The Jubilee now ends and the Holy Door is closed. But the door of mercy of our heart continues to remain wide open... May the Holy Spirit help us to contribute actively and selflessly to making justice and a dignified life not simply clichés but a concrete commitment of those who seek to bear witness to the presence of God’s Kingdom.” — Pope Francis, Misericordia et misera, concluding the Year of Mercy

This report shares some of the many social action activities that took place at the Archdiocesan level, specifically in response to the Jubilee Year of Mercy. They complement the countless new ministries of mercy that took place in our parishes, schools, agencies and religious congregations. We give thanks to everyone for making this such an extraordinary year in the life of the local Church!

May the extraordinary works of mercy, through charity and justice, become ever more ordinary in our lives!
To help kick off the Jubilee Year, Archbishop Dennis Schnurr and Bishop Joseph Binzer celebrated Masses in Cincinnati and Dayton, celebrating an array of organizations that practice the fourteen Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Participating ministries included Bread for the World (advocacy for “Feed the hungry”), Catholic Charities’ Su Casa Program (Hispanic ministry for “Comfort the suffering”), and Retrouvaille (marriage support for “Forgive those who hurt you”).

Nearly a thousand gathered at Xavier University to hear Immaculee Ilibagiza share her witness of mercy! A survivor of the Rwandan genocide, Immaculee has found the way to peace, forgiveness, and healing, even after almost everyone she knew was killed. Her message of love reenergized our faith and inspired us to continue living this Year of Mercy with passion. The event came together through Archdiocesan Catholic Social Action, Center for Interfaith Community Engagement, Xavier University, Archbishop McNicholas High School, and Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio.

Leaders from 30 parishes in Greater Cincinnati gathered to celebrate the Works of Mercy taking place in our own Archdiocese. Together, we committed to increase our parish efforts during the Year of Mercy on the issues of Respect Life, Religious Liberty and Persecution in the Middle East, Ending the Death Penalty, Immigration Reform, Racism, Environmental Justice and Reentry and Jobs for the Formerly Incarcerated.
CIVILIZE IT: DIGNITY BEYOND THE DEBATE
LAUNCHED APRIL 2016

Promoted through the Archdiocesan offices of Catholic Social Action, Communications, New Evangelization and Respect Life, “Civilize It” was the Archdiocese’s alternative, election season message for civility, clarity and compassion among candidates and ourselves. Hundreds turned out for our 15 “Civilize It: Faithful Citizenship in the Year of Mercy” presentations across the Archdiocese, and the campaign gained national attention in both secular and Catholic media. Moving forward, the Archdiocese will continue to promote this campaign in 2017 and beyond, encouraging healing in a divided country and advancing policies that reflect Catholic Social Teaching.

EMPLOYING MERCY
MAY 13, 2016
CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER

Over 200 CEO’s, business owners, social service representatives and faith leaders gathered for the "Employing Mercy" breakfast at Union Terminal. It was a strong call to more businesses in Greater Cincinnati to consider hire returning citizens - those with felony records looking for a second chance. The Beacon of Hope Business Alliance, Archdiocese, Xavier University and Lawn Life sponsored the event. Learn more at www.beaconofhopeba.org.

OUTPOURING OF MERCY: GO CINCINNATI!
MAY 14, 2016
ALL OVER CINCINNATI

After a stirring prayer service at the Church of the Resurrection, over 200 Catholic volunteers joined with other Christians from Crossroads and other churches at service sites across Cincinnati as part of Go Cincinnati! Participating parishes included St. Bernard Parish, Nativity, St. Columban, Holy Family, Church of the Resurrection, Bellarmine, St. Susanna, Our Lady of the Visitation, Christ the King, and St. Clare. Parishioners tackled projects at 11 agencies across the region, such as building furniture for Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement, mulching parks and landscapes, and even raising awareness about human trafficking!
East met West, as “One Church of Mercy,” when His Beatitude Mar Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Patriarch of the Maronite Catholic Church visited the Archdiocese. His visit included a powerful conference at Annunciation Church, highlighting our Eastern rite Catholic brothers and sisters and religious persecution in the Middle East. It also was graced by Divine Liturgies at St. Anthony of Padua and St. Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Parishes. The occasion has begun an ongoing "One Church of Mercy” movement for years to come!

The Weavers of Justice Dayton Parish Collaborative and Catholic Social Action organized a letter writing campaign through Bread for the World, urging Ohio’s U.S. Senate candidates to address issues related to poverty and hunger, including low wages, lack of transportation, food deserts and the opioid epidemic. On September 10, they joined with Greater Dayton Christian Connection for a “Jericho Walk to End Hunger,” at the Nutter Center at Wright State University. Such efforts were organized in response to combat the reality that Dayton ranks as the 11th hungriest city in the US.

