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From the editors

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From the Editors

Dr Angela McCarthy

On 8 December 2015 the Year of Mercy began. The first of our formation articles by Fr Peter Black outlines the background of the Year of Mercy through the mission of Pope Francis. As Peter states, 'Pope Francis says the Holy Year is "dedicated to living out in our daily lives the mercy" which God "constantly extends to all of us."' As this issue is from Lent to the Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, the emphasis for us all in our time of penitence and Easter jubilation must be the mercy of God, for ourselves and for those who share our lives and the wider global community. With the dangers of terrorism and pressures of increased migration our stance must begin from a merciful heart. Fr Peter outlines three main themes from *Misericordiae Vultus*. Firstly, there is an elaboration on the theological understanding of God's mercy. The greatest example of God's mercy is the sending of his only Son so that we might come to know the Father. Secondly, Pope Francis offers some practical aspects about living the Year of Mercy, and challenges priests to never tire of being the face of God's mercy in all encounters with God's people. The third theme calls for justice and conversion. Commentaries on the current troubles with terrorism around the world often point to the lack of justice between differing groups and therefore an imbalance of power that causes a great deal of distress. Pope Francis wants those who are part of organised violence and the kinds of vice that create festering wounds in our society to reform their ways and reach out for God's mercy. The Year of Mercy can indeed be a powerful way for us to follow the leadership of our Pope and work to change ourselves and our impact on the world around us.

Bishop Peter Comensoli writes about the parish as a place of grace, a place where pilgrims meet, 'it is a waystation of welcoming, healing, sharing, nourishing, resting and preparing.' In this Year of Mercy it is a place that we can emphasise God's mercy in our lives in the way in which we greet each other and each stranger. Bishop Peter uses the analogy of a pilgrimage in the physical as well as the spiritual dimension. While a pilgrimage such as *El Camino de Santiago de Compostela* stretches the body and spirit in the daily walking regime, the nights of rest and companionship along the way become a very important part. The acts of grace welcomed by the tired pilgrims in every place that they rest becomes a very rich part of the experience. Our parishes should be similar; places in which we are healed and welcomed, strengthened for the journey by the sense of mercy shown to us in our vulnerable state. Two articles by Fr Tom Scirghi were first presented at The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle Campus, as two lectures sponsored by the St John of God Sisters while Fr Tom was in Australia to teach a winter term for education students. He is a very engaging presenter and his humour and graciousness shine through all of his actions. In the first of these articles Fr Tom explores the relationship between liturgy and justice. This follows beautifully from the two previous works on the Year of Mercy and the grace-filled life of an 'alive' parish. If the liturgy is effective, then justice is authentic and redemptive. Justice is about restoring relationships and the article examines Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si*. We are faced with a situation where justice for all of creation has been ignored and the Pope warns us, as a prophet, that the consequences will be dire if we do not change our ways. Fr Tom's second article looks at the naming of the Unknown God in terms of contemporary preaching. Who is the God to whom we speak and how can we speak of God if we do not have any knowledge of such a divine person? Fr Tom uses the example of his class on spiritual biography. We have to dig deep within ourselves to uncover what it is that has helped us to understand the presence of God in our lives and in the world. With the onslaught

of secularism and those who declare that they have no religion, it gets harder to source the values that have a serious foundation that can support a merciful and just way of life.

Marty Haugen

In October we were delighted to have Marty Haugen in Australia. His first stop was at the Australian Pastoral Musicians Network Conference in Brisbane. Marty then continued around Australia with workshops in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. All those who took the opportunity to attend one of these workshops was treated to hearing a man of deep faith sharing his particular way with music and liturgy. He used many relevant Church documents and in Perth spent one workshop developing an understanding around music and liturgy for the Year of Mercy. He has composed over 450 liturgical pieces of music and has made a very rich contribution to the Church.

Jerusalem

In the last issue I (Angela) wrote some of the editorial while in Tel Aviv before going up to Jerusalem. While Jerusalem is south east of Tel Aviv one has to say 'going up' because it is so literally the case! Jerusalem is in the Judean Mountains and it is indeed a strenuous climb. I caught the local bus and found myself surrounded by many young soldiers (with guns) going to work. It surely is a different world to Australia. I spent a month in Jerusalem at Ecce Homo convent studying Matthew's gospel under the wonderful expertise of Dr Pino Di Luccio SJ from the Pontifical Institute in Naples. We also had lectures from Jewish scholars and Palestinian scholars all of which encouraged a radical broadening of my mind as to the complexities of the situation in Israel and Palestine/the West Bank. However, political issues aside, just being in the country and walking the city, the desert, Qumran, the Dead Sea, Jericho, Galilee and places in between enriched my understanding of the Gospel one hundred fold. The group doing the course "In the Footsteps of Jesus" were from many countries of the world but we became a very cohesive and supportive group. To stand alone to greet the dawn on the roof of our accommodation in the Old City, while singing quietly to myself psalms from morning prayer, and listening to the occasional cock crow, was a transformational experience. The liturgies, the music, the people, all moved me immeasurably. While there we joined in the Jewish celebrations of Rosh Hashanah (New Year), Kol Nidre (Eve of Yom Kippur), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) and Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles). Understanding these feasts and celebrating their liturgies in various synagogues with our group helped me to link more closely Jesus' Jewishness and the context of Matthew's gospel. The gift at the end was that they have invited me back for Easter 2016 to be music director for the Triduum for the English speakers to be celebrated in the Basilica of Ecce Homo in the Old City. A truly rich privilege indeed.