These adults honorably hand down the stories and traditions of our Catholic faith. They witness to our young people by sharing their own joys, struggles and stories of encounters with You. These faithful servants have graciously given of themselves to witness and teach our parish youth. We as a community are especially grateful for their commitment and wish to express our gratitude for their presence to our youth. Bless these disciples with the gifts needed to continue with their important and much needed ministries. Bless our parish youth ministry that it may grow and reach the hearts of many young people for Christ. Bless this parish community with more volunteers who hear the call to be a disciple and witness their faith to our youth.
We humbly ask you God, to renew the dedication of these faithful disciples who have responded with love to serve the youth of our parish. We offer this prayer through Christ and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

A Prayer for Youth on the Celebration of World Youth Day
God of all,
We rejoice today on this celebration of World Youth Day for young people everywhere. May all youth share the love of Christ by their words, actions, and deeds. May they hear the call of our Pope to live by the Beatitudes and be merciful.
In your most holy name we pray, Amen
Other Helpful Resources for Celebrating World Youth Day
Visit the Vatican’s website for more information on World Youth Day: http://www.vatican.va/gmg/documents/index.html

Visit the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops website for more information on World Youth Day: http://www.usccb.org/wyd/

Leader’s Guide: USCCB Stateside Resource for Celebrating World Youth Day

Youth Ministry Access Sessions and Resources on Mercy

- Works of Mercy in the Jubilee Year (Journal Article)
- A Mission of Mercy: Celebrating the Jubilee Year (Gathered Session)
- Understanding Mercy (Gathered Session)
- Grace and Faith in the Year of Mercy (Gathered Session)
- I Send You Out: Missionary Discipleship Day of Service (Extended Event)
- Spending Time with Elders: A Work of Mercy (Extended Event)
- We Are Works of Mercy: A Call to Put Compassion into Action (Gathered Session)
Resource 4

Quotes from Pope Francis to Youth

“Dear young friends, this search for happiness is shared by people of all times and all ages. God has placed in the heart of every man and woman an irrepressible desire for happiness, for fulfillment. Have you not noticed that your hearts are restless, always searching for a treasure which can satisfy their thirst for the infinite?”

“The word “blessed”, or “happy”, occurs nine times in this, Jesus’ first great sermon (cf. Mt 5:1-12). It is like a refrain reminding us of the Lord’s call to advance together with him on a road which, for all its many challenges, leads to true happiness.”

“Youth is a time of life when your desire for a love which is genuine, beautiful and expansive begins to blossom in your hearts. How powerful is this ability to love and to be loved!”

“The Lord’s invitation to encounter him is made to each of you, in whatever place or situation you find yourself.”

“Dear young people, the Lord wants to meet us, to let himself “be seen” by us. “And how?”, you might ask me. Saint Teresa of Avila, born in Spain five hundred years ago, even as a young girl, said to her parents, “I want to see God”. She subsequently discovered the way of prayer as “an intimate friendship with the One who makes us feel loved” (Autobiography, 8,5). So my question to you is this: “Are you praying?” Do you know that you can speak with Jesus, with the Father, with the Holy Spirit, as you speak to a friend? And not just any friend, but the greatest and most trusted of your friends!”

“You will discover that God can be “seen” also in the face of your brothers and sisters, especially those who are most forgotten: the poor, the hungry, those who thirst, strangers, the sick, those imprisoned (cf. Mt 25:31-46). Have you ever had this experience? Dear young people, in order to enter into the logic of the Kingdom of Heaven, we must recognize that we are poor with the poor. A pure heart is necessarily one which has been stripped bare, a heart that knows how to bend down and share its life with those most in need.”