On the Feast of St. Peter Claver, the Archdiocese organized two Masses in response to the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Day of Prayer for Peace in Our Communities. About 600 gathered at the Church of the Resurrection in Bond Hill, Cincinnati, where Archbishop Schnurr presided, and at Precious Blood Church in Dayton, where Bishop Binzer presided. Catholics from various parishes and schools united in the healing Body of Christ in oneness of purpose to commit the Church to the ongoing dialogue on race relations.
MINISTERING IN THE MERCY MODE: MONSIGNOR RAY EAST
SEPTEMBER 27, 2016
ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

Msgr. Ray East, this year's Distinguished Speaker, toured Dayton, visiting Catholic Social Services' Choice Food Pantry, House of Bread, St. Vincent Hotel and St. Benedict the Moor Church before making his presentation: “Love Thy Neighbor: Ministering in the Mercy Mode,” at St. Francis Church in Centerville. A crowd of about 200 people gathered to hear Msgr. Ray encouraging us to live into the person God wants us to be, especially to move beyond racial bias and respond to the voices of those who are hungry. Msgr. East also presented to Catholic Charities and Archdiocesan employees and parish leaders on mercy and racial justice.

STATIONS OF MERCY
OCTOBER 23, 2016
URSULINE SISTERS OF BROWN COUNTY

What a beautiful day it was for a farm tour and to travel as pilgrims to stations of mercy on the grounds of the Ursuline Sisters of Brown County. Members and guests of Catholic Rural Life of St. Marys and Sidney Deaneries enjoyed a wonderful lunch on the Chatfield College Campus, visited at the farm of Jeff Wolfer and then participated in A Walk of Mercy for the Land and Its People. St. Martin Deanery Rural Life organized the tour and walk.

JUBILEE FOR PRISONERS
NOVEMBER 6, 2016
ROME!

Near the close of the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis celebrated a Jubilee for Prisoners, inviting dioceses to send those who’ve been incarcerated or who work in prisons. We accepted! The Archdiocesan Worship, Prison Ministry, Stewardship and Catholic Social Action Offices and St. Vincent de Paul took twenty-three formerly incarcerated individuals, prison ministry volunteers, and reentry advocates to be with Pope Francis up close at the Basilica of St. Peter. The Holy Father also blessed 150 rosaries we had brought from inmates in the three prisons in the Archdiocese. What a beautiful experience for everyone!
Throughout the Year of Mercy, Catholic Social Action partnered with JustFaith Ministries on a parish-based effort, called “Gather and Send.” This campaign gathered leaders from 30 parishes throughout the Archdiocese, who committed their communities to “Know Mercy” and “Show Mercy” more intentionally through increased ministries of charity and social justice. The Gather and Send parishes are Bellarmine, Christ the King, Church of Resurrection, Holy Angels Sidney, IHM, Nativity, Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady of the Visitation, the Petersburg Pastoral Region, the St. Henry Cluster, St. Albert the Great, St. Anthony Madisonville, St. Bernard Spring Grove Village, St. Charles Kettering, St. Clare, St. Columban, St. Francis de Sales, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Helen, St. John West Chester, St. Joseph West End, St. Julie Hamilton, St. Leonard Faith Community, St. Luke, St. Michael Fort Loramie, St. Michael Sharonville, St. Peter, St. Vivian, and Sts. Mary, Michael, George (Brown County). Below, in their own words, are some examples of parishioners’ enthusiasm about their efforts:

— “The Lord has inspired six new, enthusiastic members to join our Social Action Team. They are busy communicating to our parishioners about the acts of Mercy that happen in our parish community now.”

— “Mercy radiated throughout the parish in our liturgical music, bible studies and faith sharing, bulletin inserts, parish pilgrimage and field trips to put the works of mercy into action, Laudato Si’, Voices of Experience and Microfinance presentations, [and more]!”

— “It was wonderful to see everyone (individuals, families, children) taking buds from the Mercy Tree throughout the year and returning the open bloom after performing the work of Mercy.”

— “I was amazed at the number of people from our three small parishes who attended The Dismas Journey, an immigration presentation, Light in Our Darkness for those who have lost a child, and the Stations of Mercy for the Land and its People. Seeds for continuing the Year of Mercy were planted; may the Lord nourish and help them to grow.”

— “One of the most amazing things was the response to our Food for All collection. We ended up collecting enough food for the original goal of 3,000, and more than achieved the ‘thermometer goal’ of 5,000 items when we added the non-food items!”

Catholic Social Action is the large family of Archdiocesan staff and parish leaders who serve on numerous commissions, committees and task forces, responding to the Gospel call to promote life, dignity and care for God’s creation.