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Jubilee Audience: Holy Year for Reconciliation with the Father

Vatican City, 30 April 2016 – At the fifth Jubilee Audience, held this morning in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis spoke about reconciliation, an essential aspect of mercy. The Holy Father noted that God never stops offering us his forgiveness. "Often we think it is our sins that distance the Lord from us, when in reality it is by our sins that we draw away from Him. ... A common way of saying this is that, when we sin, we 'turn our back on God'." The Pope, however, emphasized that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, "is not content until He has found the lost sheep. He is the bridge that bring us back to the Father and allows us to rediscover our dignity as His children."

"By our efforts alone," he continued, "we are unable to reconcile with God. Sin is truly an expression of the refusal of His love that consequently locks us within ourselves in the illusion that we have found greater freedom and autonomy." But the Pope encouraged those present to not turn their backs on God. "Let yourselves be reconciled to God! This is the cry with which the Apostle Paul addresses the first Christians at Corinth. Today it holds the same force and conviction for all of us. This Jubilee of Mercy is a time of reconciliation for all. Many want to be reconciled to God but don't know how to, or don't feel worthy, or don't want to admit it even to themselves. The Christian community can and should encourage the sincere return to God by those who feel His nostalgia. Especially those in the 'ministry of reconciliation' who are called to be docile instruments of the Holy Spirit because, where sin abounds, God's mercy can overflow. Let no one stay away from God because of obstacles created by man. ... May this Holy Year be the favorable time to rediscover our need of the Father's tenderness and closeness so that we might return to Him with all our heart."

At the end of his catechesis, Pope Francis greeted representatives of the armed forces and police from around the world, exhorting them to "be instruments of reconciliation, bridge builders, and sowers of peace. You were called not only to prevent, manage, and end conflicts, but also to contribute to the construction of an order based on truth, justice, love, and freedom, according to the definition of peace that St. John XXIII gave in his encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*."

The Holy Father recognized that "the affirmation of peace is not an easy task, especially because of war, which hardens the heart and increases violence and hatred." He urges us, however, not to be discouraged. He concluded: "Continue your journey of faith and open your hearts to God, the merciful Father, who never tires of forgiving us. Faced with everyday challenges, make Christian hope shine forth, the certainty of love's victory over hatred and peace's victory over war."

