“In our parishes, communities, associations and movements ... everyone should find an oasis of mercy.”

Pope Francis

“Oasis” is a provocative image. Although we are not a desert culture, we have travelled enough, seen enough movies, and read enough books to grasp the meaning. Oasis is a place of rest and resources in the middle of a desert. When we are there, we connect with our spirit before we return to the hardships of the demanding desert.

Without an oasis of mercy, the Pope sees life as: “fruitless and sterile, as if sequestered in a barren desert.” In other words, unless we find mercy the desert will dominate.

Since mercy is so valuable, the Pope does not spare his praise. “[Mercy] is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace ... [It is] the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life.”

But so much for praise!

What is it about mercy that is so core to our wellbeing and generativity?

The Pope has many insights, and we will ponder them. But basically he points to mercy as a personal path. “We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy.” His hope is that through this exercise of contemplation “the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective.”

This is a hard piece of advice. We cannot borrow someone else’s mind and heart about mercy. We must walk the path ourselves and discover the ways of mercy and the life it gives us.

In order to do this, we will have an “oasis reflection” each month. This short reflection will guide our thoughts and feelings and bring us into a world where mercy lifts our minds and hearts and inspires our actions.